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From Radicalism to Antisemitism*

MOSHE ZIMMERMANN

Antisemitism is generally regarded as a regressive trend in a world undergoing industrialization and a change of values. Therefore one does not expect political forces engaged in modernization and seeking rational and practical solutions to indulge in antisemitic or anti-Jewish activities. Nevertheless, we encounter a considerable measure of antisemitism among the enlightened of the eighteenth century, among the revolutionaries of the nineteenth century, and among the democrats or radicals of the twentieth century, who were the heirs of the enlightened and the inspiration for the twentieth-century revolutionaries.

In the present essay I shall not attempt to give a general description of the interaction between radicalism and antisemitism in the nineteenth century. Rather I shall concentrate upon one biographical aspect of this subject only. On first thought it would seem that the biography best suited for this purpose would be that of Richard Wagner, the man who during the revolution of 1848-9 stood on the barricades beside Bakunin and who, two years later, mounted a general attack against the Jews in music. However, I am convinced that the most significant and interesting biography to throw light upon these developments is that of Wilhelm Marr. It was in the year 1878 that he coined the term antisemitism, thirty years after he himself had fought with his pen, if not with his sword, the battle of the revolutionaries of 1848.

When discussing this man, we need not hesitate to use the term radicalism – since he called himself a radical – as well as the term antisemitism, for he was the original antisemite. We might even claim that he was the only one of his generation to whom the term fully applies, since he himself regarded his successors as degenerated antisemites. Before he died he was even convinced that antisemitism, as he understood and promoted it, had passed away and disappeared.

* This translation first appeared in a slightly different form in The Jerusalem Quarterly 23 (Spring, 1982): 114-128.
Marr's successors themselves regarded the radical, democratic tradition of 1848 as the source of their master's anti-Semitism. They were not far from the truth. I shall attempt to demonstrate how consistent this 1848 radicalism was in his ideology, how he transferred his radicalism from one area of political and social thinking to another, until he became a sheer reactionary in terms of the late nineteenth century. I wish to emphasize here the continuity rather than the turning points in the road from radicalism to anti-Semitism.1

1. Wilhelm Marx's Radical Background

The radicalism of the 1840s has five main characteristics: democracy, emancipation, socialism, revolutionism, and the protest against the accepted norms of society and social thinking.

The connection between radicalism and democracy is so close that we find the combination "radical-democratic" in the name of a party (Marx), and "radical" and "democratic" as interchangeable terms in the definition of Wilhelm Marx's own party. This radical democracy is in the first place distinguished by numerical terms: it is concerned not only with individual citizens as entitled to determine their own fate, but the majority as the decision-maker for all, a distinction that clearly differentiates between the liberals and the democrats of that period.

Ever since the 1830s, the slogan of emancipation had been applied in various contexts: it was meaningful for relations between social classes, between the sexes and between churches. This last point in particular led to heated arguments among radicals. Outside the Church (Feuerbach) as well as within it (Wichert), radicals not only contested the status of the church within the state but even its place in human relations in general. The combination of democracy, emancipation, and antireligiousness necessarily led to revolutionism, to the demand for radical change in the governmental institutions and in the foundations of social activity, using force and violence to a greater or lesser extent. The revolutionary drive was searching for as many outlets as possible, from basic principles of government to matters nowadays termed women's liberation, quality of life, and so forth. Therefore it was regarded by friend and foe alike as calling for a change in the basic norms of society. Only thus can the semantics of the term radical be justified.

First of all, let us consider Wilhelm Marx's way of expressing his radicalism. He was born in Switzerland in 1819 and started his radical activity at an early age. His father, the well-known actor Heinrich Marx,2 sent his son to study trade, but the latter soon got involved in politics. In 1845 he was active in a group called "Young Germany in Switzerland" which was widely regarded as communist and by some as related to the "Young Germany" movement which had previously been operating in France and elsewhere. The movement was indeed close to both these trends; nevertheless it had a character of its own.

Wilhelm Marx surveyed the history of this movement in a book published in 1846, after his expulsion from Switzerland.3 In this book he emphasized the uniqueness of his movement as well as its similarities to the two others. In this context it is important to point out Marr's connections with Weitling. The father and his son's work, and their influence on Karl Marx and German communism, and his indirect criticism of Karl Marx and of German communism at that time. The activity of "Young Germany in Switzerland" was diffuse, its organization was loose, and its ideology nebulous. Yet the radical element was dominant, and so was the protest against the accepted norms of society and social thinking.

The style of writing in our possession is a letter he wrote to his father in June 1843. In this letter he tried to play down the practical significance of his political activity, but he did not conceal his radical leanings.4

In the simplest and most characteristic sentence of this letter he says that "a new world must be built on the ruins of the old," and there can be no doubt that, when he wrote the letter, Marx was convinced that this destruction was a task still confronting him and his fellow revolutionaries. At that stage Marx was looking forward to a war between socio-political classes: "there are only aristocrats and democrats." He regarded the polarization of society as an established fact, as the point of departure for revolutionary acts of the democrats, of "the people." Like a true radical, Marx did not think of a struggle for political power only, but also for economic power, and in this context the subject of the Jews came up in his writings for the first time. Marx saw in Rothschild the personification of economic injustice and asked his father whether it would not be desirable to strip Rothschild of his riches and to distribute them among the 3,333,333 hungry weavers to feed them for 360 days a year (it should be recalled that the time was just before the famous weavers' revolt in Silesia). This question might not be considered as particularly reflecting Marx's views on the Jewish question, for it was posed in the spirit of the 1840s. And yet, the type of Jew outlined here was not just a passing preoccupation with Marx as can be seen in the satirical cartoons and articles in his paper Mephistophiles which appeared in Hamburg between 1847 and 1852, while he was politically active there as a radical. While he had the Jewish question was a side-issue at the time, this was not the case with his anticlerical, even anti-Christian, position which he loudly proclaimed both in its political and its social context.

It is important to mention here that Marx was working then on an abridged and simplified version of Feuerbach's book The Religion of the Future for the larger and less educated public. From Marx's identification with Feuerbach's ideas we can already guess at his future attitude on the subject of religion as a social phenomenon. And indeed his reactions to crises of this period-for example, the crisis of 1848, in the early 1850s, and to a certain degree at the end of the 1870s—were consistent with this point of departure. In retrospect it is clear that his anticlerical polemics prepared the
ground for his anti-Jewish attacks, not a rare development for the radicals of the period. We shall be looking into this later.

One basic principle adopted by the radicals, at least as a means to their end, was nationalism or — mainly in Germany — national unity. In the 1840s, the unification of Germany in the form of a German republic was also an intermediate aim for a man like Marx. Marr considered nationalism as an end in itself, although he felt obliged to justify this in his book of 1846. That nationalism, wrote Marr, was the black, red, and gold nationalism which meant the sort of nationalism that enjoyed the support of both German liberals and democrats, who were trying to rid the country of the restoration regime since the Congress of Vienna.

It was just this subject, which had no connection to the basics of radicalism, that troubled Marr at a later stage, and precisely in this matter he expressed his fear of showing a lack of consistency in his radicalism. As we know, Marr the antisemite acted within the political framework of the Second Reich — the Reich whose colours were black, white, and red and not those of the flag of the republic and the revolution. From the early 1850s onward Marr became, by reason of political logic, one of the supporters of the idea of unification on that basis (it is said that he even received financial aid from Bismarck for writing in praise of the Prussian-German solution). So he had to find an explanation or justification for his support of this sort of national unification which was so different from that for which he had strived in the 1840s. In his memoirs, which he wrote in the last decade of the century, but which were never published, he actually misquoted the parts from his book dealing with his earlier years (the 1840s) by eliminating all the paragraphs in which he glorified red, black, and gold nationalism. But most important of all, he explained why he no longer approved of the nationalism which he had championed in the past: Black, red, and gold nationalism was the nationalism of romanticism and its colors were those of the flag of Barbarossa — that is, of the spirit of the Middle Ages — and that was why he ultimately rejected it. With this argument he seems to be saying that the liberal-democratic nationalism in which he had erroneously believed in the past did not go well with the modern radical approach, and that paradoxically his later conception of nationalism was more consistent with its radical roots. As we shall see, by the same method Marr changed his stand in the matter of the Jews in the direction of an antisemitism that, according to him, was compatible with the principles of the radicalism he had upheld from the very beginning.

2. Marr’s Conclusions from the 1848 Revolution

The year 1848 was a critical one for Marr personally and for radicalism generally. The events of that year had a traumatic effect on Marr and on his comrade-in-arms, Richard Wagner. These events proved to them that the road to the realization of the principles of radicalism was blocked, at least within the political and social frameworks in which they wanted to operate. Marr summarized the relevant conclusions in his long and detailed reminiscences.

His first conclusion relates to two elements of radicalism — democracy and revolution — in redefining the term “people.” His point of departure had been democratic-liberal in the past, and the people were defined as a collection of rational individuals who preserve their own personalities in a collective framework. After 1848 Marr became convinced that this was not an apt definition. The people, he stated somewhat crudely, usually acts instinctively, preferring cheap potatoes — and that is all. It is not a sum total of rational and individual aspirations, but a mass — perhaps resembling an organism, perhaps a conglomerate — that can be manipulated. This utterance was a result of his disappointment of 1848. The next revolution, said Marr, must be conducted in a different way. But not only did Marr change his liberal-rationalistic definition of the term “people” into an organic-ecological one; as a result of this, he also placed stronger emphasis on the element of majority. It is, no doubt, easier to defend the theoretical rights of a minority in accordance with the liberal-rationalistic definition of “people” than according to the latter definition which only refers to the weight of the masses, to the majority as against the minority. And henceforth Marr could rid himself easily of the shackles which liberalism had imposed on his democratic convictions and bestow the crown of all democracy on the “majority” (disregarding the rights of the individuals constituting the minority), thus opening the road for his democratic radicalism to launch the battle against a minority — in this case the Jewish one. Another conclusion concerns the separation between Church and State. In the final analysis the theoretical radical, and even liberal, assumptions on this subject hardly made any difference in political practice, despite the efforts made in this respect before the revolution and in its wake. Consequently, there were only two ways open to Marr — to intensify his struggle or to find a compromise. Marr chose both; surprisingly he pulled the rope at both ends, and the Jews were the main victims of this lack of consistency, for they became the lightning rod of his anticlericalism, and he thereby cooperated with Christianity as theology and state religion.

The conclusion which is most relevant for us and at which Marr arrived after 1848, concerns emancipation. This conclusion was closely connected with his personal fortunes. Marr had expected to reach great heights on the tide of the revolution — either on the all-German level or on the local level in Hamburg, his own state. His expectations remained unfulfilled, for he failed in both cases. In the overall German arena he did not succeed in making an appearance at all; and within a few months his party and his views were defeated in Hamburg. This defeat aroused his personal wrath against the Jews, for the men who succeeded where he had failed were Gabriel Riesser and Isaac Wolfsohn, both belonging to the liberal camp.

Between 1848 and 1863 we witness the contest between Marr and the other two in which Marr attacks while the others ignore him. This contest is not so
important in itself; it is of greater importance in connection with a concept which concerns the success of his two Jewish opponents and his own failure of that of emancipation. The strange development of the revolution explains the distortion of Marr's attitude towards radicalism and towards emancipation.

3. Emancipation and the Bremen Letter

In the eyes of the radicals the revolution of 1848 was a defeat for emancipation — neither the lower classes nor the bourgeoisie had attained it, and the people had not been liberated from despotism, nor the State from the Church. The only exceptions were the Jews, and this fact was particularly conspicuous to Marr in his city. The Jews attained their emancipation, leaving everything else behind. Still worse, the Jews, whom he had known to be liberals and even radicals in the historic times between 1848 and 1851, retired from the general battlefield with their foot, leaving him and his comrades to continue the battle alone. This feeling of Marr's was completely unfounded, when one considered the events in Germany as a whole. But if one looked at the revolutionary events as seen from Hamburg, one could on the face of it agree with him: Of all the binding resolutions of the Frankfurt parliament which had been ratified by the revolutionary authorities of Hamburg in 1849, only one remained in force two years later — that concerning equal rights for the Jews. Under the circumstances it was only to be expected that — even barring the factor of personal animosity — Marr and his kind would go into battle, not for the sake of emancipation as a whole but for non-Jewish emancipation, and ultimately for anti-Jewish emancipation, to the detriment of the Jews.

As a consequence of the conclusions drawn by Marr from the outcome of the revolution, he also changed his views about the Jewish question. But for Marr this change did not come about as quickly as in the case of Wagner. This was because circumstances made him slow in reaching conclusions and because, after the failure of the revolution, he left Europe and spent the next seven years in America. Having returned to his city and to political life, he did not change his views immediately — this time also due to special circumstances. In 1859, after a period of reaction, a thorough constitutional reform was introduced in Hamburg, and the prospects of the radicals (that is, the democrats) looked rosy. In seemed that amends would be made for what had happened ten years earlier. Yet in the early 1860s Marr realized that the disaster was going to repeat itself. The new constitution had given expression to the success of the moderate liberals, and the radicals' electoral victory did not bring about a corresponding change in policy. More aggravating to Marr was the fact that the Jews prevailed again and were granted rights and privileges as an independent group, while the general implementation of radical principles and the overall emancipation was not carried out.

Marr's sharp reaction, unexpected as it may have been, was understandable. It was expressed and published in Bremen's newspaper "Courier an der Weser".

...in a letter addressed to his friend Heidelmann, who was a supporter of the emancipation of the Jews. Heidelmann had sought Marr's backing for a law granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel granting equal rights to the Jews of Bremen. He saw in Marr's letter a parallel grants...
for freedom until we had emancipated ourselves from our prejudices and
slavey peculiarities, thus also the Jews.

If I wanted to live according to my principles in any particular state, the
externality of a religion, believe me, would not deter me, and as I leave
the nexus of one state, I never would have the check to demand of the
majority of that state to legislate special regulations in my favor.

But the problem lies deeper. According to my opinion, Judaism, which
is the same today as it has always been, since it is a tribal particularity, is
incompatible with the life of our state. By its very nature it must always
strive to form a state within a State. You cannot exterminate the instinct-
ive popular aversion against Judaism through so-called emancipation, and
it takes its revenge by becoming a satellite of reaction, of which we have
distinctive proof here in Hamburg. The oriental element is politically and
socially incompatible with ours; just as black and white will never produce
a color other than gray. At one time I, too, dreamt about this question,
but later on I found only renegades in politics, and in social life only . . .
and the few exceptions among the Jews had simply ceased to be Jews.

In one word: Don't look at this question from the religious side;
examine it from the aspect of cultural history, and you will discover a tribe
of mongrels whose vital principle, from the time of the patriarchs who
traded away their wives, to this day is—selling to the highest bidder. The
honorable exceptions (who anyway have better blood in their veins)
should not induce a state to allow its own element to be affected for sale
of an ideological conception. You would not permit 10,000 monkeys to settle
in Bremen. Not for religious reasons, oh no! But because monasticism
endangers the common weal. Judaism, however, is nothing else than a
social congregation, the congregation of a tribe whose whole essence is
beyond our morals and who, once they have struck root, will strive to take
hold of everything for themselves. Religiously they are commanded to do
so, socially this is their nature, politically this is a consequence of both.

You are asking: where is the freedom of religion? And I answer: if
material interests are dearer to the Jew than his religion, let him give it up;
if his religion is dearer to him, how can he demand of us to adapt our state
to it?

If you prevail upon emancipation to stipulate formally that no Jew
may be compelled to contribute to the upkeep of his temple, but that he
must also contribute his share to the leviens borne by all other citizens—
just you try it. But as soon as you accord official recognition to Judaism in
your state, you will experience the bitter consequences in less than three
years!

I am making no secret of my aversion to the Jewish character; as a rule
and almost always I have found among the Jews only masks instead of real
human beings. The religion and its precepts are nothing but products of
their consciousness, their particularities are manifestations of their organ-
ism. And how to the end, for one could write a book on this subject.

Emancipation can only be the fruit of one's own effort. If the people,
the plain, simple people, inexperienced in the arts of dialectics, demands
emancipation with equality for the Jews as emphatically as it demands
emancipation with equality for the Jews as emphatically as it demands
political or social reform, then this has become a necessity. It depends
on the Jews to make themselves so popular that the demand is raised as a
necessity in the consciousness of the people. It is not up to us to enforce
emancipation. Emancipated by us, but remaining isolated in the conscious-
ness of the people, the reaction is as inevitable as it is certain. You will
create allies for despotism and through the exclusivity inherent in the tribe
you will form a limited company which without assist will also be detri-
mental to the economic life of your state. Tribal particularities cannot be
legislated away with the stroke of a pen. But there is still something else,
and this you cannot dispute. So long as the separation of the Church from
the State has not been consistently introduced and carried out by us, it
would be self-contradictory to talk about the emancipation of the Jews.

But if a state religion, viz., a Christian state, is not enough for you, then
you may, as far as I am concerned, allow a temple and synagogal state by
its side. I wish you success.

Don't be angry with me for being so frank. I am doing nothing against
the Jews, because people learn most quickly from experience, and here
monasticism endangers the common weal. Judaism, however, is nothing else than a
social congregation, the congregation of a tribe whose whole essence is
beyond our morals and who, once they have struck root, will strive to take
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and almost always I have found among the Jews only masks instead of real
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What is most significant about this letter is that Marr does not recognize his
democratic radicalism, but makes use of it as a boomerang to hurl at the Jews.
The democratic system is reduced here to the principle of the supremacy of the
majority and thus to an argument against any form of Jewish existence in a
Marr knew full well that his definition of the term Jew may be the Achilles’ heel of his argument. Indeed an anticlerical spirit permeates the whole letter: Granting rights to Jews is compared to rights given to a group of minors; the fight is presented as a fight against religion of any kind, for separation of Church and State in principle, and directed against orthodoxy as such. There is actually a certain consistency in his argument that, so long as the Church is not separated from the State, the emancipation of the Jews would only be part of the total imbalance in relations between Church and State. Yet Marr is in a dilemma. It is not his attack against religion as such that can straighten out the distortions of his argumentation. Throughout the letter we find a discrepancy between the attitude which differentiates between Jews and non-Jews in the religious context and adduces arguments of a religious character for or against emancipation on the one hand, and the impression that this explanation does not sufficiently prove the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. It is insufficient, in the first place, because the principal claim of the Jewish fighters for emancipation had been that they were no longer a “Church,” a “state within a state,” and that they did not support a theology that militated against real social and political partnership in a modern state. Consideration of this claim would have taken the wind out of his sails, but Marr would not agree to its necessary consequences, because his intuition told him that there existed a difference between Jew and non-Jew, and this difference was of great significance. Secondly, this distinction would place Marr, the anticlerical radical, into a posi-

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colors: They could not be anything but a state within a state. Society, Marr was convinced, had proved incapable of absorbing them even in the new constitutional situation, and the Jews sensed this. Therefore the Jews deserted their former allies and took their revenge against the people, democracy, civil society, and the radical ideas by taking the reactionary road. As we have said, this description of the specific case of Hamburg contains a grain of truth, but no more than that. A more balanced view of these developments reveals that there existed a general tendency to revert from the support of radical principles to that of liberal ones—a logical tendency in light of the political developments in Hamburg and of the attitude towards the Jews following these developments. On the other hand it cannot be said that the Jews in general supported the radicals from the outset; neither can one say that the liberal Jews went over to the reactionary and conservative camp in Hamburg, even though the radicals could have got this impression.

5. Marr’s Later Years

Marr’s letter as well as his book Judentumgiving rise to an echo and to opposition. These did not come from the Jewish camp under attack but from the radical-democratic camp which felt itself compromised by a member such as Wilhelm Marr. The majority of the Jews at that time reacted to the sudden attack by adopting the tactics of “silent death sentence,” but the radical-democrats had to take active steps, especially in view of the fact that new elections were imminent. Marr’s fellow radicals understood that with his anti-Jewish utterances he had not renounced the party, but created a deviant stream within it, and for this they wanted to have him expelled. And indeed Marr was excluded from the directorate of the Hamburg Democratic Association. He nevertheless announced his candidacy for the elections and was roundly defeated—not by the liberals but by the democratic-radicals in his district. The radical citizens of Hamburg rejected Marr’s strange brand of radicalism.

Thus ended Marr’s political career as a radical democrat. In the ensuing years he worked mainly as a journalist, but despite his talent remained an obscure member of the profession until 1878. Then the barrier between his democratic-radical past and his anti-democratic and reactionary convictions broke down. The concept of race became a dominant concept which swept away all values of human logic and human will. Nevertheless, the split between these two periods of his life should not be overemphasized; even in the second stage there persists a basic continuity. Firstly, a perusal of Marr’s writings of the 1870s reveals that his conclusions were, at least indirectly, derived from the attacks of 1862. Secondly, his writings over the years after 1862 show his ever-increasing interest in the subject of race in its rational context. “Genuine nationalistic,” stated Marr in one of his articles written in the late 1860s, “in the race.” He did not make this statement, though, for destructive purposes; on the contrary, he joined three races—the Latin, the Slavic, and the Germanic—as carriers of the future, the equilibrium guaranteeing peace and order in

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attitude towards the Jews as a result of antisemitism had acquired on the subject of race was turned in the direction of anti-Semitism and concentrated upon what he considered to be the central and perhaps only goal, the fight of the German nation against the Jews.

A careful reading of Marr’s published works since 1879 will show clearly that even at this stage he was still giving an account of himself as a radical of past years. Attacks were still levied at Gabriel Rieser in these pamphlets, even though he had been dead for more than fifteen years. The defeats which Marr though they had been suffered in 1848 and 1861 still hurt. And this is borne out more by the lively correspondence he conducted during that period than by his published writings. One example will suffice: Among the abundant mass of letters in the Marr archive there is a lengthy correspondence with one of the pillars of German anti-Semitism from its very beginnings until Hitler’s rise to power, Theodor Fritsch. The archive does not contain Marr’s own letters, but Fritsch’s answers disclose the general spirit. Thus Fritsch calls Marr “one of the impractical men of forty-eight” and attacks him for his numerous and, in his view, old-fashioned proclamations in favor of revolution. No doubt, Fritsch was right: Marr’s comments, as we can infer, were based upon the ideology and experience of the radical forty-fives rather than translated into antisemitism.

In the course of the correspondence between the two, Fritsch’s expressions of his opinion grew increasingly aggressive and overtly anti-Semitic over the years, until Marr finally became disappointed in his successor to the anti-Semitic leadership. He regarded them as traitors to antisemitism (Geschäftshandthuenden) and in his opinion this bore ill for the future of the movement which he himself had launched. To the former radical the antisemitism of Fritsch and his companions looked too pragmatic, too narrow, too closely connected with money and organization, and too far from the ideals of 1848—those ideals which, in his view, should have formed the basis for a better world, for democracy and for genuine radicalism. With the passing of time one can discern Marr’s growing embarrassment over the fact that the new antisemites, whose world view was not radical enough for him, were casting him aside. After five years of fighting in the front lines of the anti-Semitic and reactionary movement, and against his friends disappeared from the leadership. And if Marr, the gifted writer, had felt in the past that the Jews were outmanoeuvring him, he now had the feeling that they, the antisemites, were doing the same with even greater ruthlessness. He was so deeply offended that in his late, unfinished articles he pronounced antisemitism dead and paid compliments to the Jews.

In one newspaper, the Oesterreicher Volksfreund, where Marr was still given an opportunity of publishing his letters in his later years, we see the aim of his fight and the consistency of his methods. Marr saw two ways for social revolution—the one was based upon the state and the other on its destruction. The
first is the road of antisemitism; the second is the social-democratic one. Thus, even at this late stage, Marr did not regard antisemitism as "yet another" of the foundations of the state, a narrow-minded form of social critique, but as an all-embracing and radical solution to all the problems that are the subject of social critique. With this Marr continued in 1893 the dispute with the communists in which he had been involved fifty years before as a young man in "Young Germans in Switzerland." In those days even his friends showed antagonism to the state but, unlike the communists of that time, they did not regard the very concept of the state as an obstacle on the road to social revolution. Now Marr saw antisemitism as the basis of the modern state, as opposed to social democracy which strives for betterment at the expense of the state. It is true Marr that ultimately his enemies had won out and that too many people were seeking the radical solution in social democratic ways. Therefore Marr spared no effort to show that his battle against the Jews was a continuation of his radical past, a continuation of the fight for the basic social norms, by showing that it was the Jews who were undermining genuine democracy, the emancipation of the lower classes, the oppressed nationalism, and revolutionary idea. There are doubts about many discrepancies and contradictions in his words which are not reconcilable from the start principles that characterized the start of his course, such as his appeal to Christian feeling and the emphasis on the role of the Christian state. It would seem that these were owing to tactical considerations and, to a certain degree, to the lack of consistency in an aging man. Yet despite all this, it is clear beyond doubt that until the end of his life his antisemitism sprang from the "radicalism of the forty-eight," only that this radicalism no longer served the process of change and modernization but turned him into an obstacle to it and its proponents.11

Notes

2. The fact that Heinrich Marr sometimes played Jews on the stage gave rise to rumors that he was Jewish, and thus also Wilhelm Marr was "suspected" of belonging to the Jewish race. This information is completely baseless, as confirmed by research into the family history in the archives of the State of Hamburg during World War II.
3. W. Menn, Die junge Deutschland in der Schweiz (Lugano, 1860).
5. Die junge Deutschland, p. 79.
8. Supplement to No. 142, June 13, 1863, by Breiten.

18 The Racial Motif in Renan’s Attitude to Jews and Judaism

SAMUEL ALMOG

Since Eugen Diiring and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the concepts of race and antisemitism have become to some extent synonymous. The merger of antisemitism and racial ideology has been so striking that one hardly remembers now that these were originally two independent factors. Racism as a school of thought came into being with the appearance of the book by Joseph Arthur de Gobineau Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines (1853-55), unrelated to the Jewish question. Nevertheless, the work contained seeds of anti-Jewish significance which did, in fact, fall upon the fertile soil of the antisemitic movement of the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century.

1. Ernest Renan – Biographical Background

Even in the very coining of the term antisemitism, attributed to Wilhelm Marr, there was certainly a move toward a racial perception. The connections between Richard Wagner and Gobineau also helped emerge the racial outlook originating from France with the anti-Semitism movement in Germany. However, the ideological reworking of these two elements into a single, combined system was still to come. In searching for the missing link, it is worthwhile to examine the work of Ernest Renan, a contemporary and compatriot of Gobineau, who concerned himself extensively with matters of race and was instrumental in shaping the modern image of the Jew. A close look at Renan’s teachings is highly relevant to our concern, both from the theoretical point of view and because of the great influence he had on the intellectual life of France and Europe at large.

Renan was born in 1823 in a small town in the region of Brittany in the north-west of France. Till the age of twenty-two he was educated in Catholic institutions and prepared himself to take holy orders. After much soul-