

# What Is Antisemitism and Why Does It Continue to Exist?

**Dr. Liah Greenfeld**

*Boston University*

✉ Email: [lvg@bu.edu](mailto:lvg@bu.edu)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0197-4701>

## Abstract

Antisemitism is often regarded as a peculiar expression of xenophobia, the natural hostility towards those perceived as outsiders. However, this article argues that xenophobia is a modern construct rooted in historical and ideological developments rather than instinctual human or animal behavior. Antisemitism precedes xenophobia by two millennia and therefore cannot be the latter's expression. The article explores the unique characteristics of antisemitism, its persistent presence in human societies, and its intersection with nationalism. It is composed by the editors out of passages from Liah Greenfeld's essay *Antisemitism as a Civilizational Phenomenon: An Analytical Essay*, the winner of the 2024 Bernard Lewis Prize, and quotations from the interview with the author.

## Keywords

antisemitism, xenophobia, monotheism, civilization, hate

## Introduction. What antisemitism is not (Essay)

Antisemitism is usually considered a variety of xenophobia – hostility towards strangers, outsiders – and as such an expression of human nature. Xenophobia, we say, is ubiquitous: everywhere humans prefer members of the in-group to those who are outside it, the *others* whom they know and therefore trust less, easily imagining them as dangerous. This we believe is a given of human psychology, reflecting in turn its biological substratum: after

all, animals with highly developed nervous systems, such as wolves, lions, meercats, are xenophobes too, ready to fight to the death with outside groups from their own species and cruel to individuals who do not belong. Such is nature, red of tooth and claw. And while among humans this instinctual bloodthirstiness can be combatted, restrained, and perhaps altogether eliminated through training and cultivation of tolerant and accepting attitudes, there is really nothing much to explain about it above the elucidation of evolutionary mechanisms which would apply to meercats and wolves as much as to humans.

Any human group can be, and in the course of history probably was, on the receiving end of xenophobia. If Jews have met with it significantly more often than other groups, this is attributable to their unlucky history which since the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE at first repeatedly placed many of them in exile and after 1<sup>st</sup> century CE for two thousand years dispersed them in foreign lands where they lived as a recognizable minority within various host populations, becoming the conventional target of these populations' natural xenophobia. Other than that, there is no difference between antisemitism and xenophobia directed against non-Jewish groups, and had their accidental, historical circumstances been different, Jews themselves, instead of being continuously victims of this natural proclivity, would be as likely as any other population to be xenophobic towards other populations.

Xenophobia often expresses itself in violence, and given that Jews have been victims of xenophobia continuously for over two and a half millennia in an exceptionally large number of naturally xenophobic host communities, it stands to reason that Jews have experienced more violence than any other group and occasionally violence which was greater than violence ever experienced by other groups. The Holocaust was one such occasion, and it is usually presented by Jews and non-Jews alike as the most striking example of *what human beings can do to other human beings*, a regrettable possibility, ever present because inherent in human nature itself, from which every minority group that may be a target of xenophobia must be protected at any cost.

Historical scholarship of antisemitism derives from this (fundamentally biological) understanding of the problem. The questions addressed in it, as a rule, are what triggered the natural xenophobia in any particular case and what were the specific characteristics of the episode. This makes each eruption of antisemitism independent and explained by its particular historical context (unless one can demonstrate an historical – that is, still accidental – connection between several historical contexts).

However, history proves this understanding false. In its original incarnation as "anti-Judaism," antisemitism was clearly not a variety of common xenophobia, both in the sense that it predated xenophobia by some 20 centuries, and in that it was nothing common. It was of high birth, fathered, simultaneously with the Church, by the best Christian minds as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD/CE as the patristic polemics "against the Jews" and by the 4<sup>th</sup> century was already a venerable tradition, perhaps the most venerable Christian tradition, with its own proper name, "adversus Iudaeos." That is, it was precisely antisemitic. Even its new obfuscating name (invented in 1871) predated "xenophobia," a neologism which made its first appearance in 1880. Humanity captures all its significant experiences in words. The absence of a word implies that an experience has no meaning within certain borders, and it is safe to assume that not long before "xenophobia" was first printed in *Daily News* in London, Englishmen who had a traditional dislike of foreigners pretending to equality with them, did not know generalized xenophobia which most of us today believe was bequeathed to us by wolves. It was news indeed.

When university administrations in America after October 7, 2023, condemn antisemitism, they invariably preface this by the condemnation of all forms of racism and xenophobia and necessarily pair antisemitism with Islamophobia, which is supposed to be as problematic and widespread. Were xenophobia natural, it would make sense that hostility to a religious group

of about 2 billion people, foreign to the West, would – in the West -- be quite common. But it is not. According to the FBI statistics, hate crimes motivated by anti-Muslim sentiments are very few, and there are no world-wide surveys of Islamophobia among the non-Muslim populations. In the United States, which, unlike Western Europe, experiences no massive Muslim immigration, it is clearly an imagined, uncharacteristic attitude. In the modern context of competition between nations one does observe anti-Americanism, Anglophobia, Francophobia, Russophobia, but only occasionally, sometimes in one country, sometimes in another. These are never sentiments shared across numerous borders and they very rarely reach the intensity of a hatred among large groups of people or lead to mass violence. Such phobias develop only against specific political background, and, remarkably, *always against a culture considered by the “phobes” superior to their own*. Islamophobia, which American campuses (and the federal government) combat, however, is not associated with international competition or the assumption of Islam’s superiority and supposed to develop simply because Muslims espouse beliefs different from those of this largely Christian society, in strict parallel to Jews, when they are defined as a religious group. This suggests that it is a strawman, invented to downplay and divert attention from the singularity of antisemitism (i.e., in effect, to not come to grips with it).<sup>1</sup>

However accurate is our knowledge of wolves (which, probably, should be taken with at least a grain of salt), generalized xenophobia – fear or dislike of strangers – is certainly not a natural human sentiment and could not have been typical in the relations between groups before *nationalism* reached very deep into populations defined as nations. The idea itself that populations within certain political borders were nations – that is, sovereign communities of shared identity and fundamentally equal members – did not exist before the 16<sup>th</sup> century and for a long time affected only the thinking of people in the narrow upper classes of societies to which it spread. It is obvious that a feudal lord’s (or peasant’s) conception of a stranger has nothing in common with the contemporary notion of *ethnic* (ethno-cultural) strangers, viewed as strangers by the entire population of a country, irrespective of class and status, because such a view could only be entertained if this population viewed itself as an ethnic (ethno-cultural) community. Antisemitism predated this nationalistic ethnic imagination by many centuries. The simplest, original Greek concept associated with strangers – *xenia* – is the concept of hospitality (Robb, 2019).<sup>2</sup> It is a similar idea of strangers – as those to whom one must be particularly hospitable and kind – that we meet in the Hebrew Bible as well. How did we get from *xenia* to xenophobia is an interesting historical-sociological question, but it is safe to assume that the roots of xenophobia are to be sought in recent history, modernity, rather than our primitive animal nature.

Still, this mistaken narrative underlies the current understanding of antisemitism. It is shared by Jews and non-Jews (including antisemites), and it lets antisemites (non-Jews or Jews)<sup>3</sup> off the hook very easily. It is a lazy understanding, it explains antisemitism away without attempting any explanation of it; and it is rooted in the fundamental weakness of the social sciences – their unwillingness to explore the human nature, that is the nature of humanity. One would not be able to explain any particular phenomenon in biology (cell division, let’s

1 This pairing of antisemitism and Islamophobia in taking measures against them is analogous to bringing to a hospital emergency room two patients, one coughing blood because of tuberculosis and the other feeling an itch due to a mosquito bite, and attempting to address the problem of the discomfort they experience by applying anti-itch ointment on the skin of both at the place where the mosquito bit the latter.

2 Kevin Robb, “*Xenia, Hiketeia, and the Homeric Language of Morals: The Origins of Western Ethics*,” in William Wians (ed.) *Logoi and muthoi : further essays in Greek philosophy and literature*, SUNY Press, 2019. The best hotels in Greece are still called “XENIA.”

3 Self-hatred, a loathing of an aspect of one’s identity, is a well-recognized psycho-pathology. Jews, just like any other human beings, are not immune to it. Therefore, Jews can be antisemites. Such “auto-antisemitism” (Theodore Lessing’s term), like any self-hatred is explained psycho-historically.

say, heart disease, or the evolution of a species) without having the basic understanding of the life process in general. To attempt an explanation of antisemitism, similarly, we'll have to begin with the basic understanding of the reality to which this specific phenomenon belongs. And one thing we can say from the outset is that this reality is not biological.

### **Methods** (Interview)

This study adheres to basic scientific methods, particularly the method of conjectures and refutations. This method is characterized by both logical reasoning and empirical testing. The essence of this approach lies in the formulation of a hypothesis—an educated guess about the relationships between certain phenomena – and the testing of this hypothesis against evidence. Science, akin to art, begins with creativity. It is not a purely technical enterprise but one that involves imagination, whereby the researcher hypothesizes connections between variables. These variables must be rigorously defined to ensure the logical consistency of the theory, as logic is grounded in the principle of non-contradiction.

Once the hypothesis is clearly formulated, the next step is to search for data that can contradict it. The deductive nature of this method stands in contrast to inductive reasoning; the hypothesis is proven wrong when a single contradictory instance arises, such as the discovery of a black swan after assuming all swans are white. This deductive cycle—formulating a hypothesis and testing it against relevant data—drives scientific progress. It is not based on an accumulation of data, as is often seen in historical studies, but on the careful testing of a well-defined hypothesis.

### **Results** (Interview)

The main conclusion of this work is that antisemitism is a psychological dynamic created by borrowed monotheism. This dynamic generates a complex of inferiority and existential envy among those who have adopted monotheistic beliefs. Existential envy, in turn, leads to the painful, self-destabilizing psychological complex. This inferiority complex inevitably transforms into hatred and violence.

Antisemites, driven by a need to prove to themselves that they are not inferior to Jews, seek to demonstrate their superiority. This is often achieved performatively—by humiliating, oppressing, or even killing Jews. In this way, they attempt to resolve their deep psychological issues through violent acts, using these actions as a form of therapy.

This phenomenon is largely present among individuals with Christian or Muslim backgrounds, although not all the people with these backgrounds are antisemites. People among them who are not antisemitic do not experience the same complex of inferiority. However, they may still question why so many around them hold antisemitic views. Cultures not rooted in Christianity or Islam (e.g., China, Japan, India) do not have indigenous antisemitic traditions.

In addition, individuals can change their views. Through experiences such as educational settings, some antisemites, upon recognizing their own antisemitic beliefs, feel shame because of their inferiority and undergo a transformation, shifting from antisemitism to actively fighting against it. This suggests that self-awareness and education can play a critical role in addressing and overcoming antisemitism.

## Discussion

### *What Is Antisemitism (Essay)*

“Antisemitism” is a code word, referring specifically and exclusively to the Jew-hatred. Unlike many other words, it was invented intentionally – by the German leftist small-time writer Wilhelm Marr in 1871 -- to replace the traditional term for Jew-hatred, “anti-Judaism,” and to stress that the nature of the sentiment was racial, rather than religious (religious Jew-hatred was thereby subsumed in racial Jew-hatred). The word is nothing but a sign for the sentiment. Therefore, it applies to all the expressions of the hostility to the Jews *as a group* (i.e., as a race, a religion, a class, a state) and, unlike a symbol, is not open to interpretation. In distinction to symbols naturally evolving out of the changing contexts, intentionally invented signs are inseparable from the referent which they were originally intended to signify. All arguments about antisemitism as if it represents a reality out there, independent of the term (e.g., Arabs are Semites, therefore cannot be anti-Semites), are irrelevant<sup>4</sup>, they do not touch on the phenomenon of Jew-hatred (Lewis, 2005; Herf, 2009).

When the object of hatred is a group, rather than individuals, individuals are not seen as agents but as embodiments of the group agency. It is then justified to hate completely innocent people who have done nothing wrong and even theoretically could not have done anything wrong, babies and children. Put in this emblematic – explicitly symbolic -- position, individuals are hated not because of what they do, but because of what they are. This testifies to the *irrational* nature of antisemitism (Jew-hatred) – that is, to its rationally unjustifiable character (Greenfeld, 2013).<sup>5</sup>

From its earliest origins antisemitism, *adversus Iudaeos*, was expressed in a furiously emotional language, i.e., ranting. It was -- and propagated – hatred. To quote from the preaching of just one 4<sup>th</sup> century saint: Jews were “the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the Devil. Their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jew must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is essential that all Christians hate them.” (St. Ambrose, 379 AD)

Hatred is a psychological phenomenon. Its explanation must, at the very least, have a psychological component. Occasional hatreds are, no doubt, contingent; their psychological component – the human ability to hate – is nothing but a condition in which historical (contextual) causes are allowed to operate. But a continuously targeted hatred, cutting through

4 This is analogous to the patently absurd scenario of a gazelle mentally debating whether the smell of a lion truly represents the lion's presence. As the introduction to the second edition of the Arabic translation of *Mein Kampf* made clear and as Nazi officials on numerous occasions explained to Arab diplomats, the term “antisemitism” and the corresponding sentiment applied only to Jews. See, *inter alia*, Bernard Lewis (posthumous), “The New Antisemitism: First Religion, Then Race, Then What?” *The American Scholar*, December 2005; Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

5 Indeed, the inability to distinguish between symbols and their referent (in distinction to signs and their referents, which are indistinguishable) is a symptom of psychotic disease. Far from being an expression of human animal nature, as presupposed by the idea of antisemitism as a variety of natural xenophobia, antisemitism belongs with varieties of mental diseases of *organically unknown origin*, such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, and milder expressions (at the time of Freud's popularity called “neuroses”) of their specter. The stubborn refusal of these obviously real diseases to reveal their biological causes, despite the enormous effort and money spent on research into them, means that their origins at least as well may be cultural – in agreement with the brief exposition above, namely, that these mental diseases are diseases of the mind, the cultural – symbolic, historical, mental – process on the individual level. See Liah Greenfeld, *Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience*, HUP, 2013.

particular historical contexts, while, perhaps, triggered (strengthened and activated) by historical contexts, is caused, and must be fully explained, psychologically. Its relevant historical context, or framework, includes all the particular historical contexts within which it occurs, depriving them of causal significance; it is the historical context which creates the specific psychological dynamic.

What are the psychological dynamics of a continuous targeted hatred? In my studies of nationalism, I was able to trace it to a *complex of collective inferiority*. Though always personally experienced, a continuous hatred which lasts for generations cannot be related to personal grievances or offences by particular individuals; it must derive from a grievance of a group against another group. It is necessarily irrational, not provoked by the threat to objective, i.e., actually entertained and empirically provable interests and attempts to realize them, because such interests change from generation to generation, as do the agents who oppose them. Nationalism, which was created as a result of an historical accident, a unique set of circumstances in England, that could not be replicated anywhere else, spread through importation, first, from England, then from societies that defined themselves as nations early in the process. (Thus, France imported its nationalism from England; Germany from France and England; Russia and numerous other societies from the generalized West.) Importer societies or their agents *chose* the source of importation as their model, an object of admiration deserving of imitation. Originally, they believed this source to be superior to themselves – and themselves, naturally, inferior to the source and in need of improvement through imitation – but were certain that they would a) soon become equal to, if not better than, their models and b) be admired by them for their efforts. As a rule, this optimistic anticipation was not fulfilled: equality proved impossible or at least was infinitely delayed, and, worse than that, the models might have regarded being imitated as a compliment to themselves but never thought much of the imitators' efforts. Thus, the imitators were left with the nagging sense of the ineradicable superiority of their models and insupportable, humiliating suspicion of their own permanent inferiority.

Under this emotional distress their initial admiration of the model gave way to a much less benign sentiment of envy – existential envy, that is, the envy of the model's existential significance which, by comparison, deprived the imitators' very existence of value. A powerful irritant, constantly rekindled by the model's presence, this envy poisoned them from within, festered, and turned to hatred. Actuated by hatred, they then transformed the model into the anti-model, ascribing to it as many vices as they previously discerned in its virtues and making the struggle against it a central orientation of their national consciousness. (The vices were likely to be the virtues turned upside down or, very often, the very vices they recognized in themselves, that originally made them feel inferior to the model.) Following Nietzsche and Scheller, I called this psychological syndrome *ressentiment*. In its nature it is not very different from the process triggered by (born of) "mimetic desire" which Rene Girard recognized in ancient Greek tragedy and used in the explanation of the centrality of violent sacrifice in the practice of Greek religion.<sup>6</sup> One does not have to see in "mimetic desire" a universal historical mechanism everywhere tying the sacred to violence (as Girard appears to argue) to appreciate the power of profound envy, necessarily based on the sense of inferiority, to generate hatred and violence. The connection between making a recognized superior one's model to imitate (thereby acknowledging one's inferiority), the frustration of the mimetic desire (to become the same as the model), the transformation of the model into the anti-model to be destroyed (to assuage this frustration), and violence, observed in such different historical contexts as Greek religion and tragedy, on the one hand, and the spread of nationalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries proves this power. In the case of the spread of nationalism, interestingly, *ressentiment* would be particularly lasting and pervasive when the material resources of the importing

6 Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, first published in French in 1972.

society encouraged it to compete with its model for dignity (standing in the world, international prestige) and it had no history of recognized cultural achievement prior to developing national consciousness. German, Russian, and Arab nationalisms clearly attest to this.

Jew-hatred, antisemitism, belongs to the same class of psychological phenomena. Motivated continuously and irrespective of the specific historical context by the sense of inferiority to Jews, existential envy of them, in contrast to common forms of hostility to the out-group, which are always context-dependent, antisemitism is irrational. As such it emerges only with the spread of Christianity beyond its original Jewish converts (Carroll, 2002; Fredriksen, 2014; Vinzent, 2020).<sup>7</sup> While anti-Zionism, demonstrably irrational as it is, is unquestionably an expression of antisemitism, Ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Hellenistic, and Roman hostility to the Jewish kingdoms and original territorial community is not. This ancient hostility was perfectly rational; it was a hostility to an enemy (however special because of its obdurate resistance)<sup>8</sup> which frustrated one's political interests, similar to the hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia and Ukraine, England and France, Greece and Persia, Athens and Sparta, Rome and Germania, Rome and Britannia, Rome and Gaul, etc. This fundamentally rational attitude does not merit being called antisemitism. Antisemitism does not result from any declared political (or economic) interest; the interest it expresses cannot be declared, because its very acknowledgment would prevent its realization (indeed, very often antisemitism goes against the antisemites' declared interests)<sup>9</sup>: it is a way to assuage the pain of the complex of inferiority which necessarily arises from comparing the antisemite's community (religious or political) to the Jews, a form of self-therapy which won't work if one understands its psychological roots (Aronson, 2006; Mosse, 2006).

It should be noted that rationally-motivated violence differs in kind from violence that is motivated irrationally. Violence accompanying rational (political) conflicts is *instrumental*, when the declared goal is achieved, it ceases. In modern warfare, the destruction of enemy combatants puts an end to the conflict. It is the efficiency of combat, not the suffering inflicted on the enemy, that is valued. Even regarding the enemy combatants, persuasion is preferred to killing. Even if killing is unavoidable, the speed, not cruelty of death is what matters (just as happens in the animal world: predators must eat – they kill as quickly as possible and do not torture their victims). Collateral damage, destruction of civilian lives, as a rule, is regretted. Even if intentionally pursued in the interest of persuasion, as in the bombing of Dresden or (however inexcusable) the Japanese cities, it is the speed of destruction, not the cruelty of the process that matters.

7 In the first two Christian centuries, with the overwhelming majority of Christians still Jews, antisemitism does not yet exist. The New Testament is no more an expression of antisemitism than the Hebrew Bible, although both provide "a gold mine" for future antisemites, for they represent a record of Jewish self-criticism and arguments, however passionate and acrimonious, of Jews against other Jews. See, among others, James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews, A History*, 2002; Paula Fredriksen, "Jewish Romans, Christian Romans, and the Post-Roman West: The Social Correlates of the *contra Iudaeos* Tradition," pp. 23-53 in I. S. Yuval and R. Ben-Shalom (eds.), *Conflict and Religious Conversation in Latin Christendom: Studies in Honor of Ora Limor*, 2014; Markus Vinzent, "'Christianity': A Response to Roman-Jewish Conflict," pp. 473-489 in Katell Berthelot (ed.), *Reconsidering Roman Power: Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Perceptions and Reactions*, 2020.

8 Vinzent, op. cit., writes: "The last of the Jewish revolts (132-135) ... was the bloodiest war ever waged by a Roman Emperor ... 'one of the most difficult 'police actions' of Rome.' [Dio Cassius noted] the losses on the Roman side which seem to have outweighed those of the Jews: 'Therefore Hadrian in writing to the senate did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, 'If you and your children are in health, it is well: I and the legions are in health.' ... [The suppression of the revolt was a defeat for the Romans.] The humiliation remained fresh in Roman memory." Pp. 475-476.

9 Diverting German trains needed to bring troops to the front during WWII to instead deliver Jewish children, women, and elderly to the gas chambers is only one well-known example of the irrationality of antisemitism. See, for instance, George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*; Shlomo Aronson, *Hitler, the Allies and the Jews*, CUP, 2006.

Not so with violence inspired by a psychopathology such as inferiority complex and the resulting *ressentiment*. In such a case violence, directed specifically at civilians irrespective of age or sex, who pose no objective threat to perpetrators whatsoever, is *expressive*, and the achievement of the declared military goal has virtually nothing to do with it. It can end only with the complete emotional relief (which it is its actual goal to provide) of those who initiate it. In its exercise cruelty, suffering inflicted on the victims before death, is more important than efficiency, even if, as in killing by gas, it is paid lip-service. Torture and humiliation of the defenseless victims, by starvation, transportation without water in packed cattle wagons, and beatings, by such senseless affronts as mandatory undressing before being put to death, all of which give the perpetrators the sense of superiority over the people in their power, are essential for this kind of violence.<sup>10</sup> The perpetrators *enjoy* what they do – they undoubtedly experience an influx of endorphins – which counteracts the disturbing sense of inferiority which turns them into violent haters – sadists<sup>11</sup> -- in the first place (Lobbestael, 2023). This violence, however, provides the perpetrators only temporary relief<sup>12</sup>, which is why it is constantly renewed. The continued collective existence itself of the victims (not to mention their successes) sustains the perpetrators' complex of inferiority, and nothing but extermination – ultimate humiliation of the object of their existential envy -- can relieve them permanently. Given this psychological, this *psychopathological*, nature of Jew-hatred, nothing but the disappearance of Jews from history as a recognizable group can lead to the disappearance of antisemitism.

Antisemitic expressive violence insists on presenting itself as defensive in a rational, instrumental way, a response to specific actions or threats of the Jews. These threats are always imaginary, reflecting cultural tropes -- be they deicide, financial control of the world, or settler colonialism -- not reality. In the modern era, these presumed crimes and dangers often take the form of actual schizophrenic delusions as in Hitler's literal conception of Jews as parasites, which his audience might have considered a metaphor but he most probably truly believed, or – fortunately private – psychotic fantasies of John Nash.

### ***Why Is There Antisemitism (Essay)***

Now we can tie all these historical, sociological, and psychological considerations together and, at last, explain antisemitism, answering the innocent question my Chinese erstwhile student asked and I found startling. It requires a true outsider's perspective to see that antisemitism runs like a red thread through the entire history of the cultural framework which

10 The symbol of the Holocaust and the measure of its crime is six million of the Jewish dead, a third of the Jewish people. However staggering the figure, this focus is misplaced. It is not the number of the killed, but the *targeted* killing of Jews, unrelated to any military objective, which makes the Holocaust genocide, but even the perpetration of the genocide is not the main reason for the unique horror of this historical event. The essence of the Holocaust is the diabolical cruelty of suffering intentionally caused to those who perished in it and those who survived it. It is this intentional and inventive infliction of suffering before and in the process of killing, the only purpose of which is to demonstrate the ability of the murderers to degrade their victims and feel superior to them, which makes the massacre of the 7<sup>th</sup> of October strictly comparable in its intention to the Holocaust.

11 Sadism – enjoyment of inflicting suffering on others – is recognized as a psychopathology (mental disturbance) since 1886, when it was analyzed as such by the German psychiatrist Richard Kraft-Ebbing. For a recent review see Lobbestael J., Slaoui G., Gollwitzer M., "Sadism and Personality Disorders," *Current Psychiatry Reports*, Nov. 2023, 25(11), 569-576.

12 The temporary, performative nature of the sense of superiority they experience vis-à-vis their victims is, among other things, expressed in the desire to leave a record of it for sharing with others – in photographs, videos, or (as happened on October 7) mobile phone calls in real time: "See, I actually did shoot, behead, torture Jewish children!" "We actually made naked Jewish women run to gas chambers in the snow," "Mommy, mommy, be proud of your son: I just killed ten defenseless Jews!"



unites all Western societies<sup>13</sup> – all societies, that is, that are Western from the point of view of China and India.

In the encompassing view of these two ancient civilizations, the West is composed, in the main, of Christianity and Islam, meaning that it is, in fact and as suggested in the brief discussion of civilizations in this essay, the monotheistic civilization. And a distinguishing feature of this civilization, uniting the many Christian and post-Christian, Muslim and post-Muslim societies despite their numerous differences, is antisemitism. Our socio-cultural world is based on monotheism. In other words, all of our civilization's creative qualities were conditioned, if not directly caused, by monotheism and would not be possible without it. This, in turn, means that it developed out of the Jewish civilization, which preceded its formation by some three thousand years<sup>14</sup> and was later incorporated in it, never losing its formative influence. Today the monotheistic civilization is shared by over 4 billion people, more than a half of the human population. If, to make calculations easier, we limit ourselves to 4 billion, 99,9605% of people the monotheistic civilization today contains (i.e., 4 billion minus 15 million Jews) are those for whom monotheism is not original, their own, but **borrowed**. It is still monotheism – the faith in One God, with everything that follows from such faith. But this God is borrowed from the Jews, and this is recognized in the Holy Scriptures (such as the Bible and the Quran) and by the faithful.

Borrowed monotheism inevitably leads to 1) the complex of religious inferiority and 2) existential envy – *ressentiment*, hatred -- towards the people whose God is borrowed/from whom God is borrowed. Antisemitism, in other words, is implicit in it. *Our civilization – the monotheistic civilization, almost entirely a civilization of borrowed monotheism – may be properly named the antisemitic civilization.*

As was noted above, it has been observed in widely divergent contexts that what Girard calls “mimetic desire” – a desire for making one's own an admired possession or quality of another and the choice of this other as a model for imitation – under certain conditions leads to the paradoxical transformation of the admiration into hatred and of the model into the anti-model. This happens when the appropriation of the desired possession or quality proves impossible and the model refuses the imitator recognition. Given that the imitator, by definition, regards oneself or one's group as inferior to the model (an individual or a group), the initial sense of inferiority develops into a self-destabilizing psychological complex and leads to *ressentiment*. The enormous creative potential of *ressentiment* on the group level – its ability to shape collective consciousness and orient action is clearly demonstrated in the history of nationalism, the development of collectivistic ethnic nationalism, specifically. An expression of the sense of inferiority by comparison to the model one (architects of an imported nationalism) wants to imitate, it is experienced as a feeling of existential envy, the desire for one's nation to replace/take the place of the initially admired other and, in full blossom, hatred which becomes built into the national identity and consciousness through the transvaluation, inversion of the borrowed values and the projection of one's originally unproblematically, and then only dimly, perceived vices onto the model turned anti-model. (That's why ethnic

13 Though a remarkably comprehensive historian, such as David Nirenberg (in *Anti-Judaism*, op. cit.), could reach this conclusion on a purely inductive basis.

14 Some historians point to the fact that, this early, Jewish monotheism was practiced rather inconsistently. This is so. It should be stressed that the behavior of a population is only one and not necessarily the most accurate marker of the character of a belief system, not even actual beliefs of a population would often accurately reflect it. Beliefs require articulation. Most people do not have articulate beliefs, unless they are spelled out in authoritative texts. A complex, elaborate belief system such as Jewish monotheism (which, among other things, encourages thinking and discourages ritualistic repetition that leads to the formation of tropes) must be codified in written language and transmitted over generations before it can be expected to be adequately attested to in widespread practice. In the sixth century BCE, such a codification of monotheism came into being in the Hebrew Bible. There it was: consistent monotheism, with a truly universal deity at its source, and the monotheistic image of reality.

nationalism, built on *ressentiment*, is so often exclusionary, encouraging the identification of nationalism as such as right-wing, the prime example being Germany).

The same psychological dynamic may be operative on the level above nationalism – that of civilization – when the first civilizational principles are borrowed and civilizational identity of the borrower by definition references the lender and is not self-sufficient. This makes the permanence and ubiquity of antisemitism within the monotheistic civilization – in which it has been operative -- understandable. Judaism is the foundation of the monotheistic (i.e. Western) civilization. The One God billions of Christians and Muslims worship is the Jewish God, the God of the Hebrew Bible, the Creator of and the central participant in the history of the Jewish people it depicts. The attention of Christians and Muslims is of necessity fixed on Jews<sup>15</sup>; their identity (as Christians and as Muslims) is not self-sufficient, it depends on a justification of their separation from Jews, on explaining why they (Christians and Muslims) – believers as they are in the Jewish God – are not Jews themselves. Psychologically, this cannot be explained by their being insufficiently good Jews, it must be explained by some egregious failing on the part of the Jews.<sup>16</sup>

The psychological problem in which Christianity and Islam find themselves as a necessary result of their acceptance of Jewish monotheism is dramatically magnified by to them undeniable God's choice of the Jews as His own people far ahead and above them. They know that, *in the eyes of God*, they are inferior to the Jews. God's obvious preference forever replays the parable of Cain and Abel for Christians and Muslims: they forever envy the Jews this preference and are forever doomed to seek the latter's perdition. *Lest they deny their own identity – they must be anti-Semitic*, in other words. Indeed, this is a sibling rivalry of sorts, on a very large scale: a futile and therefore endless competition for the love of the supremely important parent, once and for all given to the eldest child.

Of course, this is not the problem affecting the majority of Christians and Muslims: the vast majority are practicing their faith without ever giving thought to such questions or any doctrinal matter. This problem bothers only the small theologically-literate thinking elite. But it is this elite which spreads the word and, while doing so, creates *tropes* – the most important instrument of institutionalization. Whenever we speak of systemic or institutionalized this or that (e. g., in this country, we often speak of institutionalized racism), we do in fact speak of tropes which define our subconscious – i.e., not explicit – attitudes, attitudes we would in many cases explicitly deny, if asked point blank whether we subscribe to them. It is in this way that attitudes that become politically incorrect persist. And, obviously, the longer an attitude is transmitted through tropes, the deeper its institutionalization goes and the more it is resistant to the counteraction of newer institutions, such as new standards of political correctness, for instance. Within our, monotheistic, civilization antisemitism is the deepest embedded – the oldest, the strongest – institution, and, unfortunately, it cannot be said that in the past 2000 years it has often become politically incorrect.

### ***Tropes, Christianity and Islam*** (Reduced from the essay)

The rational interests, always produced by specific historical contexts, and therefore the specific historical contexts, whether social or textual, can only add to the description of the circumstances and manner in which antisemitism expressed itself in any particular episode; they do not help us to *understand* antisemitism. Antisemitism is explained by antisemites' emotional interests, that is, their unacknowledged psychological needs. That this is so is

15 That's why 2 billion 400 million people in our half of humanity actually think and have opinions about the tiny group of 15 million among them, while being unaware of much larger groups.

16 Which easily explains the obsession of the United Nations with Israel's iniquities.

demonstrated by the comparison of the Christian and Islamic antisemitic traditions. Different in every historical detail of the development of Jew-hatred in them, they are identical in its nature and expressions, down to specific tropes. This means that even looking for the origins of antisemitism in the entire cultural histories of these two great religions (namely, on the level of functionally-integrated systems of institutions – which is the highest, most general level on which history is practiced) is futile. Its psychological (psycho-historical) sources lie much deeper – on the level of civilizations. Jew-hatred is the core expression of the psycho-cultural dynamics of our, monotheistic, civilization in the framework of which both Christianity and Islam arose and have evolved. (For more details, read my article *A New Explanation of Antisemitism: Jew Hatred as a Civilizational Phenomenon*; Greenfeld, 2024).

### *Nationalism (Essay)*

And the rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the age-old religious consciousness among Europeans and people of European descent was replaced by the new secular consciousness – nationalism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it reached the world of the youngest monotheism as well and joined the religious consciousness, without replacing it, there. The appeal of nationalism within the monotheistic civilization was irresistible. At the core of the national consciousness was the vision of the social world as consisting of the natural sovereign communities of fundamentally equal members with a shared identity – *nations* – whose sovereignty and equality (implying democracy, incidentally) endowed the personal identities of their every member with dignity. Dignity, once tasted (or even sniffed in the wind), proved to be strongly addictive; its withdrawal, any threat to it would provoke a fierce reaction. Because their personal dignity derived from the membership in a nation, national populations developed deep commitment to the dignity – *international* prestige or standing – of the nation, and this being a relative good, changing with the standing of other nations, nationalism resulted in a constant, endless international competition for dignity in every possible sphere of life: economy, political influence, military prowess, women's beauty, sports, literature, music, and the measure of national intelligence – science. The society and politics nationalism created – modern society and politics – on both the individual and the collective levels are highly competitive and so, conflictual. The bone of contention in most of the conflicts on the individual level and in *all* modern conflicts on the collective level, whatever is their declared reasons, is dignity (Greenfeld, 1992, 2019).<sup>17</sup>

Jew-hatred has been the most characteristic and enduring institution of the monotheistic civilization, its distinguishing institution, since the separation of Christianity from Judaism in the early CE. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Germany, as mentioned earlier, it was re-named *antisemitism*. The new name signified the secularization of the old way of thinking and acting (i.e., of the old institution). Seamlessly, with all the tropes retained, religious Jew-hatred morphed into the national/racial Jew-hatred<sup>18</sup>, religious existential envy became national/racial existential envy, and sense of religious inferiority was replaced by the sense of national/racial inferiority. Nationalism secularized the thinking within monotheistic societies in the sense of focusing it (the same thinking) on this world. It dramatically reduced the significance of the transcendental in everyday life and made the collective aspects of the everyday (politics,

<sup>17</sup> On nationalism, see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Harvard University Press, 1992; *Nationalism: A Short History*, Brookings Institution Press, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Nationalism developed in three distinct types: individualistic-civic (with the original, English, case setting the example), collectivistic-civic (with the example set by France), and the most common type, the collectivistic-ethnic, or racial (with the paradigmatic examples set by Russia and Germany), *ibid*.

in particular) the sphere of the sacred. In this new, secular, form numerous central qualities of monotheistic consciousness – such as the belief in the unity of the world, universal values, insistence on uniformity, for instance -- were retained. But nationalism changed the specific image of both social and natural reality. As a result of the changed image of social reality, remarkably, both the complex of inferiority and the sentiment of existential envy became far more widespread than they ever were, now affecting not only the educated (who became much more numerous), but reaching every group in society. Every comparison was now invidious, and one could feel inferior to and envious of anybody. The targets of these emotions changed with circumstances, but whoever else targeted, the Jews invariably would be among them. They have remained *the focus of resentment*. Antisemitism, therefore, a thriving social institution as it was within the original religious framework because of the derivative nature of Christianity and Islam, with nationalism gained new vigor and entered the modern secular age as it were with a new lease on life. In its national/racial incarnation it continued as a truly popular -- ubiquitous and pervasive -- way of thinking and feeling.<sup>19</sup>

The arrival of nationalism brought religion down to earth, sacralizing the political sphere in particular, but barely touched anti-Jewish tropes, deriving from the relationship between God and communities of the faithful. New tropes appeared in Calvinist Protestantism, which encouraged the growth of the original, English, nationalism, and then of the American nationalism, directly issuing from the latter, such as the reference to Puritans as the "New Israel" or "New American Israel" and "all men are created equal." But they were not able to dislodge the old ones. Nevertheless, nationalism, which focused the attention on this, experiential, world and withdrew it from transcendental spheres, at least among those with any degree of modern secular education, changed the nature of antisemitism. From a fundamentally religious attitude it did transform into a fundamentally racial one. Antisemitism was, in fact, the very first form racism took. In the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, one of the earliest spokesmen for the yet unformed German people and the still less formed European unity, Herder, referred to Jews as "the Asiatic alien folk." Since Jewish "blood" did not naturally ooze from the European soil (as the blood of the forest-dwellers who converted to Christianity a thousand years after Jews created it presumably did), Jews evidently contributed nothing to the European culture – or civilization – which, it was felt at the time, was leading the cultural development (that is, development in the quality which made humans godlike, intelligence) of humanity. This, in turn, contributed to the emergence of the modern Greek myth – the conviction that the source of Western civilization (its fundamental values, its ways of thinking) was Ancient Greece, that Homer, not the Hebrew Bible, was its foundational text.

Wilhelm Marr, the inventor of the new name for the old sentiment of Jew-Hatred, was a "progressive" and the "Anti-Semitic League" he founded, the first explicitly anti-Jewish *political* organization, was socialist in its general character. Soon other German socialists, including

19 In her speech on the receipt of the Moral Courage Award (May 4, 2006), Ayaan Hirsi Ali said to her Jewish audience: "I used to hate you.... When we had no water, I thought you closed the tap....If my mother was unkind to me, I knew you were definitely behind it. If and when I failed an exam, I knew it was your fault. You are by nature evil, you had evil powers and you used them for evil ends. Learning to hate you was easy. Unlearning it was difficult." This is an example of antisemitism generated by Islamic antisemitic tropes, but clearly modernized and applied to experiences of someone living in a secular world. It is very likely that American students expressing hatred of their Jewish schoolmates these days are similarly programmed. Generally dissatisfied with their lives, stressful, competitive, and meaningless as they are, insecure and confused in their sense of self, and unsure to what to attribute their feeling of malaise, they find a relieving certainty in connecting it to the Jews – by definition representatives of evil in the world. Tropes preclude thinking; they simply press the correct buttons; they always make sense. The old Soviet "Armenian Radio" joke reports the following question and answer exchange between a member of the audience and a radio host: "Listener: Who is responsible for the silting of Lake Baikal? --- Radio host: Jews and cyclists. --- Listener: Why cyclists?" Hearing "cyclists" is unexpected; one must think about it. But it makes perfect sense that Jews are responsible for the silting of Lake Baikal.

Jews, were heard to define antisemitism as “the socialism of the uncouth (*dummen Kerls*).” They did not judge these “*dummen Kerls*” too harshly as, apart from antisemitism (forgivable on the account of their lack of sophistication), their heart was obviously in the right place – namely, on the left. National Socialists were to carry the torch half a century later; socialists too, though on the right, they gave nationalism a bad name that has lasted much longer than the opprobrium which, by association with them, for a short time was attached to antisemitism.

Turned political with nationalism, antisemitism found welcome on the left as well as on the right; it was at home, therefore, everywhere in the modern politics. What, besides social inertia -- that is, the self-perpetuation of 2000-year-old anti-Semitic tropes or systemic, institutionalized antisemitism – explains this? Was there a cause that activated these conditions? Indeed, there was: it was the envy of Jewish achievement in modern societies.

Perhaps the greatest representative of this achievement, Albert Einstein, thought an old fable threw “into bold relief the mainsprings of political anti-Semitism.” The fable told of a shepherd boy who counselled the horse: “You are the noblest beast that treads the earth. You deserve to live in untroubled bliss; and indeed your happiness would be complete were it not for the treacherous stag. But he practiced from youth to excel you in fleetness of foot. His faster pace allows him to reach the water holes before you do. He and his tribe drink up the water far and wide, while you and your foal are left to thirst,” and the horse was “blinded by envy and hatred of the stag” (Einstein, 1960). For Einstein, the stag in this fable represented Jews, the horse common anti-Semites, and the shepherd boy the ideological, intellectual anti-Semitic leadership.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, we did too well, we excelled. Of course, in every nation, the overwhelming majority of the successful have always been non-Jews, but the very Jewishness of the Jews made them more visible. Here we were, a small minority struggling against all sorts of discrimination and difficulties, ending on top. The fact that so many of us could not beat the odds, were exhausted by the need to always do uphill battle, and settled for much less, the fact that the overwhelming majority of Jews in Eastern Europe (home to the majority of the world’s Jews, when Einstein had this conversation) were so poor that the only success they could contemplate was having enough bread to feed their children from day to day would be disregarded,<sup>21</sup> and only the Einsteins and the Rothschilds were seen (Londres, 2017). We were surely treacherous stags, controlling the world, exercising our well-known “deadly dominion” over it. Our obvious control of the world and evil powers made things easy for us, which were difficult for everyone else. Therefore, our success was no reason for admiration, it was unfair, to be detested. In accordance with the new image of reality, however, it was no longer a result of a Satanic pact. Rather, our superiority (evil because it made the rest of the world feel bad) was innate – racial.

Invidious comparisons necessitated by nationalism could be more or less destabilizing to an identity in relation to the extent they threatened one’s dignity or were humiliating. Some Jewish achievement, therefore, has been harder to bear than others. Here is an illuminating exchange of comments to the already mentioned Russophone vlog by Kukuha, “Why everyone hates Jews.” A popular answer among the non-antisemitic minority (43%) among the audience of the vlog was that Jew-hatred was caused by envy resulting from the unflattering to Gentiles interpersonal competition with Jews. In particular, competition in intelligence would have this effect, consistently proving Gentiles to be inferior in regard to a natural quality directly affecting dignity. Someone calling himself “Grandpa Kabayev,” began by quoting Churchill: “We have no antisemitism [in England] because [the English] do not consider Jews to be

20 Albert Einstein, “Why do they hate the Jews?” (From *Collier’s Magazine*, New York, November 26) 1938), pp. 191-194 in *Ideas and Opinions by Albert Einstein*, Crown Publishers, 1960.

21 See Albert Londres (a non-Jew), *The Wondering Jew Has Arrived*, originally published in French in 1930, for descriptions of crushing poverty of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe in 1929.

more intelligent" and continued: "Gumiliov has shown that at the root of Jew-hatred [you find] purely economic reasons. Wherever a Jewish community would appear the indigenous population won't be able to compete with it. In the spheres of finance, commerce, numerous crafts. For reference: how many non-Jews are there among world champions in chess?" The comment is met with an explosion of reactions, among which there is one by Khiomi Redmi: "Because they are crooks. [In his autonomous republic there is a saying:] an adulterer and a thief have a long tongue [speaks well]. You will never change. But you will have to get out of Palestine." Grandpa Kabayev is surprised: "Who – 'we'? I am Russian [i.e., not a Jew] and live close to Moscow. Don't see Palestine in the vicinity." A certain Valeriy Krylov interferes: "Read Gogol, Dostoyevsky and a number of other classical [authors] you'll find Judeophobes." Grandpa answers: "Yes. All because of envy. I love sports, have experience with athletics and a bit with chess. People do not take offense if they lose in some sport competition. But [when it comes to] chess... [he stops in mid-sentence]... And all because nothing is more offensive than to recognize that you are stupider [than someone]. [If someone is] stronger, faster, more precise [this is] bullshit. But more intelligent! This is intolerable." It is fortunate that for most people Nobel prizes mean nothing. There is no more impressive measure of intelligence in our world. The realization that 0.2% of the world population – the "vilest," the "filthiest," and "denied high mental qualities" 0.2% -- represent 22% of the most intelligent people in the world, carrying more than one hundred times in intelligence its numerical weight in the human race, would hurt like a bad toothache. As it is, most antisemites envy the Jews just their economic and professional success. The visible existence of successful Jews even in these mundane areas (which, of course, proves the pernicious Jewish materialism and "fleshiness") humiliates them. It also by association with the Jews delegitimizes the areas in which Jews are successful. Thus, the disrepute of capitalism in many circles, and the condemnation of anti-capitalism, Bolshevism, for instance, in many others – or, as it was so emphatically demonstrated in Germany, of both in the very same circles, contradiction notwithstanding.

In the middle of the 20th Germany perpetrated the Holocaust and the rest of the monotheistic world, being profoundly anti-Semitic, acquiesced in it, not moving a finger to save



Figure 1. Photographs Depicting the Holocaust

the 6 million human beings -- men, women, babies -- who perished in it or to spare some suffering to those who lost everything but survived. (Needless to say, we must be eternally grateful to those exceptional few who did not acquiesce.) After the Holocaust, explicit anti-semitism was for a while banished from polite society in Europe and America. The calls to kill the Jews remained completely acceptable in the Muslim world and have been repeatedly acted upon in the new nations formed in the aftermath of WWII, where they continue to serve as a rallying cry in the absence of any other unifying cause. These anti-Semitic calls and corresponding persecution of Jews have been by and large responded to by dead silence on the part of the arguably more “advanced” nations whose heritage is Christian and who invited the Muslim nations to join them in the United Nations, founded with a declared goal to prevent another Holocaust.

Originally “United Nations” was the name given to themselves by the Allies who fought the Axis powers, especially United States and Britain, which they then bequeathed to the larger representative body. In these original united nations explicit antisemitism was in the very early years no longer tolerated after the Holocaust, and on both sides of the Iron Curtain which soon separated them. When inexplicit, however, it remained alive and well even there and then. (It is not surprising that it persisted behind the Iron Curtain: there this could be regarded as part of the totalitarian wickedness. But it is amazing, in fact, how much of it one saw, if one bothered to look, in the leading Western democracies even before the beginning of the first post-war decade of 1950s.) Nevertheless, the name of the old hostility, obstinately seeking expression, had to change. Therefore, it did. Both in the Soviet Union and in the Free World, joined with it in the new Cold War, Jew-hatred now presented itself as anti-Zionism. The bright idea to cover the despicable prejudice based on envy with the noble progressive concern for the rights of the downtrodden and opposition to imperialism (“bourgeois” in Soviet rhetoric, “white” in that of the Free World) certainly worked and Jew-hatred was made legitimate again. It would work particularly well among the educated, Einstein’s “shepherd boys”: the uneducated anti-Semites, not being sticklers for rules of etiquette, had no need for new fancy names. It could be said that, just as antisemitism was earlier the socialism of the uncouth, anti-Zionism was now the antisemitism of the sophisticated.

Israel became the treacherous stag, hated for its agility, for its excellence. This is understandable, it has been eminently provoking. A wonder to the world, which transformed into a flourishing garden a worthless spot of empty land, thrown to its half a million of pre-independence residents (many of them teenage Holocaust survivors just out of the death camps and off the boat) as a dry bone to a dying dog by the largesse of the United Nations, is envied for drying pestilential swamps, near which no one lived and irrigating desert where nothing grew before, for raising a global city out of nothing, for emerging in barely one human lifespan as one of the most vibrant societies on the planet. Its astonishing victories over the armies of surrounding states, dozens of times exceeding it in population and resources, which attacked it upon the declaration of independence, and then again and again and again, irritate Western elites, from the start reconciled to the inevitable destruction of this remnant of the Jewish people, already bled dry by the Holocaust, and is taken by them as an insult to common sense and public opinion. How dare these Jews emerge even from this bloodletting successful?! Even the Holocaust becomes an object of envy. The enormity of the disaster magnifies the greatness of Israel’s achievement. To the envious this is intolerable – to diminish the achievement, the Holocaust must be trivialized, if not denied outright. Now everyone claims to have a holocaust and every form of group discrimination (so long as it is not discrimination against Jews) is compared to the Holocaust. In a cynical reversal of logic, because the Holocaust was a cause for a group grievance, every cause for a group grievance, however trivial, is equated with the Holocaust. In a further twist of resentful “transvaluation of values” Israel is presented as the perpetrator of the Holocaust of Palestinian Arabs. The logic: Nazi death camps served them

well, those Jews, and we were absolutely right to remain indifferent to their (likely pretended) plight, after all, they are worse than Nazis themselves, just look at the condominiums they erect in the territories they got back from the Arabs who legitimately seized them during their first legitimately aggressive attack on this white imperialist state in 1948. Off with their heads. It is under this anti-Zionist guise that antisemitism plays today across campuses in the USA and the rest of the "free world."

As to the Muslim world, the very idea of the Jewish state, not to speak of its repeatedly demonstrated superiority – military, economic, cultural -- is Nakba.<sup>22</sup> Inability to assure the perpetual humiliation of the Jews equals intolerable humiliation for Muslims, in whose identity religious elements now are mixed with racial ones. Abul A'la al-Maududi, characterized as "the most systematic thinker of modern Islam" explains: Jews must exist in the state of submission. "The purpose for which the Muslims are required to fight is ... to put an end to their sovereignty and supremacy." The *umma* remains determined, as we constantly learn. "The prophet Muhammad warned us against these people," repeats the former Jordanian MP Muhammad Tu'mah Al-Qudah on October 30, 2019. "The Koran (5:82) says: 'You shall find the people strongest in enmity towards the believers to be the Jews...' Every Muslim should read this verse. Every Muslim should memorize it and carve it onto his mind and his heart... (Our) enmity toward the Jews will never end. It will continue until the Dajjal arrives and the Jews are annihilated in the Great Battle, which will take place in the Levant, in our own land, against the Jews. The enmity between us and the Jews will never cease because it is ideological... The regimes of the world can sign agreements and peace accords with the Jews, but the people curse the Jews whenever they recite the (opening) Al-Fatiha chapter (i.e., the 7<sup>th</sup> verse, 1:7) in the Koran" (Bostom, 2008; Wikipedia contributors, 2024).<sup>23</sup>

In the modern period, secularization of the reasons for which Jews are envied and hated, and of Jews themselves (now regarded as a race), and universalization/democratization of envy because of nationalism, intensifies, radicalizes, and dramatically extends the reach of antisemitism, which, in distinction to the premodern Jew-hatred that in principle could be assuaged by conversion, can be mollified only by the physical destruction. Antisemitism is a built-in, inherent, central and defining strand of the existential make-up of the monotheistic civilization and remains as important an excitant for thinking and acting today as it was in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, when it spurred on theological cogitations which created tropes that lodged themselves in the consciousness of the masses. Now, it galvanizes politics. Antisemitism is common to all the constituent parts of this civilization, uniting Christianity and Islam, otherwise opposed to each other, rival denominations of Christianity and conflicting interpretations of Islam, and, upon secularization, the contradictory, left and right, political persuasions.

In the Holocaust this civilization committed the horrific crime of parricide. The guilt was profound and widespread. But, in the attempt to cope with it, rather than face it as what this greatest crime in the history of humanity was and repent for what it was – the crime against the Jews, it allowed this patently antisemitic atrocity to be misrepresented and covered up as a paradigmatic example of the imaginary tendency of "natural xenophobia" – what humans do to other humans. The world was divided into the humans likely to be naturally xenophobic (white, of European descent, modern, enjoying the benefits of capitalist economy) in whose evil company Jews were before long included, and the "other humans" – darker in skin tone, poorer, generally lower on the scale of socio-economic development but "closer to nature" – who were imagined and rapidly came to imagine themselves as the natural victims of xenophobia. So divided, the monotheistic civilization proceeded to shred itself into pieces in a

22 Abu Bakr, op. cit.

23 Mawdudi's gloss on Q. 9:29 from his *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, vol. 3, pp. 201-202 is reproduced in Bostom, *Legacy*, op. cit., p. 42.



mad, unnecessary internecine war of all against all. It has lost all of its creative potential, all of its justification for being, it is ignominiously biting the dust.

The only chance to save it is to come to grips with antisemitism as the distinguishing characteristic of the monotheistic civilization. It must be at last extracted from the neural stores of unexamined memory where it has been lodged by millennia-old tropes and made a subject of open public discussion. It must be analyzed and its root in the existential envy of the Jews, that is, in the felt, constantly experienced inferiority of Jew-haters, exposed. Perhaps then, shamed, this civilization would be able to rebuild on cleansed foundations.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### References

- Aronson, S. (2006). *Hitler, the allies, and the Jews*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bostom, A. S. (Ed.). (2008). *Legacy of jihad: Islamic holy war and the fate of non-Muslims* (p. 42). Prometheus Books. (Original work by Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, vol. 3, pp. 201-202).
- Carroll, J. (2002). *Constantine's sword: The church and the Jews, A History*. Mariner Books
- Einstein, A. (1960). Why do they hate the Jews? In *Ideas and opinions* (pp. 191-194). Crown Publishers. (From *Collier's Magazine*, November 26, 1938)
- Fredriksen, P. (2014). Jewish Romans, Christian Romans, and the post-Roman West: The social correlates of the contra Iudaeos tradition. In I. S. Yuval & R. Ben-Shalom (Eds.), *Conflict and religious conversation in Latin Christendom: Studies in honor of Ora Limor* (pp. 23-53). Brepols Publishers
- Greenfeld, L. (1992). *Nationalism: Five roads to modernity*. Harvard University Press.
- Greenfeld, L. (2013). *Mind, modernity, madness: The impact of culture on human experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Greenfeld, L. (2019). *Nationalism: A short history*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Greenfeld, L. (2024). A new explanation of antisemitism: Jew hatred as a civilisational phenomenon. *Israel Affairs*, 30(4), 579–599. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2024.2367877>
- Herf, J. (2009). *Nazi propaganda for the Arab world*. Yale University Press.
- Lewis, B. (2005, December 1). The new antisemitism: First religion, then race, then what? *The American Scholar*. <https://theamericanscholar.org/the-new-anti-semitism/>
- Lobbestael, J., Slaoui, G., & Gollwitzer, M. (2023). Sadism and personality disorders. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 25(11), 569-576.
- Londres, A. (2017). *The wandering Jew has arrived* (original work published 1930). Gefen Publishing House.
- Mosse, G. (2006). *The crisis of German ideology*.
- Robb, K. (2019). Xenia, hiketeia, and the Homeric language of morals: The origins of Western ethics. In W. Wians (Ed.), *Logoi and muthoi: Further essays in Greek philosophy and literature* (pp. [page numbers]). SUNY Press.

Vinzent, M. (2020). 'Christianity': A response to Roman-Jewish conflict. In K. Berthelot (Ed.), *Reconsidering Roman power: Roman, Greek, Jewish, and Christian perceptions and reactions* (pp. 473-489). Publications de l'École française de Rome

Wikipedia contributors. (2024, December 18). *Abul a'la Maududi*. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul\\_A%27la\\_Maududi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_A%27la_Maududi)

### **Author Biograthy**

**Dr. Liah Greenfeld** is a Professor of Sociology, Political Science and Anthropology at Boston University. She has a PhD in Sociology of Art from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and has taught Sociology in several American universities, including Harvard, Chicago and MIT. Since the publication of her book *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Harvard University Press, 1992), Greenfeld has become an essential reference in the field of nationalism studies. She has continued her research with *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (Harvard University Press, 2001), winner of the Donald Kagan Best Book in European History Prize. A third book, *Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience* (Harvard University Press, 2013), closes this trilogy on the political, economic and psychological aspects of modern culture. A collection of essays constituting an introductory reader on Greenfeld's theses has been published in Catalan (*Nacionalisme i modernitat*, Editorial Afers, 1999). Her most recent book, *Pensar con libertad. Mi visión de Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Ben-David, Shils, Aron, Bell y Gellner* (Thinking Freely: My View of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Ben-David, Shils, Aron, Bell and Gellner), has been published in Spanish by Arpa Editores (2016).

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC4.0) which allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.