

IS 'NEW' ANTI-SEMITISM REALLY 'NEW'?

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ABSTRACT The paper considers whether the 'new' anti-Semitism identified by, for example, Bauer, Pipes and Sacks is in fact a new phenomenon. It considers several key moments in the history of anti-Semitism, together with a series of meetings facilitated by Volkan between psychotherapists affected by the Holocaust. The conclusion is that the 'new' manifestations are 'old' processes reactivated in new contexts. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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Does the term 'new' anti-Semitism signal the emergence of a 'new' category or dimension in the age-old phenomenon of anti-Semitism, or is it merely a variation on the familiar theme of Jew hatred transposed to the twenty-first century?

To answer this pressing question I provide 'snapshots' of key moments in the history of anti-Semitism, intertwined with my family history, to search for precedents to 'newness'. My method is to search for a better understanding of the source of 'newness' in these events. After reflection on the events, my initial impressions suggest that a 'new' face of anti-Semitism depends, to a large degree, on the level to which we take the analysis.

For example, the Dreyfus case, to which I'll return, appears to qualify as a benchmark for 'new' anti-Semitism. As reported, the fraudulent charges, sophisticated levels

of collusion at the highest levels of public office, the false conviction of the French army officer, evidenced 'new' parameters in the history of Jew hatred. Yet, deeper analysis, set against the historical landscape of anti-Semitism spanning from Biblical to modern times, reveals a simple repeating pattern of attitudes and behaviour. From this perspective, the Dreyfus case seemed 'new' only by virtue of the 'new' context, 'Enlightened Europe'.

Judged against 'contextual' criteria other 'new' faces of anti-Semitism also become less novel. Is it possible that most cases of 'new' anti-Semitism merely expressed Jew-hatred in a new political, cultural or economic context? The German psychiatrist Karl Birnbaum (1878–1950) critically distinguished between 'pathogenesis' and 'pathoplasty' when looking at disease: the former related to the way a disease devel-

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oped, its *cause*; the latter, the way a disorder or a disease was expressed, its *form*.

Applying such a distinction is critical to the study of anti-Semitism as it discriminates between new 'form' and new 'cause' and leaves only one genuine 'new cause' in anti-Semitism, the Holocaust. That event expressed a 'new cause' that Yehuda Bauer defined as an unprecedented event in the expression of anti-Semitism.

A caveat: we need to acknowledge the complex relationship between the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. Over 40 paradigms have been proposed for the explicability of the Holocaust, some not crediting anti-Semitism with a central role.

I find Yehuda Bauer's (2001) explication of the complex relationship between anti-Semitism and the Holocaust most persuasive with the necessary and sufficient conditions for anti-Semitism's central role in the Holocaust. As a member of the generation George Steiner called 'post-Auschwitz *homo sapiens*' I find it necessary to rethink contemporary anti-Semitism in the light of Steiner's acute observation that after the evidence of

the photographs of the sea of bones and gold fillings, of children's shoes and hands leaving a black claw-mark on oven walls, [we] *have altered our sense of possible enactments*. Hearing whisperings out of hell again we would know how to interpret the code; the skin of our hopes has grown thinner. (Steiner, 1967, 183, my emphasis)

To consider seriously the implications of Steiner's observation of 'altered sense of possible enactments', the post-Auschwitz *homo sapiens* generation confronts a new humanity. Our generation's consciousness with our altered sense of awareness, our altered state of being, alerts us to the possibilities of enactments of a 'new' hatred that compels us to rethink anti-Semitism. Dr Natan Kellerman coined the term 'uncon-

ditional hatred' (Kellerman, 2005) to describe a hatred that cannot be eradicated from the mind of the anti-Semite by application of logic, reason or appeal to humanitarian values. In light of this we ask: how valid is the claim that in our post Holocaust world we are experiencing a 'new' anti-Semitism?

WHAT IS 'NEW' IN THE 'NEW' ANTI-SEMITISM?

Daniel Pipes' article titled *The New Anti-Semitism* (Pipes, 1997) alerted us to the striking and unrecognized patterns of anti-Semitism: first, the shift in the epicentre of anti-Jewish speech and action from the Christian to the Muslim world; second, 'and even more ominous: even in the predominantly Christian countries of Europe and the Americas, Muslims today increasingly carry the banner of anti-Semitism and constitute a physical threat to Jews.' He concluded that several implications followed: the need to recognize that American Jewish organizations need to respond to this fundamental demographic shift and prepare to allocate adequate resources and policies directed at not legitimating 'their own worst enemies' fundamentalist Islamic groups.

In contrast to Dr Pipes, Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks (2005) in his lecture to the Inter-Parliamentary Committee against Antisemitism delivered on 28 February 2002, posed a less definitive question with alarm:

What we are witnessing today is the second great mutation of antisemitism in modern times, from racial antisemitism to religious anti-Zionism (with the added premise that all Jews are Zionists) . . . The mutation is this: that the worst crimes of antisemites in the past – racism, ethnic cleansing, attempted genocide, crimes against humanity – are *now attributed to Jews and the state of Israel, so that if you are against Nazism, you must ipso facto be utterly opposed to Jews.*

His reaction: 'I regard this as one of the most blasphemous inversions in the history of the world's oldest hate. I am shocked that so few non-Jews in Europe have recognized it and denounced it.'

I find this trend abhorrent too. But my surprise, with all due respect to Rabbi Sacks, is not because so few non-Jews in Europe recognize or speak against this turn of event; rather that there are not more who publicly support this perverse view.

It is incumbent on the 'post-Auschwitz *homo sapiens*' to rethink and redefine the boundaries of human capacities to enact Jew hatred. From this position, I restate my initial question: Does the term 'new anti-Semitism', defined by either Daniel Pipes or Rabbi Sacks signal a 'new' mutation or shift, *after the Holocaust*, in the age-old phenomenon of anti-Semitism or is it merely a variation on the theme of Jew hatred transposed to the twenty-first century?

My thesis is that *after the Holocaust* the familiar state of mind that enacted patterns of 'old' anti-Semitism can be fully understood only by accommodating a previously neglected dimension of human behaviour: the 'irrationality' of emotions, like 'unconditional hatred'. Precisely because such emotions are deemed 'irrational' I consider it essential to include them in any serious analysis of anti-Semitism, 'old' or 'new', as I hope to show.

Why anti-Semitism is so resistant to rational analysis is precisely because a restricted rational analysis ignores the dimension of the emotional irrationality and its defences. Irrational states of mind comprise that complex psychological mental maze people enter to cover up the taboo of the socially unacceptable anti-Semitic motive: to wilfully, intentionally exterminate Jewish men, women and children, for the sole reason that they are Jews. In cultures where systems of law and justice set

standards to regulate human behaviour, such statements of intent, deeply rooted in non-rational psychological processes are deemed, at least, to be 'politically incorrect', possibly in breach of the law.

I now turn to outline briefly the historical persistence of murderous intent driving Jew-hatred from the era of Biblical *anti-Jewish* pogroms, through the phase of European *anti-Semitic* Enlightenment to current *anti-Zionist* policies. Just below the surface of public discourse, a common thread persists: the threat of, or actual, murder of Jews in the Diaspora and Israel.

In my paper, I trace this thread, from the first enactment of anti-Jewish policy perpetrated by the Egyptians, recorded in the Bible. That '*anti-Jewish*' attitude legitimized murdering Jewish male babies. Centuries later, following the birth of Christianity, *anti-Semitic* theologically based attacks culminated in the twentieth-century Holocaust. I will argue that today's so-called 'new' anti-Semitism, along with aspects of *anti-Zionism*, shares a core feature with the 'old' anti-Jewish attitude: to implement policies directed at killing Jews.

HISTORICAL 'SNAPSHOTS'

International lawyer, human rights activist and Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz observed that people of 'every race, religion, geographical area, political leaning, gender, and age' are well known anti-Semites. He suggests that the reason

probably lies more in the realm of abnormal psychology than in any rational attempt to find understandable causes in the history, politics, or economics. Anti-Semitism is a disease of the soul, and diseases are best diagnosed by examining those infected with them. (Dershowitz, 1991, 102)

As a psychiatrist I'm not qualified to assess disorders of the soul. But my professional

focus on abnormal psychology offers relevant insights to the shadow side of human nature, the psychopathology of the individual or collective human psyche. That perspective informs my considerations when I reflect on the question: 'is 'new' anti-Semitism really 'new'?'

I state my conclusion at the start. Whether a 'new' anti-Semitism operates today depends on whether we accept a surface analysis or decide to grapple with deeper truths. The latter demands that we uncover the source of anti-Semitism in the inner recesses of the psyche. Choosing the latter confronts us with irrational, unconditional hatred and the mental mechanisms involved in its denial. That the deception of self and others includes denial of murderous intent and/or action, how non-rational systems of belief persist and how they are passed on from generation to generation. I hope to shed light on how the anti-Semitic mantra comes to repeat the same

tiresome litany – the Jew as fiend, the Jew as conspirator, the Jew as a canker, exploitative, amoral, depraved and always foreign – in short, all that led Hannah Arendt to identify anti-Semitism as 'an outrage to common sense'. (Kuttner, 2001)

With this background, I turn to a series of 'snapshots' to make the case that while the surface features of anti-Semitism through the ages seem to vary greatly, its deep structure is remarkably constant: kill the Jews.

CASE 1

The first instance in the history of what has become the familiar pattern of anti-Semitism stated: the Jews are too dangerous to keep and they are too important to lose. So '... Pharaoh proposed a solution. He will harness the Jews by enslaving them, so that the state will benefit from their talents without fear

that they will desert the country' (Scherman and Zlotowitz, 1994, 203).

Pharaoh's treacherous solution to the 'Jewish problem' was to deceive the Jews into showing their patriotism by building cities to safeguard the country's wealth. The Midrash teaches that Pharaoh set an example by joining the labour force to symbolize that everyone must help Egypt in its time of need. Once the Jewish volunteers were mobilized – figuratively donning their own chains – it was an easy next step to enslave them (Scherman and Zlotowitz, 1994, 203).

To understand Pharaoh's mindset, the Bible's commentary on his psychological profile fits the classic construct of what today we call the 'corporate psychopath'. Where Pharaoh sees a profit, he negotiates with Moses and Aaron, agrees to all terms and conditions, anything to assuage them, to clinch the deal. When they no longer serve his purpose, without a trace of remorse, his promise is null and void.

CASE 2

In the Christina era, 'new' labels described the emerging discrimination that covered up Jew hatred. In the fourth century, with Christianity as the official religion, 'theological anti-Judaism devolved into more generalised economic, political, and social stigmatisation and discrimination against the Jews. The Code of Justinian, enacted in 534 A. D., curtailed Jewish freedom of worship, banned Jews from holding public office, and divested them of most property rights' (Dershowitz, 1991, 102).

CASE 3

'Emancipation' and 'Enlightenment'

Moving from the 'classic' theological' anti-Jewishness to the 'new' era of French emancipation, Voltaire's famous declaration in 1761 ushered in a 'new' era:

When the society of man is perfected . . . the number of the Jews will necessarily diminish. The rich among them are already beginning to detest their superstitions; theirs will be no more than the lot of people with their arts and laws who, no longer able to enrich themselves through our negligence, will no longer be able to sustain a separate society, and who . . . ignorant even of their own books, will assimilate among the scum of other peoples. (Sacks, 1991, 203)

According to Rabbi Sacks this attitude was the secularized equivalent of an ancient Christian belief that Jews will ultimately disappear as a separate people.

A century later, in Europe, there were 'new' developments with the formation of anti-Jewish political parties in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia and of course, France. Dershowitz (1991, 109) highlights the names of parties that became euphemisms for 'no Jews allowed': 'Christian-Socialist', 'Catholic People's Party', 'Christian Democratic Movement'.

The more things change . . . new names, new participants, new groups: moderates, radicals, right and left, revisionists and anti-revisionist all engaged in campaigns and policies followed with zeal – to what end?

CASE 4

How Alfred Dreyfus, the man, the case and the affair, came to be accused, 'tried' and sentenced by a court martial is a dramatic story in itself. I use that historical 'case study' as irrefutable evidence of the continuity of anti-Semitism and ask: was there anything 'new' in that episode of anti-Semitism?

In *J'Accuse*, Emile Zola observed that the layers of preconceived ideas that the judges brought with them to the judges' bench was of course as follows:

'Dreyfus was sentenced for treason by a court martial, therefore he is guilty; and we, as a court

martial, cannot find him innocent. Now, we know that if we recognize Esterhazy's guilt we will be proclaiming Dreyfus's innocence.' And nothing could make them budge from that line. (Quoted in Burns, 1999, 99)

This pattern of accusation, a case based on preconceived guilt, involves a familiar process. For justice to be perverted on such a scale requires complicity by parts of the government, judiciary, civil and military, media, and the intellectuals. Is there anything 'new' in this case of anti-Semitism?

On the surface, it may seem 'new'. Dreyfus, supported through his long battle waged by his devoted brother, and some tenacious supporter, was eventually vindicated. Looking some decades ahead, how did Dreyfus' family fare? Did his experience lead to improved understanding and reconciliation, a better world for his descendants, the third generation?

Dreyfus' only crime was to be Jewish at the turn of the century in France. After his 'acquittal' of the fabricated crime of treason, his real crime, being a Jew, seems to have persisted through the generation, transmitted to his granddaughter, Madeleine. She was very close to Alfred Dreyfus during his twilight years, accompanied him to movie theatres and stamp collecting booths near the Champs-Élysées. Her fate?

Madeleine was denounced by French collaborators and sent by the Gestapo to her death at Auschwitz (Burns, 1999, 187–8).

CASE 5

Is the 'new' anti-Semitism really 'new' in the case of the Holocaust denier David Irving? His claims were exposed in the British courtrooms in 1995, then regarded as a 'new' legal case. The case depended on the need to defend the truth and reality of the Holocaust in a court of law.

Irving's claim ran the lines that the gas chambers at Auschwitz were 'a Disneyland

for tourists' and that more people died in the back seat of 'Senator Kennedy's car at Chapapaquidik than died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz' (Lipstadt, 1993, 2001). Is this a 'new' anti-Semitism or merely the same millennial mindset of anti-Semitism's shifting focus on a 'current' context of Holocaust denial?

CASE 6

A personal matter.

The 'crime' of being a Jew also impacted on another girl, Samuel Klein's daughter, Zsuzsi Klein, born 1936 in Budapest. Who killed her in 1944? Why did she die? Zsuzsi's crime, like Madelaine's, was that she was a Jew.

I am the grandson of Samuel Klein. Like Dreyfus' granddaughter, I also committed a crime of being born a Jew, like my aunt Zsuzsi who was one of the one-and-a-half million children killed in the Holocaust. I have the legacy and good fortune that my Holocaust survivor parents decided to escape from Hungary during the 1956 Revolution. For many years I did not realize that I had been carrying a family 'crime'. Have I inherited that potentially lethal condition? Is it still a crime to be a Jew in the modern world?

Emil Fackenheim noted in another context the German saying '*Wo kein Kläger, ist kein Richter*' – without an accuser there is no judge (Fackenheim, 1994, 224). I today stand to declare '*J'accuse*', 60 years later, you who killed my aunt and grandmother, and the other six million Jews, and the millions of non-Jews.

REFLECTIONS ON REACTIVATED ANTI-SEMITISM

Finally, I turn to a fascinating story of the struggle faced by a group of five experienced psychoanalysts or psychotherapists, living in the Düsseldorf and Köln areas. They formed the Psychotherapeutic Study

Group for People Affected by the Holocaust. The group comprised two Jews and three ethnic Germans who decided to meet initially to discuss shared professional concerns. They 'theorized that many of their patients, even though these individuals had not personally experienced Hitler's regime, were nevertheless significantly affected by it' (Volkan et al., 2002, 151).

To understand the key features of the group dynamics, a brief profile of each member is relevant.

Therapist 'One', a German, knew that his father was a high Church official. A friend of Carl Jung, although opposed to the Nazi movement, did have indirect involvement once the Nazis were in power. He remained within the Church.

Therapist 'Two', also German, acknowledged there were 'secret and subtle attitudes of anti-Semitism' in his family without direct involvement in the Third Reich.

Therapist 'Three' had a German father who was recruited into the Wehrmacht at the age of 17. This therapist grappled to try to understand how his father's experience had impacted both on his father and himself.

Therapist 'Four' was born in Romania to Jewish parents and moved to Germany as a 12 year old. Her parents were supporters of communism but she was more concerned to understand her sense of Jewishness.

Therapist 'Five' emigrated from Hungary as a teenager. He was aware of the ongoing silence about the Holocaust in his adopted Germany.

From their first meeting the members experienced communication difficulties. Unsure of their aims, they struggled to clarify vague sentiments, the idea of trying to 'open a new dialogue within German society about the Holocaust and its consequences' (Volkan et al., 2002, 151–2).

How to formulate sentiments into practice proved a major barrier until one of the

members suggested consulting with Dr Vamik D Volkan, who was neither Jewish nor German. Born in Cyprus to Turkish parents, he emigrated to the United States 40 years earlier. Now an internationally recognized psychoanalyst, his work engages him with group psychology, transgenerational transmission of trauma, traumatized society and the impact of unresolved grief and mourning. Specifically relevant was his work with 'representatives of ethnic or national "enemy groups" (who) were brought together for prolonged series of extensive, unofficial psychopolitical dialogue' (Volkan et al., 2002, 151).

Dr Volkan agreed to facilitate four meetings over the course of 1997–8. A full account of these remarkable encounters is documented in *The Third Reich in the Unconscious* (Volkan et al., 2002). I highlight one strand of the rich psychological tapestry from their complex encounters to illustrate the power of the generational transfer of conflict.

'NOT A NORMAL GAME'

In essence, the five members experienced transgenerational conflicts. These conflicts emerged slowly and painfully to reach consciousness only after hard work. Initially they were not aware of harbouring hostile attitudes towards the 'other' members in the group. Only as their meetings progressed did deeply buried hostilities surface. Eventually this group of highly trained psychotherapists became speechless. They reasonably thought that if they, trained professionals, were unable to speak about their conflicts openly, the wider community might also struggle. Hence the title of their planned symposium: *The End of Speechlessness?*

After analysing the dynamics, Dr Volkan offered the interpretation: 'through preparations for this symposium a not a normal game was being played out between the

Jewish and the ethnic German members' (Volkan et al., 2002, 157). 'Not a normal game' was the creative metaphor the group used to communicate their intimate conflicts based on a parallel concern, a German-Israeli soccer match being played during their first meeting (Volkan et al., 2002, 155).

That sport contest provided the mental 'space' to reflect and to discuss the previously hidden anxieties about the Jewish-German contact. For the Germans, the focus of explicit concern centred on the German soccer team's approach: if they played with too much aggression this would induce guilt feelings; if, on the other hand, they played in an 'uncharacteristically docile fashion' a loss would also be painful to the German therapists.

According to Dr Volkan, the struggle to establish genuine emotional (in contrast to intellectual) contact among the members of this group reactivated *malignant but previously hidden German-Jewish interactions*. The fear of having a successful symposium, Dr Volkan proposed, was the fear of that hidden dynamic being reactivated. Their contact with each other could induce a 'time collapse', a phenomenon where perceptions, feelings, deeds and defences against them would be condensed with current events, perceptions, feelings, deeds, and defences pertaining to them. This painful confusing state of mind can lead to 'speechlessness'.

Dr Vokan warned that, as unpleasant as it might be to contemplate, the group members should expect shame and guilt, senses of the victimization and entitlement, and other conflictual wishes and painful insights to surface as they continued their struggles. The reason for the prognosis of the emergence of negative feelings was based on their large group identifications with trauma. In other words, both the ethnic German and Jewish therapist identities were forged

through identification with their respective national identities, intimately entwined with their respective trauma.

As the meetings progressed, members were able to identify several examples of inherited mental representations 'that had been re-activated during the recent incident. They were beginning to understand how profoundly the past and the present had become intertwined.'

I selected only a few details from these complex meetings to highlight how flawed and incomplete any 'rational' explanation of the *experience* of malignant, hostile feelings is once uncoupled from their generational and non-rational foundations. Subjected to merely rational analysis, viewed as a single generational experience, anti-Semitism similarly will continue to defy logical explication.

To grasp the essence of anti-Semitism, the analysis needs to include both the transgenerational experiences as well as the deepest levels of 'non-rational' or primitive emotions. From a psychological perspective it is necessary to step outside of ones own 'generational consciousness' to access the profound processes involved in the generational transmission of anti-Semitism. I suggest that such a level of analysis is essential before declaring any attitude or experience 'new' anti-Semitism.

In conclusion, I have tried to provide six historical snapshots that, when seen from the surface, seem to qualify as turning points in the emergence of 'new' anti-Semitism. However, by adopting a transgenerational perspective, links emerge. A pattern, handed down from one generation to the next, is common for all the events except for the Holocaust, which Yehuda Bauer called 'unprecedented'.

But Bauer warned that, while it was unprecedented, 'It might be repeated – certainly not in the exact same form, but possibly in a similar manner, and we have no

way of determining who will be the Jew and who might be the German the next time' (Bauer, 2001, 267).

CONCLUSION

Does the evidence point to the 'new' anti-Semitism being 'new' in the post-Holocaust world? I suggest that on one level we are witnessing new manifestations of anti-Semitism as defined by Daniel Pipes and Jonathan Sacks, amongst others (Chesler, 2003). However, in my opinion, taken at a psychological level, these manifestations are 'old' processes merely being reactivated in new contexts.

The one historical exception to the 'old' anti-Semitic process is the Holocaust, by virtue of its unprecedented dynamic. Israel's President Moshe Katsav described this at the 60th commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz as 'a failure of humanity'.

So can human society advance to 'rehumanize' itself in the post-Holocaust era? I find some hope offered by Greenspan and Shanker. Their groundbreaking analysis of personal and social evolution offers a pathway to new adaptive levels of personal and social organization. Their radical rethinking of human evolution demands that we rethink our unit of survival from the individual to one based on global interdependency (Greenspan and Shanker, 2004).

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