

Michele Battini,
(Universtá di Pisa/Italian Academy at Columbia University)

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THE ANTI-JUDAIC TRADITION AND THE BIRTH OF AN ANTI-JEWISH ANTI-CAPITALISM

I.

In what follows I shall argue that within some components of 19th and 20th centuries political movements (authoritarian, communitarian and organicist) a structure of thought emerged that was anti-Semite and that I call anti-Jewish anti-capitalism. Its main ideological thesis was that social injustice could be solved only by expropriating the capitalists of their economic power, and in particular the Jewish bankers, who were the core of international capitalism. This anti-Jewish anti-capitalist system of thought found some consensus also in the organized worker and peasant movements in some countries of Central-Eastern Europe and in some important areas of Western Europe, and also among small savers, small landowners, craftsmen and industrial entrepreneurs.

The most important protagonists of these anti-Semitic anti-capitalist movements were often Catholic and Christian political and trade union organizations, religious periodicals, associations of believers. Even when nationalist groups held sway of the anti-Jewish movement, the Catholic and Christian impact remained very strong and contributed in reinvigorating centuries old symbols and popular representations that were peculiar to Christian cultural tradition of hostility towards the Jews, a “nation” of fellow creatures in appearance, yet essentially different from all other creatures. The Jews were depicted as brothers of the Christians and yet insensitive toward the Christian law of brotherhood. Furthermore, anti-Jewish anti-capitalism also inherited from the anti-Judaic Christian tradition the millenarian controversy about the *usura vorax* (usury voracity), a stereotype which can still be detected in early nineteenth-century writings against “Jewish financial feudalism”. This image became central in the plan of the German NSDAP of suppressing bankers’ interests as a form of “Jewish” exploitation of the producers.

As Elie Halevy wrote in *Histoire du Socialisme Européen*, “On ne réclamait pas, à la manière des socialistes, la suppression du profit, considéré comme le principe même de l’économie capitaliste,

mais la suppression de l'intérêt, considéré comme mode d'exploitation des agriculteurs, ouvriers, artisans, industriels, par le capitalisme bancaire.”

Since the time when the Jews had acquired the rights of civil and political freedom, their emancipation was considered as paradigmatic of modern democracy. The first emancipation laws were promulgated during the French Revolution, in 1791; since then, as according to the anti-Semitic rhetoric, the freedoms of the Jews coincided both with the advent of the legally established constitutional State and with the degenerative processes of modern democratic society: secularization, amoral individualism, unregulated competition, the market, political disorder.

In the narrative framework employed by intransigent Catholic writers in order to complain the end of the historical link between absolute monarchical power and Catholicism, the Jews were charged with the responsibility of break-up the *societas christiana*. Indeed, although they were assimilated in the demos and made equal to all other citizens, they had not modified their true nature as a “foreign community” – “foreign” because had for centuries refused to recognize the true religion. With the politics of assimilation, the Jews were made invisible, or no longer recognizable, even if they remained unchanged. The conclusion was that the Jews were immutable. The symbol of a menacing change, they remained an obscure, underground force that threatened the nation, just as they had threatened Christianity in the past, at the time when they acted as the sovereigns’ tax collectors.

After the French Revolution, to anti-Semitic writers, the Jews embodied a menacing competition because they were powerful and, at the same time, different, although unrecognizable (an invisible threat). The new anti-Jewish hatred was not the expression of hostility towards people who were deemed different (of a different “race” or “ethnic group”); it was instead the expression of fear of fellow citizens, who remained a foreigner group, that on the one hand infiltrated in the Christian nation and on the other persisted in claiming to be the Chosen People. Finally, the presumed secret conspiracy to seize economic power in order to control all the States became the handiest explanation of every crisis that occurred: from the European financial and banking crashes in the last quarter of the 19th century to the inflation which ruined the Weimar Republic. *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* claimed to document the meeting of the Jewish international élite that took place during the first Zionist Congress, in Basel in 1897, in which the economic-financial conquest of the world was planned.

The issue of the birth of political anti-Semitism is an open question. Hannah Arendt has traced its origins back to the end of the 19th century and the rivalry between continental imperialist

nationalisms, like Pan-Germanism and Panslavism. Since Arendt's interpretation, the Jewish Diaspora was depicted as an infiltrated empire. In other words, the nationalists projected on to the Jews their own goal of supremacy.

II

But why was political anti-Semitism – at odds with Jewish emancipation, and therefore also with the legally-established constitutional State – indebted to the anti-Judaic tradition?

The term itself, “anti-Semitism”, began to circulate after the publication, in 1879, of a text of political propaganda written by a German democrat, Wilhelm Marr, in the attempt to find a non-religious way of defining the Jews, by means of social (this was the case with Marr) and racial classifications, in the age of political nationalism's hegemony.

After Napoleonic expansion imposed civil equality in Europe, legal emancipation was definitively achieved in the second half of the 19th century: in the Hapsburg Empire in 1867, in Prussia in 1869, in the Reich in 1870. In the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Papal States it was ratified in 1848, but here too it was revoked, being restored after the Italian unification and the storming of Porta Pia. The emancipation laws did not, however, touch the majority of European Jews, those who lived in settlement districts of the Russian Empire between Poland, Lithuania, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, where, in fact, apart from the intensification of professional discrimination and exclusion from the cities, there raged a new and violent anti-Jewish movement fomented by the Christian Orthodox clergy and the Tsarist police, particularly after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. This surge also reached Central Europe.

Towards the end of the century, in Lower Austria, the Socialist Karl Lueger gained the support of the anti-Jewish movement, monopolized by the Christian Socialists, and in 1897 was elected burgomaster of Vienna, in a climate deeply marked by the social effects of the great economic depression, which had begun as early as 1873 and had come to a head with the crash of the Vienna Stock Exchange, whose consequences reached as far as Berlin. In the anti-Semitic press, the responsibility was attributed to Jewish finance. Hitler grew up in that political school.

In Germany, the associations and confederations of the agricultural and industrial entrepreneurs and the Pan-German political organizations provided reactionary support for the semi-absolutist system or hoped for a transformation in a Caesarist sense, which Bismarck himself did not hesitate to exploit. Some important anti-Jewish initiatives were promoted by the Farmers' League – the foremost of those associations – and blessed by the preacher of the Berlin Court, the Lutheran

pastor Stöcker; there were subsequent campaigns promoted by the Conservative Party, the Anti-Semitic League and the Social Party, while Prof. Paul de Lagarde, an eminent Orientalist, made the University of Göttingen a centre of dissemination of anti-Jewish publications, which exercised a lasting influence on the Reich's teaching body: from 1873 to 1890, over 500 texts of anti-Jewish propaganda were published.

Inexplicably, however, the strongest anti-Jewish movement of this period developed in a totally different institutional context, namely the democratic political system of the III French Republic founded on secular education and universal male suffrage, in sharp contrast with the ideals of the political Enlightenment. The context of the international economic crisis undoubtedly explains the circumstantial causes: the negative economic situation also gave rise to grave consequences on the other bank of the Rhine above all after 1882, hitting primarily savers, small peasant farmers and merchants; and some odd events, like the Wilson scandal and the resignation of President Grévy, spread the perception of a degrading political corruption, casting serious discredit on parliamentary democracy. The failure of an important Catholic bank (Union Générale), ultimately heightened a very intense campaign against the presumed Jewish international financial power, which was held responsible for the bank's collapse. The campaign against *la république des affaires*, corruption, the Jews as "the financial masters" also created a favourable climate for an authoritarian *coup d'état*, planned and attempted by General Boulanger in 1889, while the pamphlets of the *Ligue antisémite* directed by Moréas and Guérin were proliferating on ground prepared by the enormous success, in 1886, of a book written by the catholic Edouard Dumont: *La France Juive*, which denounced the Jewish conquest of the national economy. Anti-Jewish riots broke out in Montpellier, Tours, Toulouse, Lille, Angers, Marseille and Grenoble and continued well into the 1890s.

It was the Dreyfus affair which created an anti-democratic block around anti-Judaism: supporters of the army, nationalists, conservatives, right-wing anti-parliamentarians, above all Catholic organizations joined forces against the Jewish officer, the symbol of disloyalty to the country, the foreigner within who had betrayed the trust placed in him, and the juridical emancipation which had damaged the national and Christian community. In the "Jewish conspiracy", Catholic newspapers – *La Croix*, *La Bonne Presse*, *Le Pèlerin*, *Les Études* - found a facile confirmation of the historical reason for the adversities of the Catholic Church, the decline of the family, the exclusion of the religious from secular education. The leading role played by the Christian associations and the religious newspapers relied precisely on the Church's intransigent rejection of the modern errors of liberal freedoms: a stand which had been sanctioned by the First Vatican Council, in 1870, with the

encyclical *Quanta Cura*, and preceded by the condemnation of the modern world expressed in the *Syllabus* of 1864; in claiming its “theological” primacy in the struggle against the Enlightenment and the constitutional State, the Catholic Church revealed its political ambition of controlling the opposition to modern democracy, starting from the nationalist and national Catholic movements and seizing the opportunity to re-launch the cultural war for the total re-Christianization of society. Anti-Judaism was indispensable in this battle.

It is very important to stress that the anti-Jewish controversy became the common feature of several nascent Catholic parties, was dominant in the religious press, took on a leading role in the clash between the Church and the secular State as it emerged after the second half of the 19th century. The Jews, “exploiters” of assimilation, were transformed into the symbol of modern moral decay, of the system of Enlightenment and liberal values, of the separation between Church and State.

The growing “visibility” of the Jews in society, as well as the new migratory waves of Eastern Jews in Germany and France favored their transformation into credible scapegoats for social hardships; yet the success of the anti-Jewish propaganda in broad strata of the population was made easier by the familiarity that Christian believers had with and anti-Judaic stereotypes that centuries of Christian tradition deposited in the collective memory.

In January 1881, the *Civiltà Cattolica*, for example, did not criticize at all the anti-Semitic unrest fostered by Pastor Stöcker, but hoped that the Catholics would claim and take up the leadership of this movement in the name of the primacy of the Church of Rome, which had been the first to denounce the extension of the rights of citizenship to the Jews with the consequence of destroying the rules that had separated the Jews from Christian society for centuries and “prevented them [the Jews] from doing any harm”.

The reasons that had dictated the separation of the Jews from the *societas christiana* were the same, but the procedures had to change, with a qualitative leap from discrimination (as was written in *La Croix*, the newspaper of the French Assumptionist Fathers, on 6 November 1894) to expulsion and the elimination from the civil context: “Admettre les juifs dans la société chrétienne, c’est déclarer que le deicide, don’t ils portent la malediction perpétuelle, ne touché plus notre generation. Or ils sont maudits si nous sommes chrétiens”.

The ecclesiastical authorities followed the line indicated by the *Civiltà Cattolica*, the *Historisch-Politisch Blätter* and *La Croix*; even the Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli, recognized the need to support more solidly the commitment to the faith through the social struggle

«against the Jewish dominance of wealth, capital, banks, the great factories and newspapers». But the roots of modern anti-Jewish anti-capitalism and its socialist component are to be found in the long history of the Christian theological dispute about usury, the whole course of the controversy about the commandment in Deuteronomy XXIII, 20-21.

III

What happened to the portrayal of the Jew as a usurer during the crisis of the society of the *ancien régime*, when the slow process of de-Christianization was accompanied by the “artificial” imposition – as Karl Polanyi would have written – of the self-regulating market? What changes did emancipation provoke and how did intransigent Catholicism and the Christian social doctrine react to this breach?

The second half of the xviii century saw the birth, in Western Europe, of that phenomenon which Marc Bloch has defined as “agrarian individualism”: the attack on collective pastureland and the private appropriation of common lands broadened and heightened the conflicts between the aristocracy, the *laboureur* owners and the *journaliers*. In France, the wheat riots tried to bring in *taxations populaires* based upon the model of “moral economics”, in order to counter the repeated attempts to introduce, in 1763 and then between 1774 and 1775, “free trade in wheat.” At the same time, the *remonstrances* of the Parliaments were accompanied by the violent neo-rigorist propaganda against «the monstrous Hydra which the Church had often struck with its bolts». The rigorists, like Louis Bulteau or Father Nicolas Petitpied, raged against the new “dissembling thieves”, digging up the prohibition in Deuteronomy; Turgot, on the contrary, attacked the “legend” of the biblical prohibition on lending.

It is disconcerting to reread, in the writings of the middle of the xviii, repeated statements about the incompatibility between the Church and “commerce”, once again obsessively based upon the question of loans at interest, an evident concealment of a confrontation between the Catholic Church (represented by the neo-rigorists) and the new bourgeois social strata, whose approach was irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity. The bourgeois are portrayed as being committed to activities of profit and interest, in which there is – so it seems – no possibility of differentiating between usury and larceny, of which the former is only a variant: the usurer lends money and goods only to gain interest, which is unfair because it is greater than the value of the goods or the sum lent. The metaphor of the “monstrous Hydra” - whose heads are always growing again, whose jaws are wide open to devour the wealth of Christians and drink the blood of the poor – is the same one used for centuries against the Jews.

After a few years, the picture would have changed radically. The controversy about usury and the new commercial spirit would also have been affected by the issue of emancipation (emancipation that would have resulted in what Vidal-Naquet has defined a juridical, linguistic and national abyss between the Jews of Western Europe and those settled in the Central-Eastern regions.)

In the geographical area of the emancipation, the acquisition of rights by an individual Jew, directly involved with the State could clash with the impetus towards that same individual's fusion with the nation. And the phenomena of rejection and the legal restrictions which emancipation immediately encountered were heightened by several causes: the conflict between the doctrine of the Catholic Church and Natural Rights philosophy, the hostility towards the role played by the Jews in the new economic activities, the legacy of the old stereotypes which were easily exploited to justify this very hostility. The history of these phenomena is also a part of the history of the formation of the national consciousness of the Jews, of that nationalization of the Jews which Arnaldo Momigliano considered "parallel" to the integration of regional populations and national minorities.

The heart of the problem of the genesis of political anti-Semitism (and, in this context, of its socialist and popular component, which, here, interests me) therefore remains the issue of emancipation. The term "emancipation", utilized since the close of the xviii century to indicate the end of discrimination against a religious minority, leads one to consider different aspects of the nineteenth-century Jewish experience: despite the undoubted importance of the legal equalization, it had varying impacts particularly as regards the social and cultural spheres, in which changes occurred gradually over very long periods of time; in some cases – as in the German States – legal emancipation actually arrived when the processes of social and cultural integration were already very advanced, thanks to the identification of the Jewish *élites* with the ideal of the *Bildung*. Over the long term, emancipation appears a diversified, complex, contradictory phenomenon, which can also call into question the very concepts of equality and freedom. Hannah Arendt recalls for example the case of some Jewish communities or of some Jews with particular socio-professional characteristics, who had, for centuries, enjoyed a privileged status, whose evolution led to legal equalization, but without this change being, in concrete terms, evident: this is the case with the Hofjuden, the Jews in the courts of the German States, or the Jews living in the internationally important European ports.

The years following the Revolution and emancipation – in many countries revoked during the Restoration – were decisive. Provisional equalization was accompanied by old forms of discrimination, nostalgia for former privileges, pressure for conversions and forced baptisms. For the Jews and their new “communities”, the old identity and the new national one could clash, but could also complement each other: love of country, a civilizing mission, bearing witness to monotheistic ethics.

The emancipation of the Jews belonged in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and its more or less faithful translation into the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. The growth of the new anti-Judaic paradigm was propelled by the rejection against that philosophy, in particular its individualistic consequences in all life domains, from economic and politics to religion as well. Catholic intransigent reaction against the choc of 1789 had a leading role in it. Catholic conservative arguments against freedom echoed the old polemics against the Protestants in the age of Reformation; but they registered also the social concern with the decline of communities and corporations per effect of economic liberty and the growth of a self-regulated market. Indeed it is very interesting that Louis de Bonald, one of the most eminent theorists of the reaction against the French revolution and the Enlightenment, was the author of one of the first text of social polemic against the emancipation of the Jews. In 1796, de Bonald, in exile after the Revolution, wrote *La théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux*, a political theory treatise of neo-absolutism, which echoed the main themes of Bossuet’s counter-Reformation theology and was violently anti-Roussauaian. Ten years later, in 1806, de Bonald wrote *Sur les Juifs*, his most vitriolic text, and moreover the first to my knowledge that merged the polemic against equal liberty with that against capitalism and against the Jews.

Counter-Enlightenment as anti-individualistic and anti-democratic philosophy: this is the premise of de Bonald’s reflection on the Jewish question. His *Sur les juifs* is in fact an outright invective against the *philosophes* – except for Voltaire – “always favorable to the Jews” and the Constituent Assembly, which has promoted their [the Jews] legal emancipation granting them citizenship rights. According to de Bonald, however, the Jews did not become French citizens, but remained obstinately faithful “to their own law” and the unjustifiable practice of usury, the main reason for the economic ruin of rural and patriarchal families, the model of traditional authority and society (the same family structure that Frédéric Le Play, Saint-Simonian and Catholic, would, as late as 1871, defend as the mainstay of the social order and moral cohesion). In 1806, de Bonald wrote,

thousands of Alsatian small landowners had had to give up their plots of land because of the exorbitant rates of interest demanded by Jewish moneylenders.

An extraordinary document because of its paradigmatic character, *Sur les juifs* launches a direct attack against the *philosophie*, the Revolution and the rights of citizenship – therefore against emancipation. This attack merges with the “social” criticism of the market economy, in the name of the community. The apologetics of the Catholic faith, the “return to the true religion”, are declared to be the only guarantee of social discipline and a new hierarchical society, a parable for the defense of communities, families, bodies and associations. The Jews, however, come to be identified with the wicked practices of commercial society, which threaten the social order and an agrarian economy. De Bonald is, therefore, poles apart from the British “modernist” Catholics who, with the publication, in 1774, of the anonymous *Letters on Usury and Interest*, had maintained the Church’s doctrine could be reconciled, more easily than Calvinism, with the commercial ethos. But he is equally distant from the Bentham of *Defence of Usury*. A rigorist, as regards commercial ethics, de Bonald takes the defense of social and moral economics, which values were those shared by the people (the plebeians) who organized the revolt against the liberalization of the wheat market promoted by the Minister Turgot, a defender of “usury” and the legitimacy of profits. A few months later, in August 1806, the foremost Jews, summoned by the Emperor Bonaparte, would have disavowed an orthodox interpretation of *Deuteronomy*, declaring that loans (without excessive interest rates) could not be a practice which the Jews conducted only with “Gentiles”.

The beginning of *Sur les Juifs* is peremptory. The faults of the *philosophes* have been, above all, religious indifference and contempt for the Christian tradition, justly critical, suspicious and hostile towards the Jewish faith.

“Depuis assez longtemps les juifs sont l’objet de la bienveillance des philosophes et de l’attention des gouvernements. Dans ces divers sentiments, il entre de la philanthropie, de l’indifférence pour toutes les religions, et peut-être aussi un peu de la vieille haine contre le christianisme, pour qui l’état des juifs est une preuve qu’on voudrait faire disparaître.”

More particularly, de Bonald identifies the *faute* of the Enlightenment *philosophie* in its utilitarian type of choice, in adopting an “economic” method, rather than an ethical one, in the decision-making process: the Enlightenment thinkers overturn the priority between public ethics and private economy; the underlying principle of politics is no longer ethics, but utility, namely, the idea of economic well-being. Following this type of “economic” philosophy, the Enlightenment thinkers maintained “qu’il y a était beaucoup plus question d’améliorer la condition politique des juifs, que de changer leur état moral, et de les améliorer eux-mêmes”; the work which, yet again,

comes under attack is *The Wealth of Nations*, but the application of the *philosophie économiste* wanted by the French Constituent Assembly also comes under fire:

“L’Assemblée constituante, forçant toutes les barrières que la religion et la politique avaient élevées entre eux et les chrétiens, appela les juifs à jouir des bienfaits de la nouvelle constitution qu’elle croyait de bonne foi donner à la France, et provisoirement les déclara citoyens actifs de l’empire français: titre qui, avec la contemplation des droits de l’homme, nouvellement décrétés, était alors regardé comme le plus haut degré d’honneur et de béatitude auquel une créature humaine pût prétendre!

Jusqu’alors les juifs avaient joui en France des facultés générales dont les gouvernements civilisés garantissent aux hommes de libre exercice, et qui étaient compatibles avec la religion et les mœurs d’un peuple en guerre ouverte avec la religion et les mœurs de tous les peuples.”

De Bonald is clearly nostalgic of the conditions of separation and discrimination but, at the same time, of privilege (*facultés*) in which the Jewish nation had lived until the Revolution; he insists above all on the choice which the Jews – persisting in their presumption of superiority and refusing the revelation of Christ – had made for centuries, engaging “in open warfare against all the other peoples”, and he repeats the traditional theological interpretation: the discriminatory regulations would have been the consequence of the obstinate Jewish separation from the true faith. In calling the Jews to participate in political power, take up administrative positions and even do military service, the Constituent Assembly has therefore committed “la faute énorme et volontaire de mettre ses lois en contradiction avec la religion et les mœurs;” even if, sooner or later, it would have been forced to reproach itself “comme les amis des noirs, la précipitation avec laquelle ils appelaient à la liberté, qui alors était la domination, un peuple toujours étranger.”

The “nature” of the Jewish nation appears, in this text, an inescapable fact, permanent and natural, analogous with the racial difference with the blacks but, at the same time, the natural difference is immediately correlated with its social practices, an indication of its ineliminable and unequivocal hostility towards Christian peoples. The phenomenon had already erupted in 1777 in Alsace, but the danger now threatened the whole of France. In Alsace, it remains dramatic, because over three-quarters of the lenders’ credit, owed by farmers, is by now made up of the accumulation of usurious interest which makes the Jews the new “hauts et potents seigneurs d’Alsace, où ils perçoivent autant que la dime et les redevances seigneuriales; et certes, si dans la langue philosophique, féodal est synonyme d’oppressif et odieux, je ne connais rien de plus feudal pour une province, que onze millions d’hypothèques envers des usuriers.”

The accumulation of topoi and stereotypes coming from the anti-Judaic tradition is striking, while what appears new and provocative is the characterization of financial commercial activity as “feudality”, a term (Jewish financial feudality) which is, however, generally attributed to a text which appeared thirty-nine years later, *La féodalité financière*, by the socialist Fourierist, Alphonse Toussenel. De Bonald uses this term as early as 1806.

“Les juifs, s’ils eussent été partout répandus en France, unis entre eux comme tous ceux qui souffrent pour une même cause, et d’intelligence avec les juifs étrangers, auraient fait servir leurs richesses à acquérir une grande influence dans les élections populaires, et auraient fait servir leur influence à acquérir de nouvelles richesses. Je crois que, jusqu’à présent, plus pressés de s’enrichir que dominer, ils ont réalisé en partie cette conjecture, en employant leurs capitaux à de grandes acquisitions.”

Therefore, the worst has yet to come. Because of its economic power and the imbalance between the increase in resources and population growth, there is the danger that the “Jewish nation” subjugates the Christian Catholic majority; in fact, that it replace it progressively. This explains but does not justify – according to de Bonald – the exasperated popular reactions, which could even result in massacres, as happened in Algiers. This justifies, as well as explaining, the discrimination measures, like those adopted in Bavaria, to prevent more than one marriage in each Jewish family and to impose very high taxes on the wedding ceremony itself. The gravity of the situation justifies the most drastic measures, but there is no point in harboring any illusions that the definitive solution to the Jewish question could ever be “political”. Legal discrimination and the imposition of recognition marks, to prevent the Jews from becoming invisible (the “*marque distinctive*”), will be necessary, at least until the Jews, “par leur bassesse”, will be the enemies of the “bien public.” It will be necessary to prevent that the Jews, a State inside of the State “État dans l’État, viendront au bout, par leur conduite systématique et raisonnée, de réduire les chrétiens à n’être plus que leur esclaves.”

The final defeat of the Jewish conspiracy will, however, only occur with the destruction of its identity as a foreign and hostile people which lives scattered among other peoples, only following its own law like a “State within a State”.

“Ceux, au contraire, qui trouvent le principe de la dégradation du peuple juif, et de l’état hostile où il est envers tous les autres peuples, dans sa religion aujourd’hui insociable, et qui considèrent ses malheurs, et même ses vices, comme le châtement d’un grand crime et l’accomplissement d’un terrible anathème, ceux-là pensent que la correction des vices doit précéder le changement de l’état politique. C’est-à-dire, pour parler clairement, que les juifs ne peuvent pas

être, et même, quoi qu'on fasse, ne seront jamais, citoyens sous le christianisme, sans devenir chrétiens.”

The polemical aspect – as will shortly be seen – was directed against the *abbé* Grégoire and Malesherbes, who had maintained exactly the opposite thesis, the granting of citizenship to overcome separateness and prepare for integration in Christian Europe.

IV

De Bonald's article, slightly over ten pages, lends itself both to a superficial *explication de texte* - with regard to the elements of the historical context, identifiable through the author's political polemic – and a deeper one, which reveals its character as an example of a new anti-Jewish paradigm. In terms of the first aspect, the article appears above all a document of the end of the counter-offensive against emancipation at the time of Napoleonic new anti-Jewish politics, eleven years after the beginning of the process of legal equalization.

De Bonald clearly alludes to the *pamphlets* or *remontrances* published in support of the royal edict promulgated in 1787 in favour of non-Catholic French subjects. It was a measure essentially in favour of the Protestants, “in the position of a minority” since the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. (Support for this revocation had been expressed, in his time, precisely by de Bonald's political teacher, Jacques-Benigne Bossuet). Many of de Bonald's other interventions obsessively deal with the birth of both political individualism and the process of secularization, as well as the schism in Christianity, the freedom to read the sacred texts claimed by the Protestants. In *Les Juifs* he is probably alluding to the part which had been played, in the preparation of the Edict of 1787, by Chrétien Guillaume Lamoignon de Malesherbes. Two years later, Malesherbes was appointed president of the Constituent Assembly's Commission that passed the new Statute of the Jews; his position, which was able to convince the *abbé* Grégoire to vote in favor of the emancipation, claimed that the inclusion of the Jews in a law concerning a general reform of the “*état civil*” would favor their conversion to Christianity and, through the elimination of every trace of “diversity”, the new converted would no longer be considered bad or evil. Legal emancipation would also abolish all discrimination in the professions, thus favoring the relinquishing of the practice of usury.

As for the concentration on the Alsatian problem, it too cannot be considered mere chance. After the edict of 1787, in the *Midi*, as well as in Lorraine and Alsace, the Jews had begun to put their names in the Protestants' registers, asking for the application of the norm to all non-Catholics, not just the Protestants; in Nimes they had asked to be able to register in the tailors' association and the authorities had in fact acceded to this request, despite the negative view of the royal

administrators. The parliament of Metz, in Lorraine, had been the first to register the edict and one of its members, Louis Roederer, who would subsequently have been elected as a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, had transferred the debate from the provincial parliament to the National Assembly in 1790. The anti-Jewish Catholic opposition had been particularly violent in Lorraine. In 1787 it had been the *abbé* François-Martin Thiebaud who had opposed the edict. On 7 September 1791, after the decree of full emancipation had been passed, it had been yet another Alsatian, Prince Victor Broglie, a deputy of the Constituent Assembly, who had tried to introduce an amendment in favour of the abolition of the Jewish communities, and even a Protestant Calvinist Alsatian deputy, Koch, had allied himself with his Catholic colleagues. Despite this opposition, Alsace had been the first French and European region to achieve civil equality for the Jews, thus favouring their political radicalization⁶¹ and social and economic “regeneration”.

De Bonald’s text brought to an end the Alsatian episode and contributed to the launch of the new Napoleonic politics but, above all, it anticipated the essence of the new anti-Jewish paradigm. The traditional theological stand (the final conversion of the Jews, a prerequisite for the salvation of the whole of Christendom) fused with the polemic against liberal constitutionalism and Jewish legal emancipation, to which were imputed rationalistic abstractness and a utilitarian “economic” vision of politics. Because of the new representation, in anti-capitalist literature, of the Jew, as the profiteer of emancipation, which was taking shape at the beginning of the XIX century, there began to emerge an attitude of widespread anti-Jewish hostility, and the “war against Jewish financial feudality” progressively became an ideological component of a part of the new socialism.

Following *Sur les Juifs*, de Bonald wrote other works dealing with social economics. Among these, the things that stand out are the fierce criticism of Scottish economists, an essay on loans at «legitimate» interest for purchasing land, the bleak portrayal of the effects of industrialization. They certainly had a very extensive impact up to the 1840s, above all among the followers of Catholic social doctrine: Ozanam, de Gerando, Lamennais, Villeneuve-Bargemont, but also undoubtedly found an echo in the works of Fourier, Comte, the Saint-Simonian sect. Extraordinarily important historical implications stem from such a network of relationships. Toussenel was a “Fourerist.”

V

The idea of the existence of a unified “socialist” political family is no longer valid and should, in my opinion, be replaced by that of a galaxy of diverse, conflicting cultures.

There was in fact not only a dichotomy, but also a clash between the democratic socialists, who considered themselves the heirs of 1789, and those belonging to a hierarchical, corporatist socialist constellation, which was just as critical of the 1789 legacy as the reactionaries, from whom they took an attitude of hostility towards emancipation and the identification of the capitalists with the Jews. The boundaries themselves between the galaxy of different forms of socialism and Christian and Catholic social doctrines were very faint and porous, as may be seen in the case of Toussenel, the author of an anti-Semitic essay, aimed at opposing the financial policies of the liberal Orleanist governments. Published in 1845 and accompanied by the polemic of the members of the *école societaire*, the author's friends, *Les Juifs, rois de l'époque. Histoire de la féodalité financière*, was the work of a follower of Fourier.

Co-founder – together with Victor Considerant – of the *Démocratie Pacifique* and a colleague of Louis Blanc in 1848, in the Commission du Travail du Luxembourg, the socialist, utopian, revolutionary Toussenel resolutely adopted the intransigent Catholic view of the modern social crisis. Protestant individualism and its Judaic roots (“derrière les protestants il y a toujours la puissance juive”) are yet again brought in: exactly like de Bonald, Toussenel accuses the *philosophes* of having launched a pro-Semitic campaign and attributes the cause to the liberal, economic and utilitarian concept of politics; in fact, the political economics of Hutcheson and Smith are considered tantamount to *nouvelle usure*.

Toussenel argued that, because of financial necessity, the Orleanist governments have created political conditions favourable for the establishment of out-and-out “Jewish monopolies” in the banks and the press. Not having the financial resources to complete the railway network, the executive had granted the Rothschild Group the franchise for the management and earnings of the Northern Railways over an exorbitantly long period of time and with enormous profit margins, in exchange for an advance payment indispensable for construction costs. The “advance against a franchise” mechanism constitutes, for Toussenel, the paradigm of the buying-up of the national resources by a new financial feudality, which would find itself in a position of absolute privilege, as well as of strategic importance within the communications network, therefore able to influence external and internal politics. Fourier had already foreshadowed the identification of capitalism with Judaism but, in relation to *Le Nouveau Monde*, Toussenel's text can be defined as the first real instance of anti-Semitic socialism, because it proposes a socialist economy based on the redistribution of wealth and the expropriation of Jewish-owned capital, even if it does not proclaim

the necessity of abolishing capitalist property; furthermore, Toussenel anticipates the proposed discriminatory legislation, on a proportional basis, which would have become the model for the “social selection” measures advanced in 1896 by the socialist and racist deputy, Georges Vacher de Lapouge. Edouard Drumont dubbed Toussenel an “inspired precursor”.

The traditional stereotypes, like the definition of the deicide people, sometimes appear, in the text, only as a conventional legacy. The problem is economic and social: in fact, James de Rothschild’s operations are blamed for the country’s economic decline and constitute the last in a chain of financial acts of sabotage of the national economy, whose first tragic link dates back to the time of the conspiracy of the suppliers of the Grande Armée and of the *féodalité financière* to ensure the failure of the Emperor Bonaparte’s Russian expedition. An explanation, in conspiratorial terms, of the military defeat would have been taken up by the Nazis themselves.

In successive stages – the loans at exorbitant interest rates incurred by governments, granting shareholdings of strategically important firms, the control of public, naval and land transport, banking privileges – the *féodalité* had successfully launched an attack against political power, particularly with the help of the Saint-Simonians, authentic *valets des juifs*.

Juif becomes synonymous with scheming usurer and *juiverie* the quintessence of financial capitalism, the corrupt symbol of rapacity.

Toussenel reductively defines financial capitalism as *juiverie*; above all he symbolically projects on to the *juif* – yet again, in the singular – the old representation of the trafficker, the moneylender, the usurer and the new one of the economic enemy of the national community and the workers. In a subsequent work, *juif* would have become an allegory of the rapacity in the human species and in other animals. Toussenel’s political and socialist solution would also have been copied from the Catholic de Bonald: mindful of the role played by Napoleon in restricting the rights resulting from emancipation, he would not have failed to call for resorting to a new monarchical despotism.

The presence of the representations of the anti-Judaic tradition in the new anti-capitalist movements is also confirmed in other parts of Europe.

In Hapsburg Vienna, during the March Revolution, the call for a Constitution was supported by many liberal writers and the democratic or radical student associations. In some cases it was,

however, violently opposed by workers' and craftsmens' associations fighting for fair rents and the right to support, like the Gesellschaft der Volks freunde or the Demokratische Verein; many associations of workers, craftsmen, porters, dockers launched a campaign against Jewish emancipation fuelled by pamphlets, poems, leaflets and songs, digging up the old material against usurers and accusing the Jews of introducing in Austria the factory system. In Raab, Hungary, in Pressburg and in other provinces of the Empire, "anti-capitalism" actually resulted in *pógroms*. The traditional reasons for hostility are adapted to express the new social conflict coming on top of the dichotomy between the "Jewish nation" and the "German nation", a subject introduced into Hapsburg Austria by the propagandists of the German States since the time of the publication, in 1802, of the work by the Prussian Counsellor Grattauer *Wieder die Juden* and dusted off in Germany to oppose the Berlin emancipation edict of 1812.

We have to wait until the last part of the xix century and the time of the slump in agricultural prices, triggered by the crash of the Vienna Stock Exchange, then of that of Berlin in 1873, to find, in the German-speaking countries, a different type of propaganda directed against the important Jewish financiers and the Lasker, Guttmann, Goldschmith families. Those who stood out were, in Berlin, the representatives of the *junkers* and the German national political groups, in Vienna, the Christian Socialists and the representative of the Landtag of Lower Austria, the extreme Left-wing socialist deputy Karl Lueger. Nevertheless, the presence of an actual socialist and anti-capitalist platform in Austrian political anti-Semitism has not been documented, while one can certainly speak of socialist anti-Jewish anti-capitalism for other European countries, for example the instance of Mantua in Italy.

The Mantuan context, like that of Central Europe, also appears deeply scarred by the great agricultural depression and the agrarian unrest directed against the big capitalist tenant farmers, financiers, tax collectors, the social categories in which the Jewish entrepreneurial and financial élite of the cities played a prominent part. From 1882 to 1885, the reasons for the polemic were not restricted to the economic situation, because it appears obvious, from the socialist newspaper *La Favilla* and the writings of the 'Garibaldino' Luigi Colli, that the identification of the Jews with the usurers is the sign of a political hostility, among the peasants and small landowners, which had old roots. There had already been a harsh reaction against emancipation (from Jewish interdictions) in the Province of Mantua in 1848; and violent riots against the Jews had broken out in 1842. Italian Socialism, and not only Italian, was largely favorable towards emancipation, and yet it would seem

that the radicalization of the social conflict in the last years of the century had given rise to different and hostile positions. This tendency appears to find confirmation in the development of distinctly anti-Jewish positions in the heart of Italian revolutionary syndicalism after the end of the nineteenth century.

Alphonse Toussenel had claimed to have reconciled Tacitus with Bossuet, the encyclopaedists and Fourier, and de Bonald's attack on the revolutionary legislation against *le droit d'aînesse* with the socialist attack on joint-stock companies: after the appeals to the ministers, the clergy, the King and the people, his book ended with a political call specifically addressed *aux socialistes*.

Edouard Drumont rescued Toussenel's text from oblivion and gave it posthumous glory for the war he declared against the republican democracy dominated by the Jews.

La France juive was, in fact, a jumble of stereotypes. Published in 1886, it was immediately hailed, by the periodical of the Assumptionist Fathers, *La Croix*, as the work of "un frère d'armes." Like Toussenel, Drumont also, however, wanted to address the "socialistes eux-même (qui) commencent à comprendre où se cachent les immenses fortunes qui ne font jamais retour aux ouvriers."

Drumont had returned to Catholicism in 1880, thanks to his conversations with the Jesuit Father Stanislas du Lac de Fupères, but he frequented heterogeneous political circles: for example, he availed himself of many Bonapartist and Blanquist collaborators (Draut, Pascal, Papillard) for his own newspaper *La libre Parole*, even if his confused political vision was certainly anti-parliamentarian and authoritarian, despite his very indeterminate institutional model. In *La France juive*, there are many quotations from the "classics" of Christian anti-Judaism, as well as the influence of anti-Jewish and anti-Masonic Catholic works (like that of Father Nicolas Deschamps) and Gougenot de Mousseaux, the patterns of intransigent rhetoric, the racial categories copied from Renan: all combined in order to claim to be able to prove the so-called "grande invasion juive de la Bourse" and thereby justify the plan to expropriate Jewish financial feudality. The political meaning of Drumont's reflection was pinpointed exactly by the editor of *Le Figaro*:

"Aussi, les considérant comme un danger pour la France (Drumont) demande-t-il tranquillement la confiscation de tous les biens des Israélites banquiers ou marchands de lorgnettes. Avec les milliards que produirait cette confiscation, M. Drumont voudrait que l'on tentât au profit des ouvriers des grandes entreprises de coopération et de participation (...). C'est à ce point de vue que son livre me paraît menaçant et que j'y entrevois les germes d'un socialisme catholique qui appellerait les malheureux à la rescousse contre les riches juifs ou républicains, comme les républicains les excitent contre le clergé et le budget des cultes."

A few years later, during the anti-parliamentary campaign conducted by General Boulanger, Drumont would have explicitly claimed to belong to the so-called Christian corporatism and, at the same time, to the socialism of Fourier, Cabet, Pecqueur and Leroux. His plan to build, as it were, “elements of socialism” through cooperative associations and forms of workers’ participation financed with the capital confiscated from the Jews won approval, above all, in Catholic circles, but was also of interest to the editor of the *Revue Socialiste*, Benoit Malon, some Blanquist groups and perhaps Jules Guesde himself, the foremost figure of the Workers’ Party. The public success of his plan and the impact of his ideas on the socialists of several different French schools favored consequently a greater consonance between his thought and the position of Malon’s *Revue Socialiste* and the Blanquists. None of these groups would however have made hatred for the Jews the centerpiece of their own strategy. In their decision to entertain a conversation with Drumont, there was perhaps above all the intention of competing against the Catholics in exploiting anti-Semitism.

In the second half of the 1880s, the *Revue Socialiste* constituted the training ground for the debate and the “foyer commun” of the anti-Semitic socialists. In 1885, some months before the publication of Drumont’s book, the periodical published an important article by Auguste Chirac, a Blanquist socialist leader with Bonapartist leanings (he would have supported General Boulanger’s attempted authoritarian coup d’état). The article was entitled *Les Rois de la République* and constituted an extensive extract of the book by Chirac which had been published two years earlier with the same title (which also referred to Toussenel’s old and forgotten book). Far from the Christian anti-Judaic tradition, nevertheless Chirac utilized the term *Juiverie*, which had always denoted usury and “the despicable practices of the Jewish moneylenders”, in order to attack all the capitalists who profit from illegal rates of interest. They can be labeled Jews, even without actually being so.

Chirac proposed a philosophy of the history of the exploitation of the working-class as a sequence of thefts carried out by the different *juiveries* at the expense of society: usury, larceny, social parasitism, capitalist exploitation: in other words, there is a dangerous Israelite *Juiverie*, but there have also been Christian, Protestant, Catholic, lay and republican *juiveries*. *Israelite* refers to a person who is Jewish, *Juif* denotes the individual who practices the parasitic and anti-social economic role, typical of the Jew, at the expense of the community. All capitalists are, therefore, *Juifs*.

Only the tragedy of Alfred Dreyfus would have forced the French and European working-class and socialist movement to reflect more seriously on the illiberal, conservative and authoritarian nature of the anti-Semitic categories, compelling it to modify positively its opinion of republican democracy. In much of Europe, the idea of exploiting anti-Semitism was abandoned, even if, only a few years earlier, in 1891, at the Brussels Congress of the Socialist International, a motion proposed by the Lithuanian-American Jewish militant Cahan on the so-called “Jewish question” had been rejected. The responsibility for this defeat has, in all probability, to be attributed to the reservations of the leading figure of the International, the Austrian Viktor Adler (of Jewish extraction), as well as the opposition of two Blanquist French socialists close to Auguste Chirac: the author of out-and-out racist works, Albert Regnard and the Franco-Macedonian Paul Agyriades. The episode of the 1891 Congress, barely two years after the establishment of the Socialist International, demonstrates the strength of anti-Jewish prejudice in the workers’ movement and that anti-Semitic anti-capitalism was also present in its executive body.

There is no doubt that, on the whole, the political action of the working-class, socialist movement (but also the Russian Revolution of 1917) “favored the historical process of emancipation” – as Enzo Traverso has written; but it is equally certain that the leading left-wing figures in Central-Eastern Europe – the German, Austrian and Russian-Polish Marxists – were not in a position to grasp either the complexity of Jewish history and its relations with Christianity, or the prism of the social, economic and political conditions of the Jews, which varied enormously in the two main parts of Europe. Prisoners of an evolutionary interpretation of history and convinced that capitalist growth would have created the necessary preconditions for Jewish emancipation, hence for surmounting the legacy of the *ancien régime*, they often stuck to the idea that the solution to the Jewish question would automatically have come from the socialist victory, neglecting to combat the hostility towards the Jews in some sectors of the working-class and in the organized workers’ movement itself. In many Jewish socialist leaders and militants, a mechanistic mentality was coupled with a critical attitude towards what appeared to them a *querelle entre bourgeois*. Viktor Adler, but also Jules Guesde, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, thought in these terms.

But if some Jewish Marxist leader could be regarded as an instance “of hatred by a Jew towards himself” (the *jüdische Selbsthass*), the thesis of the existence, in Marx and the socialist movement itself, of a fundamental anti-Semitism appears totally unfounded. Just as unfounded is the opposing thesis, which reflects an antithetical way of representing the relationship between Judaism and Marxist Socialism, described in terms of a “prophetic and revolutionary essence:” the pursuit of

justice, typical of the Judaism which would have modified and transformed itself into the utopia of socialism as the secularized prophecy of social justice. Bernard Lazare and Walter Benjamin offer two models of this interpretation. In fact, the Jews have not invented revolutions or capitalism, as Pierre Vidal-Naquet has written, even if the exodus has constituted a paradigm for liberation movements.

“The essence” of Judaism does not, therefore, coincide with the libertarian socialist utopia, just as it is not true that a fundamental anti-Semitism was deeply ingrained in the socialist movement from the outset. There is, however, evidence of the existence of an anti-Jewish anti-capitalism, as well as a non-Marxist anti-Semitic socialism, whose origins – particularly in the case of France – have to be considered in relation to the reaction against the Revolution of rights, liberty, emancipation and economic individualism.

It seems to me that that theoretical model derived from a kind of anti-plutocratic and anti-Judaic Catholic anti-capitalism and Socialism that was formulated by Toussenel, Chirac and Drumont between 1845 and 1886, but also its paradigm was created by the intransigent Catholic attitude. De Bonald’s work, *Sur les Juifs*, dates from the time of the revolt against the Enlightenment.

On the other hand, it must be instead recognized that Marxist social-democracy did not understand the Jewish history and the complexity of the social conditions of the Jews. The very socialist Marxist thought, with its critics of the market economy and the theory of the revolution, made impossible a true understanding of the nature of the “Jewish question”. European Socialism, particularly in its Marxist component, was an heir of the political emancipationism of the Enlightenment, incapable of coming to terms with the range of Jews’ socio-economic conditions. The so-called Jewish question was in reality a series of different situations: the French democratic republic weakened by the very strong Catholic opposition to Jewish assimilation; the East-Europe countries marked by discrimination and pogroms; and finally the intermediate position of Germany and Hapsburg Central Europe.