THE ANTI-SEMITIC AND THE OEDIPAL CONFLICT

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The study of anti-Semitism, touching as it does so many aspects of psychic life, appears to me to be at the cross-roads of individual and collective psychology; cross-roads with so many avenues of approach that it is necessary to make a choice. I shall attempt to clarify the problem in the light of certain fundamental psycho-analytical concepts without the least pretension to present an exhaustive study of it. I shall not attempt to examine certain well-known aspects of the problem which to me lack the specific validity which alone is important. I have in mind, for example, sociological, political, economic, ethnographic, and other arguments which explain certain limited and superficial aspects of anti-Semitic manifestations but in my view are inadequate to account for them fully.

The remarkable continuity and constancy with which anti-Semitism reappears in spite of radical differences in environmental factors show us in effect that these factors are of account only as attendant phenomena or rationalizations wherein the pretended causes may be revealed as the consequence of much older elements and of a deeper psychological nature.

In considering the object of our study, we should not be satisfied with defining an 'anti-Semite' as 'one who is against the Jews'. In fact, anti-Semitic behaviour may take many forms, and from a topical viewpoint conceal very divergent and even contradictory motivations. Anti-Semitism varies from pure and simple sadism to very complex attitudes involving every form of individual relationship, and with each successive manifestation tending to be more specific and more arbitrary. It is my intention to approach the problem by trying to answer the question: Why the Jew?

Regression

The core of the anti-Semite's projections holds a privileged place within his ego and as such is irreducible. It is a section of the ego which is more or less radically isolated from the rest of the personality, but attracts to itself a considerable portion of the libido, thereby warping the remainder of the personality. The ego is immature, as though split and menaced with disintegration, and in any case succumbs to intense castration fear.

The anti-Semite lives according to the primary process and is unaware of reality, at least in regard to his specific nucleus. He lives in his fantasy, and any reference to reality tends only to irritate him and is rejected. He is in no way embarrassed by the contradictory character of the accusations he hurls against the Jew.

The lack of homogeneity in the ego affords us some degree of understanding of the anti-Semite, who, despite his role as a sadistic persecutor, may at the same time be a good member of the community, an affectionate husband, and an exemplary father.

The specific regression also affects his superego, which is an incomplete construction based on different superego formations, each corresponding to a different and overlapping phase in its development. The principal part is played by a precociously formed superego which is based not on the introjection of complete objects but on their educative function. It pertains to a training role, which is represented in the unconscious by the introjection of an anal phalus as a part object. The genital superego is characterized, as we know, by its severity, and does not lead to a real identification. It is made up only of commands and prohibitions, and as the German saying has it: 'Whatever is not forbidden is obligatory.' Moral principles are replaced by formulas, rules and ethical values by a pseudo-morality, which can only be expressed as a system of respect for force. One who depends on a regressive superego of this type will only have introjected the respective strength of certain superegos, independent of their intrinsic

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value and content, and this tends to explain why the German masses accepted a Hitlerian in the place of a Communist superego, inasmuch as it seemed to represent an incarnation of greater power. It is this which enables us to understand how the Nazis could excuse themselves in face of the terrible accusations brought against them by replying that they merely obeyed orders. It might be thought that this was mere subterfuge and fallacious reasoning, whereas in fact they were but obeying their *pregenital superego* and could not really understand how they could be blamed, since in respect to that superego they were innocent. All reproaches were in a dimension beyond their superego, and therefore their ability to understand. When Eichmann listened to the enumeration of the monstrous crimes of which he was accused, he remained unmoved; for him they were obviously mere words without any real sense or content. But when reminded by the judge that he should stand when addressed, he offered embarrassed apologies, stuttered, and reddened with shame. In this at least he felt himself guilty, since for a moment he had forgotten the rule of respect for superiors which had been taught him throughout his training. Such morality is formalistic, and the Nazis were surprised that their presence in Paris could be found irritating when their behaviour had been impeccable. Had they not helped blind men to cross the street, and never failed to offer their seats in the Métro to ladies?

Since anti-Semitic projections are formed under the pressure of a superego, the various accusations brought against the Jews betray their superego origin, and their stereotyped form reveals their archaic and regressive character. We know the time-worn accusation which turns up in different guises, but always has the same significance: *The Jews have poisoned the wells.* The oral-anal character of this accusation is as evident as in that of ritual murder, a projection of oral aggression against the mother. In the unconscious of the anti-Semite there exists also a certain equivalence between the Jew and the witch, the phallic, all-powerful and dangerous mother. According to some writers the witch hunts of the Middle Ages have been directly replaced by the persecution of the Jews, and the chronological succession of events confirms this hypothesis.

With regard to the anal sphere the frame of reference is even clearer. The Jew is diabolical, the very incarnation of evil. As we know, the devil represents anal components which are endowed with guilt and whose home is the lower regions of the body. The devil with his colour, his odours, and his manners represents the excremental world. As for hell, region of darkness, place of eternal combustion where a torrent of sulphur burns away the very rocks while pursuing the destruction of the sinner (the bad object), it would seem to be the very projection of the digestive organs, mainspring of the last phase of the anal-object relationship, as I have shown elsewhere. The anti-Semite prides himself on his ability to smell a Jew a hundred miles away.

The anal allusion is sufficiently clear. The anal struggle in *toto* is projected on to the Jew. Not only as regards dirtiness and all that concerns money but also all the forms of aggression and treachery, culminating in the paranoiac fear of anal penetration. (*The Jews are everywhere, mingling with everything, corrupting all they touch, hatching dangerous plots,* etc.) The anal components of sexuality are also projected upon the Jews—lewd monsters who rape innocent German girls in order to pollute the race.

The anti-Semite's specific regression is most clearly seen in his representation of the Jew. This follows the line of destroying his individuality. The Jew is denuded of all personal characteristics (the Nazis obliged the Jews to place before their names the epithet *Jew*, and finally in the concentration camps they were designated only by numbers. When the question of destroying some of them arose, the director of the operation merely verified their numbers without any consideration for their identity, a typically anal-sadistic process but serving a purpose opposite to that of the sadist. It is not a question of power, but a means of reducing guilt, though of course, the two may be equally implicated.)

*Anti-Semitism and Narcissistic Integrity*

The anti-Semite presents a picture of specific regression affecting the ego in a selected manner but nevertheless touching the whole ego in respect to its homogeneity and the relationship between the introjects of which it is formed. The anti-Semite does not wish or is unable to employ the usual neurotic mechanisms. If they are used they appear to be insufficient. As we
have seen, he seeks to replace these mechanisms by projection on to the Jew, and seems to be at least partially successful in this, for he hides behind a topical constellation which is apparently healthy but nevertheless betrays his weakness and absolute dependence on his projective mechanism. In fact, as long as this collaboration continues to function the anti-Semite enjoys an apparently perfect equilibrium, even a euphoric sense of well-being. This leads us to the simple statement: 'One is anti-Semitic because it gives one pleasure to be so.'

Frédéric Rossif used in his film a series of photos taken by the Germans in the Warsaw ghetto. The Jews are shown as horribly deteriorated by the régime imposed on them by the Nazis, which led to their total degradation. Certain shots showed the photographer himself (photographed by a friend) focusing his camera on a group of Jews who realized that they were going to be shot even as they posed for these souvenirs. I was struck by the expression on the face of one of the photographer-killers, which was beaming with pleasure and contentment. There was no trace of sadism on his face, but rather a look of innocence and amused satisfaction. The soldiers on whom these photos were found were taking a great risk, but they had been unable to part with these compromising documents which apparently had an inestimable value for them. What does this prove to us?

The anti-Semite's profound satisfaction flows from the fact that his ego is in perfect harmony with his ego-ideal. Having made his projection onto the Jew, he has found his Manichean paradise: all that is bad is thereon one side—the side of the Jew—and all that is good on the other side where he himself is. The photo carries the proof. The ego-ideal is narcissistic, and the satisfaction is that of perfect narcissistic integrity recovered through the projection on to the Jew.

The anti-Semites are recruited from among the weak and erratic, the complainers, the shiftless, and the immature victims of an intolerable narcissistic injury. They project the cause of their weakness upon the Jew; it is he who is responsible, thereby covering the wound left in their narcissistic integrity. All this is banal, but what matters is to show the tie that exists between narcissism and the Oedipal situation itself.4

Collective Anti-Semitism

During the course of psycho-analytical investigation we inevitably go back to earliest childhood, and we cannot do otherwise when it is a question of a collective social group. This would take us back to that early period in the history of mankind which directly preceded the advent of monotheism. The most superficial study of the religious life of that epoch teaches us that pagan religion was in a sense pregenital, that is to say appealing to protective divinities whose cult was directly linked with fertility, especially the fertility of the earth which nourishes its children and whose love and protection it was necessary to assure. There were maternal divinities, and without referring here to the question of matriarchy, we find the figure of the 'Magna Mater' present in all primitive religions. But this relation with a maternal divinity or divinities must have had a deeply reassuring quality, and it is certain that in spite of the early frustrations arising from the pre-Oedipus relationship and of the marked early conflicts of that relationship, the narcissistic fusion with the mother constituted an ideal state that man seeks constantly to renew. (We shall leave aside the immense narcissistic radiance which the Pantheon of the pagans secured for man by filling the universe with his deified narcissistic projections.)

So much having been said, if we ask ourselves about the origins of anti-Semitism, we always find the opposition between Jewish monotheism and paganism, an opposition which has lasted a very long time and in a sense still continues. We have not space here for an analytic study of the different theologies, but we may state without fear of contradiction that if paganism gives a very great place to the maternal elements, Judaism presents itself as above all a worship of the Father, a severe, omnipresent, omniscient

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1 J. P. Sartre (1946): 'The anti-Semite has the misfortune to have a vital need of the enemy he wishes to destroy.

2 I must wait for another occasion to discuss oedipal guilt and the confusion of that guilt with the feelings of inadequacy, which is narcissistic injury (and even lack of narcissistic integrity—castration). I quote from Freud: (Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, S.E., 15).

... the sense of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego-ideal. Here we see that Freud established (i) an equivalence between guilt and the feeling of inferiority; and (ii) that the basic conflict of this guilt corresponds to the existence of a margin of difference between the ego and the narcissistic needs of the subject (ego-ideal). The forbidden object is not only the forbidden object but also that which it has not been possible to accomplish.
father, an implacable judge; in a word, the superego. For the worship of the father is not limited to reactivating the Oedipus conflict, which is as old as mankind, but in addition has interiorized the punitive element and as such has presented humanity with something it is not prepared to forgive.

We may assume that the innovation presented by Jewish monotheism consisted not only in institutionalizing a superego sanctified by religion which favoured the repression of oedipal guilt, but also the transformation of that partly conscious guilt into deeply buried guilt. Monotheism in cathecting the father as an object has obscured religion and cooled it down. In taking away the maternal figure, as Freud has shown, religion has favoured spirituality, but has also removed that source of warmth and love, the mother. Christianity later repaired this frustration by defying the maternal figure, but on a plane already transformed by the collective superego. This led to an exacerbation of the conflict in the Judeo-Christian unconscious. The Christian, the son, is in effect reunited with the mother, the father having been deported to heaven, an oedipal realization, one which has increased the Christian's guilt in respect to the Jews who have kept their fidelity to the father. In a word, the Jew by introducing monotheism has not only banished man from his intimacy with the mother (even with the Christian, the mother has remained the inaccessible virgin) and from his narcissistic universe, but has installed within him a judge to persecute and punish him for his oedipal desires. The Jew has therefore done exactly the same as the father. He has imposed the rule of the father, which explains why he particularly has been chosen by

5 Cf. the pictorial representations of the virgin mother and her child.

6 Anti-Semitism is above all a collective movement, and it would be interesting to study the relation between anti-Semitic activity and the secret 'brotherhoods'. It is an established fact that anti-Semitism grows more readily in closed societies and that all organizations or groups and spontaneously towards anti-Semitism in considering the Jews as a 'foreign body' and as a group hostile to assimilation. American anti-Semitism shows itself most strongly in this way. During the Middle Ages the secret brotherhoods (the corporations or early trade unions) excluded the Jews from nearly all trades, and if the Jews were sometimes protected it was always by certain isolated but powerful personalities, in a sense paternal figures, never by the brotherhoods themselves. A policy of Jewish exclusion exists in certain organized bodies and in certain Middle European countries. At some periods it has been easier for a Jew to become a minister of State than a janitor or postman.

It would seem that the relation between certain brotherhoods and the Jew reproduces that which existed between the prehistoric brotherhoods (as in the primitive hordes. See Freud: Totem and Taboo and Moses and Monotheism) and the father. Brotherhoods banded together to fight the father's power. As such the brotherhoods fight against the Jew as they have always fought, and still fight, against the father. One might use this hypothesis in trying to understand better the youthful 'gangs' that give so many headaches to parents, police, and teachers. It would seem that what excites so much rebellion against the father is consciousness of the fact that their very union is charged with oedipal aggression, which therefore increases their guilt. The anti-Semitic projects that guilt on to the Jew by accusing him of forming secret societies and by speaking of mysterious Jewish plots with secret ramifications everywhere, threatening the entire world. He cannot give up this projection, and even though all the courts in the world judged the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' to be a document, invented by a masquerading police force to further the needs of their cause, was never in doubt.
think of the adolescent whose oedipal rage sometimes leads to really criminal acts, even to parricide. In most cases it is not expressed except to be displaced on the Jews, of whom it is said: "But they are indestructible, we shall never be rid of them." The function of the Jew would seem to be to facilitate the Oedipus abreaction by permitting a dichotomy on the part of the anti-Semitic. He divides his father into two (the paternal superego imago), and he abreacts his aggression on the Jewish image, including the positive sentiments remain fixed on the beloved father-image in the form of God, ideals, country and fatherland, etc. These two images the anti-Semitic forms into an indissoluble couple, since the constant association is a necessary requirement for the mechanism to function. Thus he can cry out in any language: "Fatherland arise! Death to the Jews!"

The meaning of such a constant association is then: "I only beat the Jews, the evil ones, who are my enemies and therefore my father's enemies; in contrast, I love and honour my father and only want his blessing." In fact, as we can imagine, such an assertion is extremely ambivalent, and in spite of the dichotomy the anti-Semitic cannot lose his repressed Oedipus aggression which resists all defence mechanisms and all reaction-formation. The anal-sadistic relationship which the anti-Semitic maintains in respect to the father image finally obliges him to betray the father (he will always accuse the Jew of "obeying a foreign power") and in fact behind the anti-Semitic's patriotism he always works for the enemies of his country. We know of the assistance given to Hitler by the anti-Semites in each country attacked and occupied by him, always under the pretext of patriotism.

We have seen that the anti-Semitic operates a dichotomy and replaces one aspect of the father figure on the Jew. But we also undermine the fact that this dichotomy is far from being a total success in that behind the ideal father there is always the hated father, in other words the role played by the Jew with whom the anti-Semitic identifies at a certain level of his unconscious. The double substitute object must therefore fulfill certain conditions, and it is a fact that these conditions are found in combination only in the Jew. We have seen that the role played by the Jew in the anti-Semitic unconscious is a super-ego figure, a powerful father image, and in a certain measure an identification project, especially since it is given at the same time, owing to the projection, a powerful anal sexuality.

In other respects it is the decisive factor that the Jew, according to the anti-Semitic's criteria which we shall examine, is an absolutely castrated being whom he may therefore attack without danger and without guilt. In the Jew we find combined the two contradictory characteristics which cannot anywhere else be found associated in such a way.

The father is both all-powerful and castrated, thus being, as Sartre said of a Jewish minister of State, 'at the same time His Excellency and an untouchable'. The Jew is castrated, not because he is circumcised, but because he is cut off from the collectivity and therefore an 'outsider'. The anti-Semitic is a regressed anal character, and for such characters only the organic insertion within an organized social system gives narcissistic importance to the individual and only this form of narcissistic integrity is capable of giving him a phallus. The Jew, a lonely wanderer, castrated and miserable, is exactly as the anti-Semitic would like to see his father, and is in a state in which he seeks to maintain the Jew.

For the child who has known first the dual relationship with the mother later sees the father as an intruder, a foreigner—a foreigner, a term linked with the idea of distance. 'He should go back to where he came from', as the child will say about his new little brother, another intruder, and as the anti-Semitic says of the Jew. And the Jew must not seek to free himself or to resist, for he only exasperates the anti-Semitic who finds therein a new reason to prove that the Jew is a criminal who does not play the game, an impertinent cheat. His aggression against the Jew is therefore increased, and we have in fact a secondary anti-Semitism caused by a frustration of the primary anti-Semitism.

This phenomenon, seemingly perpetual, after twenty-five centuries, spanning so many social changes and resisting every attempt to eradicate it, is at last on the threshold of a radical change. I refer to the foundation of the state of Israel which has brought the Jews to the promised land. It is true that this event, of such great importance, has not caused anti-Semitism to be forgotten like a bad dream. However, its tone has suddenly changed, and we now see the same Jew, who before had been despised and persecuted, now become for the anti-Semitic a man like others since he is now called an Israeli.

The Israeli is now possessed of a sovereign state, whose power, though objectively perhaps not great, represents for the unconscious a
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phallic like any other. The Israeli, by living in his own land, has thus refound the mother and forms in her a couple, as is the case with other peoples. He lives, not in a vacuum like the Jew, but in a material world that is governed and organized. He has suddenly become part of the

system by adapting to a way of life like other peoples, with his own government, administration, and army. It may be that this painful problem which has caused so much bloodshed and tears cannot long resist the tangible reality of a simple little Jewish customs inspector.

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As Freud remarked, the words materia and mater have the same derivation.