

COLLECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN ANTI-SEMITISM

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Racism and anti-Semitism are highly complex human phenomena, having multiple causes including psychological ones. The latter are of paramount importance for understanding anti-Semitism. Over the past few decades, the focus of the psychoanalytic study of anti-Semitism has gradually shifted from the individual to the group. The earlier emphasis on unconscious individual defensive processes has been augmented by a new emphasis on the large group's psychological processes—for example, its conscious and unconscious needs for identity, boundaries, allies—and enemies. Although, like social-science and human-science theories in general, psychoanalytic theories cannot be tested with the same rigor as natural-science theories, they can help illuminate such crucial human issues as war and peace, politics, racism, anti-Semitism, and genocide.

During the 1960s and 1970s the focus of the psychological explanations of racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice—including anti-Semitism—began to shift from the individual to the group. In the 1980s, “one began to appreciate that prejudice was inherent in the very structure of all groups.”¹ This was a major psychological discovery. Individual psychological processes, such as unconscious projection, are not the same as collective psychological processes, such as the human group's needs for boundaries, cohesion, ideology, identity, leaders, and self. Large human groups especially, such as

nations, display such needs emphatically, and threats to them may lead to murderous group violence and even genocide.²

Indeed, during the 1980s, whereas most of the writers on the psychoanalysis of anti-Semitism had concentrated on unconscious *individual* processes—mainly projection—others began to focus on *group* psychological processes, especially the dire threat to its ideals, ideology, or religion that the majority group has always perceived from the minority group of the Jews. The American psychoanalyst David Terman reviewed the history of anti-Semitism from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory. He explained both ancient and Christian anti-Semitism as an unconscious psychological mechanism employed by the majority group that feels its *collective ideology* to be threatened:

The fury which may then be unleashed is proportional to so dire a threat. The narcissistic rage of the group, like that of the individual, by definition precludes empathy: the offender appears not as an individual or group with needs, motivations, and goals which arise from quite separate or different concerns, but only as a malevolent force whose sole purpose is to destroy one's most precious asset [the majority group's ideology], so the proper response is the obliteration of the danger. All manner of evil is then perceived in the dissenter [the Jew]. Such a phenomenon has often been explained as the projection by the offended party of its own disavowed evil, but in this framework that would be a *secondary* rather than a primary cause. More pertinently, the malevolence attributed to the dissenter has to do with the [collective] narcissistic injury to the group.³

This explanation is at first sight stunning: did the Nazis murder six million Jews only because their racist ideology was threatened by the “different” Jews, whom they had totally dehumanized, and whose image they had distorted out of all proportion to reality? Or did they perhaps develop their racist ideology in response to some other, inner threat that had nothing to do with the Jews themselves?

The Nazis opposed Christianity, too, replacing Jesus Christ with Adolf Hitler as their god. Many Roman Catholics were persecuted and even murdered. The American Jewish psychoanthropologist Howard Stein maintained that Judaism and Christianity had been bound up in a reciprocal system of mutual stigmatization based on a shared father-son conflict that neither could acknowledge. Each group unconsciously projected onto the other elements that are repressed in its own religion or tradition. Stein believed that Jews react against their wish to rebel against the Father (God) by their need, in every generation, to offer themselves or their sons as victims. Both Jesus Christ and the Jewish people can be seen as such

sacrificial victims. Christians identify the Jews with the onerous conscience (superego) that they reject, and with the Father who kills the son (or Jesus the Son). This is the unconscious origin of the Christian accusation of deicide against the Jews.⁴

The Nazis, Christianity, and Judaism

In the 1990s the Israeli criminologist Shlomo Giora Shoham, who had adopted the name of his fallen-soldier son as his own middle name, published a study of the German psychological road from Valhalla to Auschwitz.⁵ Drawing on the ideas of Howard Stein, Shoham attributed anti-Semitism and the Holocaust to the conflict between Germanic and Jewish myths, which determine the opposed social character and ethos of the two groups. He described the Germanic peoples as aggressive and materialistic, the Jews as self-sacrificing and spiritual. Shoham maintained that in northern Europe, Christianity was infused with Germanic characteristics. The Jews were its ideal victims because of their refusal to accept Christianity, their foreignness, and their powerlessness, which encouraged demonization and scapegoating.

In Shoham's view, there was always a "macabre symbiosis" between Germanic aggressiveness and the Jewish propensity to self-sacrifice. The Nazis tried to purify the German national character of Jewish-Christian elements. Their propaganda demonized the Jews and prepared ordinary men to commit mass murder. The Jews, by force of circumstance as well as because of their national character, went "like sheep to the slaughter." Shoham, however, used psychological stereotypes and simplifications.

In the 1950s the French Jewish historian Jules Isaac, a founder of the Jewish-Christian friendship movement, noted the medieval Christian roots of anti-Semitism, showing that Nazism imitated the Christian degradation of the Jews.⁶ Forty years later, the French psychoanalysts Béla Grunberger and Pierre Dessuant published a psychoanalytic study of anti-Semitism based on Grunberger's theories of narcissism.⁷ The authors saw the historical sources of anti-Semitism in Judaism's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. They believed that the "enigma" of Christian anti-Jewish feeling could be solved by viewing Christianity as a "narcissistic religion." They sought the roots of Christian anti-Semitism in the unconscious wish to avoid the oedipal conflict, which threatens the collective narcissistic illusion on which Christianity is built. Christianity maintained an endemic anti-Semitic culture, which varied in intensity in response to political, social, and religious upheavals.

The Shoah, then, was the culmination of two thousand years of disdain for the Jew in the Christian religion. Grunberger and Dessuant used psychoanalytic theory to illustrate how persons like Hitler were prone to become anti-Semitic, based on the inner duality of their personality. They presented examples of this duality, such as the material vs. the spiritual, to explain the belief in the existence of Christ in both human and divine form. This paradox led Christians to view Jews as symbols of evil, unredeemable because of their rejection of Jesus as the Christ and of Christian baptism.

Grunberger and Dessuant concluded that “Christian narcissism” was what led to the apocalypse, the Shoah. The anti-Semite, in confrontation with reality that subverts his narcissistic illusion of omnipotence, “pours out” his narcissistic rage on the Jews rather than face the pain of his own broken dreams. In Part 6 of their book, they analyzed Nazi anti-Semitism.⁸ However, these psychoanalysts, like many others before them, seem to have confused individual psychological processes with group processes.

Three years later, the Italian scholar Riccardo Calimani attempted to integrate the various theories of anti-Semitism.⁹ He recounted the history of prejudice and stereotypes regarding Jews from the ancient period to the present, with particular emphasis on the Christian world. Stereotypes are sometimes the only source of ideas about the Jewish minority, and among many European Christians the terms Jew, Israeli, Zionist, and Semite are often confused and interchanged. Reviewing the historical, philosophical, and psychoanalytic views of anti-Semitism and, above all, of the anti-Semites themselves, this scholar saw in anti-Semitism a projective interpretation by Christian society of its own evils, branding the Jew as a scapegoat. He concluded by asserting that the Jewish issue does not really exist and the only relevant issue is that of anti-Semitism itself. But as noted earlier, the individual unconscious process of projection is only part of the problem, with the collective issue of the threatened “group self” being no less important.

The Psychological Role of Stereotyping

One of the psychological processes that enabled anti-Semites such as the Nazis to murder Jews—as well as Gypsies, homosexuals, Slavs, and other “inferior” people—without feeling remorse, shame, guilt, or horror at their own actions was that of *dehumanization* and demonization. The killers had convinced themselves that the people they were killing were not human, that they were demons, monsters, or plague-bearing rats, and that they had to be

exterminated so as to save the German nation, which was the Nazis' idealized mother.

Already in 1967 the scholar Norman Cohn considered the demonization of the Jews as the main factor that led to the Nazi extermination policy.¹⁰ Cohn traced the history of the myth of "a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world," mainly expressed in the fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which was published in Russia in 1905 and became famous internationally, with many people believing in its authenticity.¹¹ The *Protocols* were used in anti-Semitic propaganda in Russia, Germany, and France. Cohn analyzed the worldwide spread and acceptance of the forgery as a phenomenon of collective psychopathology. The *Protocols* combined medieval and modern elements, reflecting the complex structure of modern anti-Semitism in its most virulent form. In our own time the *Protocols* are being widely circulated in Arab and Muslim countries and presented as authentic proof of Jewish perfidy and monstrosity.¹²

Whereas the "old" Christian anti-Semitism was religious, the "new" anti-Semitism of the Nazis in the twentieth century was "racial." The Nazis readily adopted various fantastic and unscientific theories that conveniently divided humanity into superior and inferior races, with the German "race" at the top and the Jewish one at the bottom. The "anti-Semitism" of our own time, that of the twenty-first century, does not seem to care whether the Jews are a religion, a people, a nation, a race, or an ethnic group. Fear and hatred of the Jews in France, for example, is not only the province of the extreme Right that loathes all "foreigners," but also is found on the extreme Left, which combines its hatred of the "fascist Israeli government's oppressive rule over the Palestinians" with the fact that Israel is "the Jewish state" into a broad anti-Semitism.

Josef Joffe, the German Jewish editor of the German weekly *Die Zeit*, who is also a visiting scholar at Stanford University, has delineated five "elements" of anti-Semitism: stereotyping, denigration, demonization, obsession, and elimination.¹³ Joffe believes that while the "new anti-Semitism" in Europe has given up the fifth element, which he calls "operational antisemitism"—the physical elimination of the Jews—"classical antisemitism has migrated from the West to the Islamic world,"¹⁴ where the fear and hatred of Jews, and the wish for their annihilation, has become endemic.

Whereas anti-Semitism in Europe ostensibly became taboo after the Holocaust, and some European countries—notably France and Germany—have laws against it, that is not at all the case in the Arab and Muslim world. This does not mean Christian Europe—which now has a sizable Muslim minority, much larger than its Jewish one—has become free of anti-Semitism. One of the countries with the

highest number of anti-Semitic incidents in the world is France—which also has several million Arabs and Muslims among its citizens and residents.

Anti-Semitic literature often preceded the persecution and massacre of the Jews. The German scholar Jens Malte Fischer surveyed the research on anti-Semitism and discussed anti-Semitic stereotypes in European literature.¹⁵ Fischer analyzed the works of the anti-Semitic and racist French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline,¹⁶ using Erich Fromm's psychoanalytic theories¹⁷ to explain Céline's violent hatred of the Jews as an unconscious projection of his own self-hatred. Céline, whose last name had been Destouches, took his mother's first name as his own last name.¹⁸

Another racist stereotype was expressed by the German writer Artur Dinter, who portrayed the Jews as contaminating Aryan blood.¹⁹ Fischer compared Dinter's book with passages from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.²⁰ Eduard Fuchs's study of the Jewish stereotype in German cartoons²¹ showed that anti-Semitic sexual fantasies were present in German folklore already during the Renaissance. Fischer quoted an anonymous German pamphlet published in the 1920s as a supplement to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He concluded that all these perverse anti-Semitic literary depictions arose from the psychological disturbances of their authors via unconscious projection.

The nineteenth-century British Jewish statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) wrote novels that idealized the “chosen Hebrew race.”²² At the same time, Disraeli anticipated the *Protocols* in projecting onto the Jews his own unconscious wishes for world-domination.²³ Disraeli's ambivalence about his own Jewishness has characterized prominent Jews in the Diaspora or “Exile,” as the Zionists and Israeli Jews call all countries other than Israel. Some Jews have displayed a pronounced hatred of their own people.²⁴

The Psychology of the Anti-Semite

Some anti-Semites seem to pose psychological riddles. One of these was the far-Right British political leader Arthur Kenneth Chesterton (1896–1973), a cousin of the writer Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936). The American scholar David Baker argued that the case of Chesterton, the founder of the British National Front, suggests that not all fascist leaders have authoritarian personalities or are crazed genocidal Nazis.²⁵ Other scholars had concluded from Chesterton's extreme anti-Semitism

that his character had a psychopathological defect. In Baker's view, the historical, social, and intellectual—rather than psychological—forces in Chesterton's upbringing and experiences during World War I had impelled him toward cultural and ethnocentric fascism. What attracted him to Oswald Mosley (1896–1980) and British fascism was the camaraderie and sense of purpose. Despite his belief in a world Jewish conspiracy, Chesterton condemned the Nazi genocide of the Jews and joined the British army against Germany. Chesterton's ambivalence, however, does not disprove his psychopathology.

The German Catholic intellectual Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) was a racist anti-Semite with close ties to the Nazi Party. The modern German scholar Nicolaus Sombart analyzed Schmitt's life and work, placing him in the historical context of a generation of antiliberal, antifeminist, and anti-Semitic German men.²⁶ Sombart maintained that Jews became the archenemy of the German people when they continued to fight for the ideals of the Emancipation after the Germans had abandoned them.

Ultimately, however, Sombart believed with Freud that the roots of anti-Semitism lay in the unconscious castration fear of the uncircumcised, their envy of alleged Jewish political and sexual superiority, and their interpretation of contemporary history as the rise of Jews to world domination, as exemplified in Disraeli's influence over Queen Victoria. German nationalism defined itself as the fight against world Jewry to the point of its extinction. Like Hitler himself, Schmitt, though a pronounced anti-Semite, was fascinated by Jewish thinkers, especially by Disraeli and his idea of the chosen race. Sombart suggested that for these German anti-Semites, the Jewish enemy unconsciously represented a bad part of their selves that they sought to destroy.

One of the most prolific contemporary writers on the psychology of anti-Semitism is the American Jewish scholar Sander Gilman.²⁷ After many of his pieces appeared separately, Gilman published a collection of his essays on the distorted representation of the body and soul of the Jew—the “Jewish” voice, foot, nose, and psyche—in Western Christian culture, and on its ideological and social implications.²⁸ He discussed the anti-Semitic stereotypes of the physical “differences” of the Jew's body from the Christian one that were deeply rooted in Christian theological texts, and the place of these stereotypes in modern anti-Semitism. Gilman referred to Freud's interpretations of this issue and to the phenomenon of Jewish self-hatred connected to the stigmatization of the image of the Jew. He illustrated this problem in contemporary American culture. Gilman maintained that the pseudoscience of race in the late nineteenth

century secularized prior Christian religious negative views of the Jews and expressed them in a neutral, “scientific” language.

Collective vs. Individual Psychology

As noted, many scholars of anti-Semitism have confused individual psychological processes with collective ones. The German sociologist Gunnar Heinsohn used a psychoanalytic theory of sacrifice and guilt to explain the irrational nature of anti-Semitism.²⁹ He believed that sacrifice to the gods began in the ancient world as a psychological means of reducing the anxiety caused by natural cataclysms. People were convinced that the gods wanted them to sacrifice their children so as to appease them. The sacrifice of one’s firstborn son was common among the Jews in ancient times (Leviticus 18:21, II Kings 23:10, Jeremiah 32:35). The authors of the Bible sought to replace it with animal sacrifice. Biblical Judaism’s renunciation and interdiction of child sacrifice was viewed as alien and threatening by the ancient peoples such as the Greeks and the Romans. The act of sacrifice, however, aroused unconscious but powerful guilt feelings in the sacrificers.

Child sacrifice was later repressed, but returned symbolically in Christianity after Christ’s execution by the Romans. Heinsohn did not claim that the Christians had killed their Messiah, but that after his crucifixion by the Romans they produced the myth that Christ had been their savior as well as the sacrificial lamb who carried the sins of the world. The eating of the Sacred Host, which stands for the flesh of Christ, unconsciously represents a cannibalistic act that produces unbearable guilt feelings, which are in turn unconsciously projected onto the Jews, as though they had themselves sacrificed the Son of God. Anti-Semitic Christians thought that the world’s ills could be solved by the sacrifice of Jews—from the medieval massacres to the Nazi Holocaust. To Heinsohn, modern racism was an outgrowth of this psychoreligious process, which he thought was again at work in Germany, often in the guise of anti-Zionism.

The Hungarian Jewish scholar Imre Hermann, a Marxist and Freudian psychoanalyst, in his work on the psychology of anti-Semitism, written during the Holocaust, did distinguish between individual and collective psychology.³⁰ Hermann discussed the unconscious search for a scapegoat and the unconscious projection of guilt onto strangers, the unconscious projection of individual characteristics onto entire peoples, and the desire to eliminate “parasitical communities” from society. He showed how, in

Freudian terms, the fear of castration, the Oedipus complex, and clinical paranoia were reflected in anti-Semitism. Hermann surveyed popular anti-Semitism from a Marxist viewpoint as an endemic collective mental illness that becomes epidemic at times of economic or political crisis. Naturally, Hermann focused on Hungarian anti-Semitism, which led to the Hungarian collaboration with the German Nazis in the extermination of Jews in 1944.

One of the most prestigious social science research centers in Weimar Germany, from 1919 to 1933, was the Institut für Sozialforschung at the University of Frankfurt am Main, known in English as the Frankfurt School.³¹ From 1930, the Frankfurt School was led by Max Horkheimer and most of its members were, like him, German Jews. During Nazi rule from early 1933, the institute avoided the subject of anti-Semitism in its research work, perhaps out of fear of Hitler's reprisals on the German Jews.³²

In the mid-1930s, Horkheimer succeeded in moving his institute from Germany to the United States and making it part of Columbia University. He began to write on anti-Semitism.³³ By 1944, Horkheimer and his colleague Theodor Adorno realized that unconscious projection, in addition to social, economic, political, and religious factors, was a major cause of anti-Semitism.³⁴ This led them to publish a series of studies on the authoritarian personality and anti-Semitism, which integrated Marxist philosophy, economics, history, and sociology with psychoanalysis.³⁵ Horkheimer's and Adorno's theories, however, have been criticized by many scholars.³⁶

The British psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott coined the well-known term "transitional object" for security blankets, teddy bears, or other anxiety-soothing objects used by infants and children to separate and individuate from their mothers.³⁷ The German scholar Eberhard Groener applied Winnicott's theories to the study of anti-Semitism.³⁸ Groener suggested that Christ unconsciously served the Christians as a "transitional object," especially in periods of insecurity. Their profound and intense need for this object was one of the causes of their hostility to Judaism, which negated Christ. Groener too, however, failed to distinguish between individual and collective psychological processes.

Psychoanalytic Perspectives

The word psychoanalysis has two different meanings: a theory of human behavior and a method for treating emotional pain. Ackerman and Jahoda as well as Ostow³⁹ have used the clinical setting of

psychoanalytic treatment to gain insights into the unconscious processes operating in anti-Semitic patients. So did the Moroccan-French American Jewish psychoanalyst Danielle Knafo, who found that, in psychoanalysis, the emotional conflicts of the patient are often conveyed in terms of religious, racial, or ethnic stereotypes.⁴⁰ Patients bring up anti-Semitic feelings at critical times during their therapy. Knafo presented three clinical cases—of a non-Jewish patient, a Jewish one, and a half-Jewish one—showing that anti-Semitism is a psychological defense that serves various unconscious defensive purposes, often involving split-off or projected aspects of the personality.

On the basis of her experience as a Jewish psychoanalyst in New York, Knafo concluded that psychoanalysts need to confront their own ambivalence about anti-Semitic patients rather than remain silent about such attitudes as anti-Semitism, which challenge their own identities. Thus, potentially anxiety-producing information or situations can help establish peace between analyst and patient, as well as within each of them. Knafo also discussed the self-hatred of the Jewish patient.

Some scholars have used the psychoanalytic approach to dysfunctional families in order to analyze the tragic historical relationship between Christians and Jews. The British family therapist John Launer has suggested that, as occurs in psychologically unhealthy families, the relations of Christianity and Judaism have been characterized by abuse and victimization.⁴¹ Launer maintained that the historical confrontation between the two religions was that of two mutually disqualifying beliefs. Both religions demonstrated a mutual process of unconscious projection in their negative stereotyping of each other. The Christian reaction to the challenge of Judaism has often been terror and rage, as seen in the cases of Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler, the latter in a secularized form.

Launer thought that the Jewish resistance to seeing Judaism in a continuing dynamic relationship with Christianity also contributed to the perpetuation of this pathological relationship. He suggested ways of resolving the conflict, such as recognizing that both religions are equally legitimate offspring of ancient Judaism, or that there exists a Christian-Jewish symbiosis. Launer's ideas closely resemble those of Howard Stein fifteen years earlier.⁴² One of the problems with this approach, however, is the assignment of individual or family psychodynamics to large groups like Jewry and Christendom whose collective psychology is different and special.⁴³

The Berlin-based journalist, diplomat, and political analyst Paul Hockenos pointed out that after the end of the Cold War and the

collapse of the Soviet empire, “anti-Semitism is alive and flourishing throughout Eastern Europe, even in the virtual absence of Jews.”⁴⁴ Hockenos believed that because the nationalist regimes in these formerly Communist countries feel guilty for the evils of Communism and for what their peoples had done to their Jews during the Holocaust, they “reverse the guilt” and blame the Jews for their people’s sufferings.⁴⁵

Howard Stein linked the resurgent anti-Semitism in these newly liberated countries to their need for boundaries, self-definition, and national identity.⁴⁶ Building on Vam K.D. Volkan’s work on the large group’s unconscious need for enemies,⁴⁷ Stein presented a psychoanalytic explanation for the explosion of ethnic hatred, and especially anti-Semitism, in post-Communist Eastern Europe. He maintained that the decades of suppression of ethnic identity by the former Communist rulers generated an intense search for identity, which required an image of an ethnic enemy who would serve as a reservoir for all the negated and externalized aspects of the ethnic group. In many instances the Jews were designated as that enemy, even in countries like Poland where there were virtually no more Jews.

Stein showed how the Jews were unconsciously used as the enemy necessary for self-definition because “Jews remain the final reminder of ambiguity and uncertainty of all human boundaries, between self and other, between good and evil, between clean and unclean, between male and female, between all human distinctions.”⁴⁸ Stein also demonstrated that Jew-haters like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in Russia and Louis Farrakhan in the United States harbor deep ambivalence toward Jews, which is “played out via personal conversions and a splitting of loving and hating selves into different contexts.”⁴⁹ Two years later, the American Jewish political psychiatrist Jerrold Post reiterated Stein’s ideas.⁵⁰

In 2004, the French Jewish journal *Pardès: Etudes et culture juive* devoted a whole issue to psychoanalytic studies of contemporary anti-Semitism. In the first article, the Lacanian analyst Guy Sapriel pointed out the striking similarities between the anti-Semites’ fantasies about their fathers and their imaginary notions of the Jew. In Sapriel’s view, *everyone* (it is not clear whether he meant to include the Jews themselves) is—at least unconsciously—anti-Semitic by virtue of his or her fantasies about their primal father.⁵¹ He asserted that anti-Semitism was “a permanent, universal phenomenon, linked to the trace of the forgotten memory of the origins of humanity.”⁵² Nevertheless, Sapriel found the continued existence of the Jewish people after the Shoah a great riddle.⁵³

The Transition to Islam

The French Jewish psychiatrist Georges Gachnochi, who had lived in Israel for some years, studied the transition of Christian anti-Semitism from right-wing European fascism to “Islamic leftism.” Gachnochi thought that anti-Semitic European Catholics identify the modern “Zionists”—presumably the Israeli Jews—with the ancient Jews who “crucified” Christ, and the modern Palestinian Arabs with the suffering Christ whom the Jews had “sacrificed” on the cross. They accept unquestioningly the alleged Israeli Jewish responsibility for the tragic death of the Palestinian Arab boy Muhammad al-Dura on 30 September 2000, even though there is considerable doubt about who killed him.⁵⁴

Gachnochi pointed out the lack of any rhyme and reason in the Islamic accusations against the Israeli Jews or in their version of history, with Yasser Arafat claiming, for example, that there had never been a Jewish temple on Jerusalem’s Mount Moriah. This did not discredit him with the European public, the European Left being itself indifferent to history, permeable to anachronisms, and open to revisionism and Holocaust denial.⁵⁵ Gachnochi attributed the current resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe to a “repetition compulsion” with two aspects: the repetition of the same unconscious defenses of projection and scapegoating against the same individual and collective conflicts, and the compulsive repetition of the collective trauma of the Shoah through attraction to suicide bombings and mass death.⁵⁶

Jean-Pierre Winter, another French Jewish psychoanalyst, considered anti-Semitism a perversion rather than a phobia or a paranoia.⁵⁷ He pointed out that those who fabricated the “proof” of the false accusation of treason against the French Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus in the late nineteenth century, knew very well that their evidence was false. If they really believed in a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, then they were psychotically delusional.⁵⁸

Winter found the Muslim anti-Semites’ use of epithets like “Judeo-Nazi” for the Israelis, and their own sadomasochistic identification with the Jewish victims of the German Nazis, no less perverse and chilling than the German Nazis’ Orwellian use of the phrase “national socialism” to describe their own racist and murderous ideology.⁵⁹ Winter’s colleague Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel also asserted that accusing the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust of “lack of repentance” toward “the people who had to pay the price of blood or exile to permit Israel to exist”—the Palestinian Arabs—was “a pure example of perverse thinking.”⁶⁰

Winter recalled Freud's theories about the murder of the father, Moses, by the ancient Jews and the killing of the son, Jesus, by the early Christians. Winter thought that in Islam, neither murder had occurred. Allah was one of the ancient Arab gods whom Muhammad made into the one and only god of Islam. For Jewish and Christian sons, the dead father was even more powerful, psychologically, than the live one. His will continued to dominate his sons, whose superego—the internalized father—forbade them all manner of joys and enjoyments, and the Promise of the Land of Israel to Abraham was the will of the dead father.⁶¹ Freud believed that when a little boy sees that his mother has no penis, he thinks she has been castrated, and is filled with panic lest he himself lose his penis. The same panic, Freud thought, took hold of the adult when he heard the cry “the throne and the altar are in danger.” We are all imperfect and incomplete. Anti-Semites refuse to accept this fact while at the same time knowing that they are far from perfect. Winter's theoretical connections, however, between Islam and Judaism/Christianity, fathers and sons, Freud's theories and the anti-Semites' refusal to accept imperfection, are not sufficiently clear.⁶²

The Current European Wave of Anti-Semitism

Olivier Nicolle, another French psychoanalyst, called the modern discourse of anti-Semitism a “collective psychic formation” that unconsciously defends anti-Semitic groups against the anxiety of their inner conflicts. Nicolle maintained that the current wave of European anti-Semitism was accentuated by collective events of national, international, and even worldwide dimensions, through which it found both forms of expression and a channeling of its dynamics to a clearly visible object.⁶³ He saw contemporary anti-Semitic slogans as the product of unconscious condensations and displacements of collective fantasy scenes. These slogans range from the most eloquent, as in the anti-Semitic speech of then Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohammed in 2003, to the most laconic and schematic, as in an equation sign between the Star of David and the swastika; from the most inciting, as in “One Jew—one bullet,” to the most allusive, as in “No to *communautarisme*,” a French word that alludes to the Jews' “crime” of organizing themselves into communities and betraying their pact with the French Republic. Once proclaimed, such slogans as “Bush = Sharon = murderer” acquire legitimacy as “public opinion.”⁶⁴

Referring to the French political Left, Nicolle suggested that the collective anti-Semitic fantasy of all the world's Jews being one huge

collective entity, which is responsible for the “American-Zionist war” on Iraq or Afghanistan, helps the anti-Semites imagine themselves as the champions of pacifism, multilateralism, and solidarity with all victims in the world and “the Jews” as traitors who subvert the continued existence of two idealized state collectives—the national French Republic and the supranational European Union. During past European crises, the Jews were accused of being a fifth column, the Jewish officer Dreyfus was branded a traitor, the converted Jews of Spain after the Reconquista were suspected of cheating and persecuted, Christian paschal liturgy referred to the “perfidious Jews,” and Christians were sure that the Jews had poisoned their wells.⁶⁵

Nicolle found a “projective correspondence” between the distorted representation of the Jews proffered by anti-Semites during the first years of the twenty-first century and the affects of those who were its aim: accused of betrayal by the anti-Semites, many French Jews themselves felt abandoned, neglected, even betrayed by the social and political institutions of France. The creation of the European Union threatens the French people’s certainty about their future. The more the French are apprehensive, the more they idealize their “one and indivisible” republic and denigrate the Jews.⁶⁶

It should be noted that psychogeographic and psychopolitical entities such as “our country,” “our nation,” and “our motherland” easily lend themselves to the unconscious displacement of our early infantile feelings about our parents—especially our mother.⁶⁷ Nicolle maintained that anti-Semitic accusations of treason conceal deep unconscious jealousy.⁶⁸

The French philosopher Jean-Claude Milner accused democratic Europe of having “criminal tendencies” and of even now seeking to eliminate its Jews.⁶⁹ The French Jewish political scientist Alexandre Adler argued that some Jews now “convert” to anti-Zionism as their ancestors converted to Christianity.⁷⁰ Citing these authors, the abovementioned French psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel suggested that while anti-Semitism was a highly overdetermined phenomenon, having political, historical, economic, social, cultural, religious, *and* psychological causes, the “new” European anti-Semitism continued the old one in subtle ways. Just before the recent U.S. war on Iraq, for example, fearing chemical-weapons attacks from Iraq, Israel asked Finland to supply it with a sophisticated gas-defense system, only to be told that the European Union forbade arms sales to Israel. No one seemed to remember that millions of European Jews had been gassed to death by the Nazis.⁷¹

Like other psychoanalysts, Chasseguet-Smirgel viewed the medieval Christian ritual-murder libel against the Jews as an

unconscious projection of Christian guilt feelings for “absorbing” the flesh and blood of Christ. This blood libel was still very much alive in Russia in 1903 and currently is widely believed in the Arab and Muslim countries of the Middle East.⁷² Like her colleague Georges Gachnoli, Chasseguet-Smirgel pointed out that when, in 2000, at the beginning of the Second Intifada the boy Muhammad al-Dura was killed, the Israelis were blamed and the Jews once again became child murderers to the Europeans, even after the German television channel ARD had screened a documentary disproving this allegation.

In 2002, during the Israeli siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where Palestinian terrorists had taken refuge, the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* published a cartoon showing Jesus in his mother Mary’s arms saying, “Mom, do you think they will kill me a second time?” A Danish pastor publicly compared the Israeli army’s actions to Herod’s massacre of the innocents, and the atheist left-wing French newspaper *Libération* published cartoons showing Ariel Sharon about to crucify Yasser Arafat and devouring little children. Such myths derive their emotional power from the archaic sadomasochistic themes of the victim and the victimizer, the sacrifice and the sacrificer, which were so common in the ancient world⁷³ and which, one might add, begin in the early life of the infant and child with his or her parents.

Summary

Racism and anti-Semitism are highly complex human phenomena having historical, social, economic, political, ethnic, religious, as well as psychological causes. The latter are critical to the understanding of anti-Semitism. Psychoanalysis is not only a method of treating emotional suffering, but also a general theory of human behavior. In the study of anti-Semitism, the focus of psychoanalytic scholarship has gradually shifted from the individual to the group. The emphasis on unconscious individual defensive processes such as repression, displacement, projection, splitting, and denial has been enhanced by a focus on the large group’s conscious and unconscious needs for identity as well as boundaries, for allies as well as enemies.

Although psychoanalytic theories cannot be tested with the same rigor as natural-science ones, they shed light on the crucial human issues on the individual as well as the group level. In the context of anti-Semitism, an attempt has been made here to clarify those group processes that had been neglected in the past in favor of individual ones.

Notes

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