

Remembering Esther

Anti-Semitism and the Conflict of Identity

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Reading the biblical narrative of Esther – a narrative giving way to the ritualized Feast of Purim – against more recent testimonies and accounts of anti-Semitism demonstrates common patterns in social, political, and religious responses to conflict. When studied carefully, these patterns support a common model capable of cross-cultural application. This model supports the fundamental thesis that anti-Semitism is not simply a belief but a conflict over identity that produces beliefs and behavioral patterns consistent with deep-rooted prejudices. Moreover, this conflict is typically an “absolute conflict” disguised as an “institutional conflict”, terms that will be defined, and is usually triggered by perceived interruptions to institutionalized power. Studies of anti-Semitism must always include detailed understandings of both the identity of the perpetrator and the identity of the victim.

1. INTRODUCTION

The heart of our thesis is this: social conflicts over group identity are produced when circumstances of power maintenance require that a minority be identified and categorized for the benefit of a non-zero sum “game”. In situations of anti-Semitism, such conflicts produced by escalating feelings of prejudice result in feelings of suffering, oppression, or isolation on the part of the victim. These feelings and their accompanying experience of anti-Semitism fundamentally alter victims’ individual and collective identities due to the nature of the “process” of anti-Semitism. Thus, this study will focus on the dialectical processes of anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviours. These “processes” are produced by an intensive focus on power acquisition or maintenance on the part of the eventual perpetrator of anti-Semitic actions.

Because the Bible (in both its Jewish and Christian permutations) is a fundamental component in the identities of social groups in which experiences of anti-Semitism largely have occurred, this essay focuses on the biblical narrative of Esther, comparing it with selected passages from first-person accounts of the Holocaust. In doing so, this essay will clarify the structural composition of social conflicts originating from issues of identity. Furthermore, it will refine a social-scientific model capable of application in studies of anti-Semitism.

Since “Jewishness” is by nature cultural and religious in identity – but not, for contrast, a national identity¹ – any model or conversation on anti-Semitism must be capable of addressing certain variables that religion introduces into conflicts over social identity.² Past studies of anti-Semitism have tended to define the concept beginning with the actions or perceptions of the perpetrators. This was often done to the neglect of any sophisticated understanding of the cultural identity of a victimized group before and during social conflict.³ Thus, for example, conversations about German anti-Semitism around the time of World War II usually begin with the individual “Aryan” German or German culture but say substantively little about how Jewish identity itself changed before and during the process of legalized anti-Semitism during that time. Consequently, the conversation in

such circumstances becomes less about the identity of the victims and more about the formation of German cultural identity and psychology, and anti-Semitic actions – Daniel Goldhagen, for example, exemplifies this in his breathy 600 plus pages focusing on the development of German anti-Semitism as a thing *sui generis*. (Goldhagen 1996) Little focused attention is paid to the formation of the victims' cultural identity, treating them usually as an anonymous group or reducing group experiences into the articulated experience of the individual. And while there is undoubted benefit to such a conversation, studies of anti-Semitism will gain from a model that begins structurally with the “conversation” between power and identity and then proceeds toward understanding how the conversation is carried out by the perpetrators *and* by the victims. Such a model focuses on the structure of the conflict between power and identity and how that conflict frames the identities of the perpetrators and victims involved. It attempts to avoid prioritizing the perpetrator over the victim. It views anti-Semitism as a social and psychological posture or attitude perpetuated and prevalently practiced in situations of social conflict – and this includes situations produced by social, economic, political, and religious forces.

2. IDENTITY AND INSTITUTIONALIZED CONFLICT: SETTING THE GAME BOARD

For our discussion, “identity” is the place where structure and agency meet (Bhavnani and Phoenix 1994, 6) and “body” as an identifiable object represents both the material space of the self and the space wherein internalization and externalization occur.⁴ Under those definitions, matters of identity exist at the root all social group conflicts. Such conflicts tend to be zero-sum games because they are motivated by a desire for power or control over the formation of identity and the body.⁵ In saying this, we are aware, as Lewis Coser has pointed out, that different types of conflict exist: in “fully institutionalized conflicts”, such as duels, the goal is a mutually agreed-upon settlement; in “absolute conflicts” the goal is the total destruction of an enemy, the success of which brings cessation to the struggle (Coser 1961, 347).

Conflicts over identity and body tend to be “absolute conflicts” that have been masqueraded as “fully institutionalized conflicts” to give them credibility, legitimacy, or acceptance by the social-political body to which the aggressive party, or parties, belongs. An “institutionalized conflict” has rules and outcomes for which a society has made space. As long as the outcome of the conflict remains within culturally predetermined allowances, an institutionalized conflict, while not condoned, does not awaken “feelings of doom”. An “absolute conflict”, such as genocide, on the other hand, threatens a culturally perceived order⁶ unless it can be presented as an act intended to preserve order for the social-political body. This can occur when it is masqueraded as an “institutionalized conflict”. Within situations of anti-Semitism, these two types of social conflict are largely manifest when the articulation of social-group identity becomes a struggle for or demonstration of power – whether this articulation be a group's internal expression of itself over against external perceptions or it be external perceptions of a group imposed upon it as reductive labels.

The “conversation of identity”, as the phrase is being used here, refers to circumstances in which external and internal definitions of identity do not agree and are summoned into an interaction that is framed by their disagreement. This often occurs when the internal identity of a social group, usually a minority, is rejected by and grossly replaced with one externally constructed by a majority.

3. IDENTITY AND POWER MAINTENANCE

In the Israelite text of Esther,⁷ Haman, who plays the aggressor, appeals to the king's sense of institutionalized conflict by casting the continued existence of the Jews against the safety of the kingdom:

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes), "There is a particular people that has been scattered and separated among the peoples of all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different (literally, a second) among all the people, and they are not keeping (doing) the laws of the king. There is no reason for the king to give them rest (to tolerate them)". (Est 3:8 [translation mine]).

Haman appeals to the king's sense of order and the king's responsibility of order maintenance within the social-political body.⁸ Moreover, his appeal places his genocidal goal within the framework of the ruled's expectations of their ruler as well as the distributed power such expectations affect. This institutionalizes the conflict, defining it as a necessary action for the stability of the social-political order. In this situation, the conflict, which was absolute in nature, was framed as an institutionalized one. To be successful in his appeal, Haman must reduce Jew and Jewishness to a homogenous bloc that has been externally reduced and categorized to isolate the community from what constitutes the normative identity of the social-political body. Only in this way can he categorize "Jew" as a thing, and so a definable threat to the social-political order maintained by the king (and subsequently the king's own power).

While Esther is a fictional narrative, the typology of processes that define social-cultural identity remains fairly consistent among conflicts of body and identity. Such conflicts are usually understandable as containing a perpetrator, or perpetrators, and a victim, or victims.⁹ The aggressor, or perpetrator, defines the object of his or her aggression as something other than self-aware; therefore, the defined object is seen as incapable of defining self within the fabric of a social body, it must be externally defined. Perpetrators, in other words, tend to view their victims as something, and not *someone*, less than self-aware.

Haman's extension of his appeal alone is not itself "conflict". Rather, it is an appeal to the king's sense of conflict as a threat to his hold on power over the kingdom. The conflict over body and identity in Esther begins when Haman's definition of "Jew" contradicts that of Jewish self-definition and assumes a hostile relationship between Jews and those non-Jewish individuals in positions of power. By the time Haman builds a gallows upon which to hang Jews (Est 5:14) and the king has signed a decree issuing the destruction of all Jews within his kingdom (Est 3:6-11), the conflict over identity and body has already begun. Haman has already *professed* power over Jewish identity and body. However, his asserted power is resisted first by Mordecai then by Esther, both of whom, for the narrator's purposes, are individuals who stand in representation of the Jewish social-cultural body. By their dialogue with each other and by hers with the king, Mordecai and Esther represent "Jewishness" as a collective of individual identities in a direct reversal of Haman's homogenizing of Jewish identity. The conflict, in other words, begins with the clash between external and internal definitions of identity. It begins not with the definition of identity as it is experienced or defined through experience. It begins with *identity as perceived*. Haman's gross oversimplification of Jewish identity is apparent on the basis of what is described as his only experience of "Jew", which includes no more than Mordecai's refusal to bow in his presence – Haman is unaware Esther is Jewish.

Thus, contrary to Marx's assertion experience and identity can be separated (Tucker 2002, 87). While it is true that all internal expressions of identity are defined by experience – where experience is understood as an interaction between cultural agents – an external definition of identity as "other" does not initially require an experience of a defined subject. Haman defined the Jews as things to be slaughtered, a definition that did not require Haman to have an intimate experience of

the Jewish body. Arguably, the virtual same can be said of Hitler's decision to carry out the Nazi policy of *Judenrein*. "[T]here can be no compromise – there are only two possibilities: either victory of the Aryan or annihilation of the Aryan and the victory of the Jew".¹⁰

Neither of these ideological stances was based on the material-world experiences of the objectified body;¹¹ in other words, they were not produced by any conflict preceding the identities of the groups in opposition. For both the situation described in Esther and that of Nazi Germany, the conflict was initiated before physical action was undertaken; it began when an externally defined identity was imposed upon the categorized "other" as an objectively defined identity. We can say then that conflict does not *begin* with any active resistance of the victims but when the rules of interaction between social agents are dogmatically (re)defined by those who have imposed "other" as an objective definition or category. In this sense, social conflict requires an identity struggle; or to put it in different terms, it requires the struggle for identity against a (claimed) power to identify. But this power is never one that considers the will of the body defined. As Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer point out, anti-Semitism is rooted in "delusionary perceptions accepted as authoritative", when "delusionary perceptions" are understood as being strongly biased and uninformed (Perry and Schweitzer 2002, 3).

4. CONTROLLING IDENTITY AS AN EXERCISE OF POWER

The ability to define an "other's" identity or body is itself an expression of power. This act alters the institutionalized distribution of power and restructures the manner in which affected individuals relate to it and to each other.¹² Inherent within such an act is the simultaneous rejection of a subject group's self-defined identity, instead defining the group with an imposed identity. The ability to impose identity becomes the recourse of those seeking power, who define the hierarchy of power in support of themselves. In other words, the effectiveness of this power depends upon the ability to redefine distributed relations of power, controlling through institutionalized categorization all possible threats to the stability of the normative order. This occurs through redefinition of the social body, rather an *inscribing* upon it,¹³ creating structured relations not as constitutive of "natural" groups of members but of perceived and imposed categorical groupings. And in doing so, it imposes a "reality" for social engagements defined within the perspective of the group in power. This is the institutionalization of power; whether it is attempted or real power depends on the nature of the circumstance. For Haman, this occurred during his rise into power. Ascending rank within the kingdom, he embraced his near proximity to central power as nearly autonomous power in itself; he expressed that power over those who did not overtly validate his status. In other words, the Jews, whose collective identity had been reduced by Haman to nothing more than "sentient stubbornness", were identified not as contributing citizens to Persian imperial social-economic order but as a threat to the stability of the imperial hierarchy of power.¹⁴ Taking his case before the king, Haman defined "Jew" not from a Jewish internal perspective but from his own external perspective framed by his personal pursuit of power. In his mind, the Jews were no different than Mordecai, his "paradigmatic Jew", who refused to offer "proper" obeisance, and who represented the possible unraveling of his own power (cf. Est 3:1-3).

Haman's decisions reveal that active control over an other's identity and body bespeak insecurity in one's own stability in power. Or to phrase it differently, the act of definition contains within itself the fear of invalidation.¹⁵ It constitutes an appeal to sources perceived to legitimate one's own power. While these may be institutions, systems, or other cultural bases, they may also be something more material, such as is usually the case with a tyrannical government. In the case of the latter, one must have the means at one's disposal to exercise power in a dominating way, suppressing other attempts at power. In the case of the former, one may appeal to a dominant cultural meaning or perception, such as was the case with anti-Semitism before and during

Germany's Third Reich. Because this fear increases with increased power, one must be in a constant state of appeal to the power structure to validate one's own power. As a result, power is continually exercised as a form of self-confirmation. In Esther, Haman viewed Mordecai's actions as threatening. If Mordecai refused to accept his identity as one beneath Haman's authority then Haman must show control over Mordecai's body.

In addition to Haman's personal sub-narrative, the encompassing Esther narrative demonstrates the need for a continual focus on power's legitimation with its literary play on the rise and fall of power within the story of Esther. It begins with Esther's rise to power after Queen Vashti had fallen out of power.

Vashti refused to come at the word of the king, which was in the hand(s) of the eunuchs, and the king was full of wrath and his anger burned within him (Est 1:12 [translation mine]).

Vashti's refusal to accept the higher authority of the king marks the beginning of her fall. Her decision, an exercise of her own power, threatened to undermine the power of the king over her body and the limits imposed upon her identity. Her fall allows Esther's rise into power. According to the narrative, Haman's own rise followed that of Esther but their paths do not intersect until Haman ceases to be satisfied by his limited position within the social-political system and attempts to control it. Through strategic posturing, Haman undermined the authority of the king by casting him as someone easily manipulated within Haman's own power game. And for reasons similar to those concerning the king's removal of Vashti, Haman endeavours to remove Mordecai, who refuses to validate Haman's power. Yet instead of replacing body with body, belligerent identity with complacent identity, as does the king, Haman, whose position is insecure, viewed Mordecai as a symbol of a larger threat. Rather than dealing with Mordecai on an individual basis, Haman cast collective blame upon all Jews through his gross identifying of all Jews as socially disruptive.

In response, Haman imposes a vision of society based upon the structured space of difference by emphasizing boundaries between internal and external definitions of identity.¹⁶ His understanding of Jewish identity is constrained within the framework of his own identity – no longer defined by an internal notion of identity and the position of the individual body within the power hierarchy of the king, "Jew" becomes a mute object defined and categorized within a hierarchy dominated by Haman. Control over such changes in the definition of collective of identity, as Jennifer Todd notes, are at the core of social transformations as well as symptomatic of the power to regulate a social-political body (Todd 2005).

A similar process arguably could be observed in Nazi Germany beginning in 1933-38.¹⁷ There, German Jews who were once granted the right of citizenship were categorically redefined as "sub-human" and therefore incapable of German citizenship. Hitler's view on this matter was clear even by 1919 in a letter to Adolf Gemlich in which he described Jewry as a "racial association" and a "racial tuberculosis" that threatened the basic order of German stability and power.¹⁸ Once Hitler gained power (in 1933) and was capable of enforcing social change to bring about a legal enforcement of the identity of the German social-political body, his actions thrust Jewry into a contest over Jewish body and identity.

To be clear, this argument does not support that anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany was based solely upon religious, social, or other, prejudice or was simply a matter of racism. Nor does it depend upon arguments such as the one offered by Daniel Goldhagen, which treats German anti-Semitism as something *sui generis*. The conflict over identity meted out in the form of anti-Semitism was complex. While a binary opposition between "us" and "them" existed, it was part of a larger, more complex "conversation" about identity.¹⁹ In many ways, this conversation was about control, in the economic, social, political, and even religious senses but more importantly about acquiring indefatigable power.

5. RELIGIOUS GROUP FEELING AND IDENTITY

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in the camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky. Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul (Wiesel 2008, 52)

The absence of God in Esther, and also Auschwitz, emphasizes that the perceived actions or presence of God are always subject to human or social circumstances. In this sense, God, or the idea of God, is, from a social-scientific perspective, the externalized product of a religious body's self-perception.²⁰ The perceived viability of God depends upon the internal stability of the religious body. Thus, the absence of God in the midst of conflict demands an immediate human response; preservation of group identity depends not on the divine but on a human agent's action – as, for example, Esther's willingness to possibly sacrifice her own life demonstrates (cf. Est 4:9-17). Esther's action, that is her resistance to imposed identity, preserved Jewish self-identity. When a socially dominant force imposed an identity upon a minority body, that body, for the sake of its own identity, must consider and respond to the imposition. To put it differently, a body upon which an external definition of identity is imposed must resist that definition to preserve its own identity – but resistance also entails legitimation of the externally constructed label, a point that Robert Weltsch also emphasizes.²¹

The nature of identity conflict is such that the objectified body cannot identify itself without acknowledging the external, dominating force exerting power over it; the material needs of its own existence, which produce a dependence upon a larger society, prevent it from doing so. In situations of conflict, if a minority community were to cease resisting a majority's externally applied identity it would lose its recognizability as a body within the larger social context. For both Haman and Hitler, though only the latter saw this made reality, the loss of the body was the ultimate goal of the conflict, which should be termed "absolute conflict". And for Hitler, the loss of the body was intended on two planes: the first, crushing internal self-definition by silencing resistance, making the body simply a "thing" to be categorized. And this we might term "ideological destruction". The second was a crushing of the physical body composed of individual, material bodies. And this we might term "material destruction". In Haman's story, we see plans for material destruction (he builds a gallows and gets a royal decree for annihilation passed) but a parallel vision of ideological destruction is not readily apparent. Until, that is, we understand Haman's vendetta against the Jews to be an extension of his struggle with Mordecai and his reaction against the Jews to be a breaking of Mordecai's sense of self.²² In that sense, his "ideological destruction" of the Jews is really an ideological destruction of Mordecai – this vision, as can be considered generally typical of any act of external labeling, conflates the group and the individual.

Haman considers the Jews inferior subjects. Similarly, Hitler considers the Jews as a "sub-human race", as though the Jews during that time too were cast in a Hamanic interpretation of Mordecai, refusing to acknowledge Hitler's (and Germany's) power simply by virtue of their continued existence. Just as the security of Haman's power necessitated the destruction of the Jews, the security of the power of a "supreme race" required the destruction of that which could perceivably corrupt it. In this conflict there are, in other words, two distinct social bodies at stake, neither capable of preserving or assimilating the identity of the other. And because the subsequent conflict that is created is by nature an absolute conflict, it requires the deconstruction of one body. In the cases of Haman and Hitler, conflict was created by an antagonist with power also looking to preserve both his hold on and his expression of that power – in both, the ultimate expression of power seems to be a nation without Jews. In other words, it is found in the erasing from existence this Jewish

body that might define itself in resistance. Thus, it is defined in the nature of the created conflict over the body. And is that not a fundamental component of anti-Semitism, the belief that *my* power will always be suspect as long as Jewry as an identifiable body exists? And doesn't that perception expose the irrationality behind anti-Semitism? That Jews because they are Jews are a threat to power and all that supports it and must therefore be hated?

In conflicts where religious group feeling is involved, God, or the idea of God, may be perceived absent because the body's identity has become, temporarily or permanently, framed not by its position before the divine but by its position before that which seeks to redefine it; in such situations calling for self-preservation it becomes a body defined in resistance – an attribute that has been emphasized within Jewry as a result of long-standing anti-Semitism.²³ When a religious body feels threatened by a surrounding society, it focuses on withdrawal and a categorical distinction between member and non-member, or insider and outsider. The body creates and enforces boundaries. When the internal meaning system that defined group identity has been or is in the process of being deconstructed, such as was the case for Jews during the Holocaust, and when the body's existence is threatened, the threat or reality of chaotic dismemberment of the body triggers a human survival instinct within the group. On the other hand, the "kingdom of God" – the goal of an autonomous, non-minority-status existence for the religious body – can only exist when a chosen people is *physically* preserved. It is for this reason the narrator has Esther appeal to the king who has power over Haman, who himself was a threat to the Jews, instead of God. Esther appeals to the highest authority, who still held power over Haman, not of the Jewish religious body but of the imperial social-political body.²⁴ Jews in Nazi Germany, for contrast, could not hope to make such an appeal since both the highest authority and the political structure itself (or its laws) were expressly anti-Semitic; their "Haman" was not a subordinate in power but *the* power over the German social-political body. For them, the exemplar or pattern of Esther seemed unavailable because "Jewish representative and friend" had been removed and obscured from the "conversation of power". For example, from the Law of the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 7, 1933: "Civil servants who are not of Aryan descent are to be retired; if they are honorary officials, they are to be dismissed from official status". (Cited in Dawidowicz 1976, 39 [emphasis mine]) The defacing of Jewish identity had been given legal design.

And in fact, the very idea of *die Judenfrage* pursued by German intellectuals even by the 19th century CE was an attempt to define the identity and body of the Jews against the foil of German society. A reflection of this conflict is found also in Marx's statement, "The Jews desire political emancipation" (Marx 1978, 26). To be clear, political emancipation, a complex issue for Marx, required overcoming the alienation of the political subject and the private citizen, the former being inherently secular while the latter, in this case, religious.²⁵ His statement was written within a larger response to Bruno Bauer who argued that all political subjects needed to give up his or her religion in a secular State; but a secular State was really the logical outgrowth of a Christian State. Bauer's argument, according to Marx, was weak on at least two accounts: (1) to be carried out, it required implicitly that all political subjects first accept as real and possibly falsifiable the principles of Christianity (either consciously or unconsciously) in order that their opposite, or perhaps better their invalidation could become the basic principles of a secular State; and (2) it misses the more fundamental issue that social organization and its corresponding individual and collective ideations are products of the relationship between human beings and the natural world (see Marx 1978). Adopting a state religion would lead to an obscuring of Jewish identity, and so make gains toward a "victory" for German society within the framework of *die Judenfrage*, but it would not bring true emancipation to the Jews (or anyone else, for that matter). Moreover, Jewish attempts to preserve Jewish collective identity within German society were seen by some in 20th century Germany as an impossible obstacle to any full social-political integration of Jews. Hitler, for example, with the general support of the German society, responded by redefining Jewish identity and body as those things constituting a race *sui generis* – specifically, a "race" of sub-humans who according to

physiological argumentation could not be Germans and could not be “emancipated”. His – and we must at least include here also Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Goering, and Reinhard Heydrich – answer to *die Judenfrage* was the Final Solution. Thus, *die Judenfrage* became no longer the basis upon which a conflict could be constructed but became the nature of the conflict itself. The Final Solution moved beyond deconstructing identity into annihilating the body.

They crowd my memory with their faceless presences, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen. (Levi 2008, 83)

In Esther’s conflict, she was successful because she was able to prevent such a solidification of category and definition. Her relative position within the hierarchy of power permitted her access to the final authority in the land. She symbolized Jewish capability to resist oppressive revision of Jewish identity. Under the Nazis, by contrast, despite the absence of an Esther, while some took their lives in despair, most Jews resisted, whether through ideological struggle or even armed resistance. Even in the face of communal collapse in concentration camps and death marches, the spirit of Esther remained (cf. Levi 2008, 152).

6. REMEMBERING (AS) RESISTANCE

With zeal and zest I threw myself into the work to help assemble archive materials. ... I know that we will not endure. To survive and remain alive [after] such horrible murders and massacres is impossible. Therefore I write this testament of mine. ... I want my little daughter to be remembered. Margalit, 20 months old today. Has mastered Yiddish perfectly, speaks a pure Yiddish, at 9 months began to speak Yiddish clearly. ... I am not sorry about my life and that of my wife. But I am sorry for the gifted little girl. She deserves to be remembered...²⁶

Beliefs marked by prejudice, and actions taken based on those beliefs are, from an observer’s perspective, easily irrational. The culturally sanctioned logic permitting or encouraging prejudicial belief may often make little sense outside the culture or sub-culture promoting it. Yet the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism suggests parallels in behavioral and thought patterns of prejudice among different cultures. In understanding anti-Semitism, we must begin not with the individual culture acting out anti-Semitism. We must begin by identifying the conflict in which a perpetrating body exercises, or attempts to do so, power over a victimized body and its identity. In this sense, we understand anti-Semitism to be a conflict over identity that produces and subsequently reinforces beliefs, behavioral patterns, and oppressions consistent with a (sub-)culturally encoded and legitimated prejudice. Anti-Semitism is fundamentally, if even unconsciously so, about power over identity as a basis for absolute conflict.

Throughout the many different times and circumstances in which this conflict has manifest itself, Jewish response, following in the footsteps of Esther, memorialized in the Feast of Purim, has been to resist and persist through hopeful remembrance of what it means to be human.

The role of remnant is central to Jewish existence since the time of the prophets. It performs the responsibility of remembering and hoping in a way that can model the social form of remembrance. The remnant makes the one who remembers herself into a sign of loss, [a] sign of suffering of the others who cannot be fully remembered, and a sign for others to interpret. ... The remnant waits and promises to remain. Or perhaps it is promised to remain – it is assigned a post it cannot renounce: it must remain until the redemption. As a history of a remnant, history is the witness of suffering in anticipation, a witness to exposure that cannot be renounced. (Gibbs 2000, 375)

ENDNOTES

¹ Although some members of the modern state of Israel have made strides toward making Jewishness a component of national identity, it is not a national identity in the same sense that “Israeli” is. It is possible to be Jewish and not be a member of the nation of Israel. For further discussion, see (Schwarz 1981). Moreover, conflating “Israeli” and “Jew” rejects any discussion of pre-twentieth century anti-Semitism and runs the risk of reducing prejudice to a political issue.

² Hartman refers to the impact anti-Semitism has had upon an “internalized” Jewish identity: “Judaism at its core is a collective enterprise, a religion invested in a people. However, it is precisely on this collective level that one finds one of the central paradoxes of contemporary Jewish life. On a national political level, in particular times of crisis, the Jewish people are a paradigm of collective responsibility. However, when it comes to issues relating to our collective religion, we cease to function as one people and allow sectarian and denominational forces to take over” (2007, 1).

³ For example, Jochnowitz (2009) defines anti-Semitism as the result of supersessionist ideology (notably within Christian, Islamic, and Marxist thinking), and that anti-Semitism, although irrational especially in its perseverance, has the force to bind differing ideologies together (such as any alliance between Islam and Marxism). Raab (2002) suggests that modern anti-Semitism in Western Europe, the United States, and that held by Muslims correlates with negative attitudes toward or perceptions of Israel, and vice versa; in other words, anti-Semitism is the result of a misdirected, *external* evaluation of political and social action. Curtis (1997, 322) observes there is a positive correlation between educational level and feelings of prejudice and that older generations tend to be more anti-Semitic due to cultural anti-Semitism prevailing to a greater degree.

⁴ I am using these terms as Berger (1990, 4) defines them. These processes create the conditions for social engagement. One might also describe it as the posture of the individual before society. Bourdieu (1990, 9-10) describes the postures of social agents before these processes as “dispositions acquired through experience”.

⁵ Coser’s description of social conflict is important here. “[S]ocial processes ... such as friendship or love, have no precise termination point; they follow a law of social inertia insofar as they continue to operate if no explicit provision for stopping their course is made by the participants. Social conflict is such a process. While in a game, for example, the rules for the processes include rules for its ending, in social conflict explicit provisions for its termination must be made by the contenders. If no mutual agreements are made at some time during the struggle, it ‘ceaseth only in death’ or in total destruction of at least one of the antagonists. The termination of conflict hence presents problems that do not arise in finite processes” (1961, 347). Such conflicts tend to be absolute conflicts in which the eventual power expressed over a victim results in the victim’s termination.

⁶ A “culturally perceived order” is not always true social-political order but order as cultural actors understand and may articulate it.

⁷ As Niditch (1985, 449-50) observes, the seeming lack of religious concern in the text of Esther emphasizes the work’s focus on human relations rather than religious ritual.

⁸ Or as Esposito, and De Long-Bas, in their study of Islam, put it, “The ruler is responsible for persuading or coercing the population into obeying him” (2003, 143).

⁹ In saying this I am aware of Govier and Verwoerd’s argument (2004) that victim-perpetrator is possibly a false dichotomy. I am also aware that the victim-perpetrator relationship is not so straightforward as one in which roles are simply passive or active. And while I would agree that relations between social agents cannot be so simply defined, our intent here is to first understand the structure of the relationship before looking to individual personalities, which will always be relative to historical situation, culture, and circumstance. Furthermore, to make the structure of this relationship a morally defined structure is to reject any possible cross-cultural conversation about the structure itself. But compare, “The notion of a victim who is purely innocent and good is unrealistic, and functions to encourage moral arrogance and discourage moral humility. Persons identifying as ‘victims’ may have been able to remain ‘pure’ for circumstantial reasons: they have profited from ‘moral luck’. Often, persons who are harmed in the course of a conflict have also been involved in some way to support agents of physical force and for that reason share responsibility for the actions of some combatants” (372).

¹⁰ Adolf Hitler in a speech at a *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* meeting, April 12, 1922, as cited in Dawidowicz (1976, 31).

¹¹ As Perry and Schweitzer put it, regarding a prevailing German anti-Semitism, “Racist and antisemitic ideas had become a mobilizing ideology; in varying forms and intensity, antisemitic assumptions and vocabulary characterized the political and cultural views of many Germans before 1914, and they were not contested in any systematic way. ... It is indeed astonishing that Germans, many of whom had virtually no contact with Jews, were so obsessed with them and that they believed that a nation of fifty million was mortally threatened by a half-million citizens of Jewish birth, or that the eleven million Jews of the world (by 1900) had organized to rule the planet” (Perry and Schweitzer 2002, 106-07).

¹² In this sense we are referring to power as production without moral evaluation. As Foucault writes, “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (1995, 194).

¹³ “Society is not exchangeist, the socius is inscriptive: not exchanging but marking bodies” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 185).

¹⁴ For a comparative example, note the following from Hitler’s Reichstag address of January 30, 1939: “And one more thing I would like now to state on this day memorable perhaps not only for us Germans. I have often been a prophet in my life and was generally laughed at. During my struggle for power, the Jews primarily received with laughter my prophecies that I would someday assume the leadership of the state and thereby of the entire Volk and then, among other things, achieve a solution of the Jewish problem. I suppose that meanwhile the then resounding laughter of Jewry in Germany is now choking in their throats. Today I will be a prophet again. If international finance Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequences will be not the Bolshevization of the world and therewith a victory of Jewry, but, on the contrary, the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe” (cited in Dawidowicz 1976, 32-33).

¹⁵ Foucault writes, “The more one possesses power or privilege, the more one is marked as an individual, by rituals, written accounts or visual reproductions. The ‘name’ and the genealogy that situate one within a kinship group, the performance of deeds that demonstrate superior strength and which are immortalized in literary accounts, the ceremonies that mark the power relations in their very ordering, the monuments or donations that bring survival after death, the ostentation and excess of expenditure, the multiple, intersecting links of allegiance and suzerainty, all these are procedures of an ‘ascending’ individualization” (1995, 192-93).

¹⁶ On structures of difference as social space, note also Bourdieu: “But with the exception of the least differentiated societies (which still present differences in symbolic capital, which are more difficult to measure), all societies appear as social spaces, that is, as structures of differences that can only be understood by constructing the generative principle which objectively grounds those differences. This principle is none other than the structure of the distribution of the forms of power or the kinds of capital which are effective in the social universe under consideration – and which vary according to the specific place and moment at hand” (Bourdieu 1998, 32).

¹⁷ The difference, of course, is that while Haman was in a position of authority he was not the authority. In Nazi Germany, the Law for the Relief of the Distress of Nation and State was passed on March 23, 1933 to insure Hitler’s assumption of dictatorial power.

¹⁸ In a letter to Adolf Gemlich, September 16, 1919, cited in Dawidowicz (1976, 30).

¹⁹ Since we are talking about a macro-oriented theory used for group analysis, we are not focusing on the individual. That said, there were individual Germans who were not ideologically anti-Semitic. At the same time, one should not conflate anti-Semitism as a whole with the Shoah/Holocaust/Final Solution. That was a gross product of anti-Semitic feelings and tendencies within German culture and Hitler’s racist biases mixed together with Nazi attempt to establish and consolidate power.

²⁰ My intent here is not to debate the existence of God but to discuss God as *perceived*.

²¹ In his “Wear It with Pride, The Yellow Badge” in *Jüdische Rundschau*, no. 27, April 4, 1933, cited in part in Botwinick (1998, 147).

²² For the author, this may be a first experience with what we would now term, following Wilhelm Marr, “anti-Semitism”. The author tries to understand the irrationality of such prejudice and hatred by framing it within a conflict between two men, two individual identities. While Esther is likely a fictional narrative it reflects certain situational truths, namely the experience of anti-Semitism.

²³ As Hartman writes, “In many ways the ‘others’ who surround us have always served as the ultimate protector of Jewish collective identity. We could always count on being a people segregated and persecuted by

'them', and the answer to the question of who is a Jew has often been those whom 'they' persecute for their Jewishness. In the context of an anti-Semitic world, Jewish collective life always had a measure of clarity to it. If Hitler did not distinguish between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, or between the observant and non-observant, who are we to create boundaries on the basis of these considerations?" (Hartman 2007, 2).

²⁴ The Feast of Purim (see Est 9:23-28) ritualizes the conflict (and Jewish victory over it) by reframing it into an act of internal definition and encoding the victory into cultural identity. The ritual memorializes the past, keeping it ever present as a force shaping identity.

²⁵ Roland Boer helped me clarify the issues at stake in this matter dealing with Marx's statement.

²⁶ From Israel Lichtenstein's Last Testament, July 31, 1942, cited in Dawidowicz (1976, 296).

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