

# Anti-Semite and Jew

*Jean-Paul Sartre*

[1944]

Translated by George J. Becker

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If a man attributes all or part of his own misfortunes and those of his country to the presence of Jewish elements in the community, if he proposes to remedy this state of affairs by depriving the Jews of certain of their rights, by keeping them out of certain economic and social activities, by expelling them from the country, by exterminating all of them, we say that he has anti-Semitic opinions.

This word opinion makes us stop and think. It is the word a hostess uses to bring to an end a discussion that threatens to become acrimonious. It suggests that all points of view are equal; it reassures us, for it gives an inoffensive appearance to ideas by reducing them to the level of tastes. All tastes are natural; all opinions are permitted. Tastes, colours, and opinions are not open to discussion. In the name of democratic institutions, in the name of freedom of opinion, the anti-Semite asserts the right to preach the anti-Jewish crusade everywhere.

At the same time, accustomed as we have been since the Revolution to look at every object in an analytic spirit, that is to say, as a composite whose elements can be separated, we look upon persons and characters as mosaics in which each stone coexists with the others without that coexistence affecting the nature of the whole. Thus anti-Semitic opinion appears to us to be a molecule that can enter into combination with other molecules of any origin

whatsoever without undergoing any alteration. A man may be a good father and a good husband, a conscientious citizen, highly cultivated, philanthropic, *and* in addition an anti-Semite. He may like fishing and the pleasures of love, may be tolerant in matters of religion, full of generous notions on the condition of the natives in Central Africa, *and* in addition detest the Jews. If he does not like them, we say, it is because his experience has shown him that they are bad, because statistics have taught him that they are dangerous, because certain historical factors have influenced his judgment.

Thus this opinion seems to be the result of external causes, and those who wish to study it are prone to neglect the personality of the anti-Semite in favour of a consideration of the percentage of Jews who were mobilized in 1914, the percentage of Jews who are bankers, industrialists, doctors, and lawyers, or an examination of the history of the Jews in France since early times. They succeed in revealing a strictly objective situation that determines an equally objective current of opinion, and this they call anti-Semitism, for which they can draw up charts and determine the variations from 1870 to 1944. In such wise anti-Semitism appears to be at once a subjective taste that enters into combination with other tastes to form a personality, and an impersonal and social phenomenon which can be expressed by figures and averages, one which is conditioned by economic, historical, and political constants.

I do not say that these two conceptions are necessarily contradictory. I do say that they are dangerous and false. I would admit, if necessary, that one may have an opinion on the government's policy in regard to the wine industry, that is, that one may decide, *for certain reasons*, either to approve or condemn the free importation of wine from

Algeria: here we have a case of holding an opinion on the administration of things. But I refuse to characterize as opinion a doctrine that is aimed directly at particular persons and that seeks to suppress their rights or to exterminate them. The Jew whom the anti-Semite wishes to lay hands upon is not a schematic being defined solely by his function, as under administrative law; or by his status or his acts, as under the Code. He is a Jew, the son of Jews, recognizable by his physique, by the colour of his hair, by his clothing perhaps, and, so they say, by his character. Anti-Semitism does not fall within the category of ideas protected by the right of free opinion.

Indeed, it is something quite other than an idea. It is first of all a passion. No doubt it can be set forth in the form of a theoretical proposition. The "moderate" anti-Semite is a courteous man who will tell you quietly: "Personally, I do not detest the Jews. I simply find it preferable, for various reasons, that they should play a lesser part in the activity of the nation." But a moment later, if you have gained his confidence, he will add with more abandon: "You see, there must be something about the Jews; they upset me physically."

This argument, which I have heard a hundred times, is worth examining. First of all, it derives from the logic of passion. For, really now, can we imagine anyone's saying seriously: "There must be something about tomatoes, for I have a horror of eating them"? In addition, it shows us that anti-Semitism in its most temperate and most evolved forms remains a syncretic whole which may be expressed by statements of reasonable tenor, but which can involve even bodily modifications. Some men are suddenly struck with impotence if they learn from the woman with whom they are making love that she is a Jewess. There is a disgust for the Jew, just as there is a disgust for the Chinese

or the Negro among certain people. Thus it is not from the body that the sense of repulsion arises, since one may love a Jewess very well if one does not know what her race is; rather it is something that enters the body from the mind. It is an involvement of the mind, but one so deep-seated and complete that it extends to the physiological realm, as happens in cases of hysteria.

This involvement is not caused by experience. I have questioned a hundred people on the reasons for their anti-Semitism. Most of them have confined themselves to enumerating the defects with which tradition has endowed the Jews. "I detest them because they are selfish, intriguing, persistent, oily, tactless, etc" – "But, at any rate, you associate with some of them?" – "Not if I can help it!" A painter said to me: "I am hostile to the Jews because, with their critical habits, they encourage our servants to insubordination." Here are examples a little more precise. A young actor without talent insisted that the Jews had kept him from a successful career in the theatre by confining him to subordinate roles. A young woman said to me: "I have had the most horrible experiences with furriers; they robbed me, they burned the fur I entrusted to them. Well, they were all Jews." But why did she choose to hate Jews rather than furriers? Why Jews or furriers rather than such and such a Jew or such and such a furrier? Because she had in her a predisposition toward anti-Semitism.

A classmate of mine at the lycée told me that Jews "annoy" him because of the thousands of injustices that "Jew-ridden" social organizations commit in their favour. "A Jew passed his agrégation the year I was failed, and you can't make me believe that that fellow, whose father came from Cracow or Lemberg, understood a poem by Ronsard or an eclogue by Virgil better than I." But he admitted that he

disdained the *agrégation*<sup>1</sup> as a mere academic exercise, and that he didn't study for it. Thus, to explain his failure, he made use of two systems of interpretation, like those madmen who, when they are far gone in their madness, pretend to be the King of Hungary but, if questioned sharply, admit to being shoemakers. His thoughts moved on two planes without his being in the least embarrassed by it. As a matter of fact, he will in time manage to justify his past laziness on the grounds that it really would be too stupid to prepare for an examination in which Jews are passed in preference to good Frenchmen. Actually he ranked twenty-seventh on the official list. There were twenty-six ahead of him, twelve who passed and fourteen who failed. Suppose Jews had been excluded from the competition; would that have done him any good? And even if he had been at the top of the list of unsuccessful candidates, even if by eliminating one of the successful candidates he would have had a chance to pass, why should the Jew Weil have been eliminated rather than the Norman Mathieu or the Breton Arzell?

To understand my classmate's indignation we must recognize that he had adopted in advance a certain idea of the Jew, of his nature and of his role in society. And to be able to decide that among twenty-six competitors who were more successful than himself, it was the Jew who robbed him of his place, he must a priori have given preference in the conduct of his life to reasoning based on passion. Far from experience producing his idea of the Jew, it was the latter which explained his experience. If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him.

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<sup>1</sup> Competitive state teachers' examination.

That may be so, you will say, but leaving the question of experience to one side, must we not admit that anti-Semitism is explained by certain historical data? For after all it does not come out of the air. It would be easy for me to reply that the history of France tells us nothing about the Jews: they were oppressed right up to 1789; since then they have participated as best they could in the life of the nation, taking advantage, naturally, of freedom of competition to displace the weak, but no more and no less than other Frenchmen. They have committed no crimes against France, have engaged in no treason. And if people believe there is proof that the number of Jewish soldiers in 1914 was lower than it should have been, it is because someone had the curiosity to consult statistics. This is not one of those facts which have the power to strike the imagination by themselves; no soldier in the trenches was able on his own initiative to feel astonishment at not seeing any Jews in the narrow sector that constituted his universe. However, since the information that history gives on the role of Israel depends essentially on the conception one has of history, I think it would be better to borrow from a foreign country a manifest example of "Jewish treason" and to calculate the repercussions this "treason" may have had on contemporary anti-Semitism.

In the course of the bloody Polish revolts of the nineteenth century, the Warsaw Jews, whom the tsars handled gently for reasons of policy, were very lukewarm toward the rebels. By not taking part in the insurrection they were able to maintain and improve their position in a country ruined by repression.

I don't know whether this is true or not. What is certain is that many Poles believe it, and this "historical fact" contributes not a little to their bitterness against the Jews. But if I examine the matter more closely, I discover a

vicious circle: The czars, we are told, treated the Polish Jews well whereas they willingly ordered pogroms against those in Russia. These sharply different courses of action had the same cause. The Russian government considered the Jews in both Russia and Poland to be inassimilable; according to the needs of their policy, they had them massacred at Moscow and Kiev because they were a danger to the Russian empire, but favoured them at Warsaw as a means of stirring up discord among the Poles. The latter showed nothing but hate and scorn for the Jews of Poland, but the reason was the same: For them Israel could never become an integral part of the national collectivity. Treated as Jews by the tsar and as Jews by the Poles, provided, quite in spite of themselves, with Jewish interests in the midst of a foreign community, is it any wonder that these members of a minority behaved in accordance with the representation made of them?

In short, the essential thing here is not an "historical fact" but the idea that the agents of history formed for themselves of the Jew. When the Poles of today harbour resentment against the Jews for their past conduct, they are incited to it by that same idea. If one is going to reproach little children for the sins of their grandfathers, one must first of all have a very primitive conception of what constitutes responsibility. Furthermore, one must form his conception of the children on the basis of what the grandparents have been. One must believe that what their elders did the young are capable of doing. One must convince himself that Jewish character is inherited. Thus the Poles of 1940 treated the Israelites in the community as *Jews* because their ancestors in 1848 had done the same with their contemporaries. Perhaps this traditional representation would, under other circumstances, have disposed the Jews of today to act like those of 1848. It is

therefore the *idea* of the Jew that one forms for himself which would seem to determine history, not the "historical fact" that produces the idea.

People speak to us also of "social facts," but if we look at this more closely we shall find the same vicious circle. there are too many Jewish lawyers, someone says. But is there any complaint that there are too many Norman lawyers? Even if all the Bretons were doctors would we say anything more than that "Brittany provides doctors for the whole of France"? Oh, someone will answer, it is not at all the same thing. No doubt, but that is precisely because we consider Normans as Normans and Jews as Jews. Thus wherever we turn it is the *idea of the Jew* which seems to be the essential thing.

It has become evident that no external factor can induce anti-Semitism in the anti-Semite. Anti-Semitism is a free and total choice of oneself, a comprehensive attitude that one adopts not only toward Jews, but toward men in general, toward history and society; it is at one and the same time a passion and a conception of the world. No doubt in the case of a given anti-Semite certain characteristics will be more marked than in another. But they are always all present at the same time, and they influence each other. It is this syncretic totality which we must now attempt to describe.

I noted earlier that anti-Semitism is a passion. Everybody understands that emotions of hate or anger are involved, but ordinarily hate and anger have a provocation: I hate someone who has made me suffer, someone who condemns or insults me. We have just seen that anti-Semitic passion could not have such a character. It precedes the facts that are supposed to call it forth; it seeks them out to nourish itself upon them; it must even

interpret them in a special way so that they may become truly offensive. Indeed, if you so much as mention a Jew to an anti-Semite, he will show all the signs of a lively irritation. If we recall that we must always consent to anger before it can manifest itself and that, as is indicated so accurately by the French idiom, we "put ourselves" into anger, we shall have to agree that the anti-Semite has *chosen* to live on the plane of passion. It is not unusual for people to elect to live a life of passion rather than one of reason. But ordinarily they love the *objects* of passion: women, glory, power, money. Since the anti-Semite has chosen hate, we are forced to conclude that it is the *state* of passion that he loves. Ordinarily this type of emotion is 'not very pleasant: a man who passionately desires a woman is impassioned because of the woman and in spite of his passion. We are wary of reasoning based on passion, seeking to support by all possible means opinions which love or jealousy or hate have dictated. We are wary of the aberrations of passion and of what is called mono-ideism. But that is just what the anti-Semite chooses right off.

How can one choose to reason falsely? It is because of a longing for impenetrability. The rational man groans as he gropes for the truth; he knows that his reasoning is no more than tentative, that other considerations may supervene to cast doubt on it. He never sees very clearly where he is going; he is "open"; he may even appear to be hesitant. But there are people who are attracted by the durability of a stone. They wish to be massive and impenetrable; they wish not to change. Where, indeed, would change take them? We have here a basic fear of oneself and of truth. What frightens them is not the content of truth, of which they have no conception, but the form itself of truth, that thing of indefinite approximation. It is as if their own existence were in continual suspension.

But they wish to exist all at once and right away. They do not want any acquired opinions; they want them to be innate. Since they are afraid of reasoning, they wish to wad the kind of life wherein reasoning and research play only a subordinate role, wherein one seeks only what he has already found, wherein one becomes only what he already was. This is nothing but passion. Only a strong emotional bias can give a lightning-like certainty; it alone can hold reason in leash; it alone can remain impervious to experience and last for a whole lifetime.

The anti-Semite has chosen hate because hate is a faith; at the outset he has chosen to devaluate words and reasons. How entirely at ease he feels as a result. How futile and frivolous discussions about the rights of the Jew appear to him. He has placed himself on other ground from the beginning. If out of courtesy he consents for a moment to defend his point of view, he lends himself but does not give himself. He tries simply to project his intuitive certainty onto the plane of discourse. I mentioned awhile back some remarks by anti-Semites, all of them absurd: "I hate Jews because they make servants insubordinate, because a Jewish furrier robbed me, *etc.*" Never believe that anti-Semites are completely unaware of the absurdity of their replies. They know that their remarks are frivolous, open to challenge. But they are amusing themselves, for it is their adversary who is obliged to use words responsibly, since he believes in words. The anti-Semites have the right to play. They even like to play with discourse for, by giving ridiculous reasons, they discredit the seriousness of their interlocutors. They delight in acting in bad faith, since they seek not to persuade by sound argument but to intimidate and disconcert. If you press them too closely, they will abruptly fall silent, loftily indicating by some phrase that the time for argument is past. It is not that they are afraid

of being convinced. They fear only to appear ridiculous or to prejudice by their embarrassment their hope of winning over some third person to their side.

If then, as we have been able to observe, the anti-Semite is impervious to reason and to experience, it is not because his conviction is strong. Rather his conviction is strong because he has chosen first of all to be impervious.

He has chosen also to be terrifying. People are afraid of irritating him. No one knows to what lengths the aberrations of his passion will carry him — but he knows, for this passion is not provoked by something external. He has it well in hand; it is obedient to his will: now he lets go of the reins and now he pulls back on them. He is not afraid of himself, but he sees in the eyes of others a disquieting image-his own-and he makes his words and gestures conform to it. Having this external model, he is under no necessity to look for his personality within himself. He has chosen to find his being entirely outside himself, never to look within, to be nothing save the fear he inspires in others.

What he flees even more than Reason is his intimate awareness of himself. But someone will object: What if he is like that only with regard to the Jews? What if he otherwise conducts himself with good sense? I reply that that is impossible. There is the case of a fishmonger who, in 1942, annoyed by the competition of two Jewish fishmongers who were concealing their race, one fine day took pen in hand and denounced them. I have been assured that this fishmonger was in other respects a mild and jovial man, the best of sons. But I don't believe it. A man who finds it entirely natural to denounce other men cannot have our conception of humanity; he does not see even those whom he aids in the same light as we do. His

generosity, his kindness are not like our kindness, our generosity. You cannot confine passion to one sphere.

The anti-Semite readily admits that the Jew is intelligent and hard-working; he will even confess himself inferior in these respects. This concession costs him nothing, for he has, as it were, put those qualities in parentheses. Or rather they derive their value from the one who possesses them: the more virtues the Jew has the more dangerous he will be. The anti-Semite has no illusions about what he is. He considers himself an average man, modestly average, basically mediocre. There is no example of an anti-Semite's claiming individual superiority over the Jews. But you must not think that he is ashamed of his mediocrity; he takes pleasure in it; I will even assert that he has chosen it. This man fears every kind of solitariness, that of the genius as much as that of the murderer; he is the man of the crowd. However small his stature, he takes every precaution to make it smaller, lest he stand out from the herd and find himself face to face with himself. He has made himself an anti-Semite because that is something one cannot be alone. The phrase, "I hate the Jews," is one that is uttered in chorus; in pronouncing it, one attaches himself to a tradition and to a community — the tradition and community of the mediocre.

We must remember that a man is not necessarily humble or even modest because he has consented to mediocrity. On the contrary, there is a passionate pride among the mediocre, and anti-Semitism is an attempt to give value to mediocrity as such, to create an elite of the ordinary. To the anti-Semite, intelligence is Jewish; he can thus disdain it in all tranquillity, like all the other virtues which the Jew possesses. They are so many ersatz attributes that the Jew cultivates in place of that balanced mediocrity which he

will never have. The true Frenchman, rooted in his province, in his country, borne along by a tradition twenty centuries old, benefiting from ancestral wisdom, guided by tried customs, does not need intelligence. His virtue depends upon the assimilation of the qualities which the work of a hundred generations has lent to the objects which surround him; it depends on property. It goes without saying that this is a matter of inherited property, not property one buys. The anti-Semite has a fundamental incomprehension of the various forms of modern property: money, securities, etc. These are abstractions, entities of reason related to the abstract intelligence of the Semite. A security belongs to no one because it can belong to everyone; moreover, it is a sign of wealth, not a concrete possession. The anti-Semite can conceive only of a type of primitive ownership of land based on a veritable magical rapport, in which the thing possessed and its possessor are united by a bond of mystical participation; he is the poet of real property. It transfigures the proprietor and endows him with a special and concrete sensibility. To be sure, this sensibility ignores eternal truths or universal values: the universal is Jewish, since it is an object of intelligence.

What his subtle sense seizes upon is precisely that which the intelligence cannot perceive. To put it another way, the principle underlying anti-Semitism is that the concrete possession of a particular object gives as if by magic the meaning of that object. Maurras said the same thing when he declared a Jew to be forever incapable of understanding this line of Racine: *Dans l'Orient désert, quel devint mon ennui.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bérénice.

But the way is open to me, mediocre me, to understand what the most subtle, the most cultivated intelligence has been unable to grasp. Why? Because I possess Racine - Racine and my country and my soil. Perhaps the Jew speaks a purer French than I do, perhaps he knows syntax and grammar better, perhaps he is even a writer. No matter; he has spoken this language for only twenty years, and I for a thousand years. The correctness of his style is abstract, acquired; my faults of French are in conformity with the genius of the language. We recognize here the reasoning that Barrès used against the holders of scholarships. There is no occasion for surprise. Don't the Jews have all the scholarships? All that intelligence, all that money can acquire — one leaves to them, but it is as empty as the wind. The only things that count are irrational values, and it is just these things which are denied the Jews forever. Thus the anti-Semite takes his stand from the start on the ground of irrationalism. He is opposed to the Jew, just as sentiment is to intelligence, the particular to the universal, the past to the present, the concrete to the abstract, the owner of real property to the possessor of negotiable securities.

Besides this, many anti-Semites — the majority, perhaps — belong to the lower middle class of the towns; they are functionaries, office workers, small businessmen, who possess nothing. It is in opposing themselves to the Jew that they suddenly become conscious of being proprietors: in representing the Jew as a robber, they put themselves in the enviable position of people who could be robbed. Since the Jew wishes to take France from them, it follows that France must belong to them. Thus they have chosen anti-Semitism as a means of establishing their status as possessors. The Jew has more money than they? So much the better: money is Jewish, and they can despise it as they

despise intelligence. They own less than the gentleman-farmer of Périgord or the large-scale farmer of the Beauce? That doesn't matter. All they have to do is nourish a vengeful anger against the robbers of Israel and they feel at once in possession of the entire country. True Frenchmen, good Frenchmen are all equal, for each of them possesses for himself alone France whole and indivisible.

Thus I would call anti-Semitism a poor man's snobbery. And in fact it would appear that the rich for the most part exploit this passion for their own uses rather than abandon themselves to it — they have better things to do. It is propagated mainly among the middle classes, because they possess neither land nor house nor castle, having only some ready cash and a few securities in the bank. It was not by chance that the petty bourgeoisie of Germany was anti-Semitic in 1925. The principal concern of this "white-collar proletariat" was to distinguish itself from the real proletariat. Ruined by big industry, bamboozled by the Junkers, it was nonetheless to the Junkers and the great industrialists that its whole heart went out. It went in for anti-Semitism with the same enthusiasm that it went in for wearing bourgeois dress: *because* the workers were internationalists, because the Junkers possessed Germany and it wished to possess it also. Anti-Semitism is not merely the joy of hating; it brings positive pleasures too. By treating the Jew as an inferior and pernicious being, I affirm at the same time that I belong to the elite. This elite, in contrast to those of modern times which are based on merit or labour, closely resembles an aristocracy of birth. There is nothing I have to do to merit my superiority, and neither can I lose it. It is given once and for all. It is a *thing*.

We must not confuse this precedence the anti-Semite enjoys by virtue of his principles with individual merit. The anti-Semite is not too anxious to possess individual merit. Merit has to be sought, just like truth; it is discovered with difficulty; one must deserve it. Once acquired, it is perpetually in question: a false step, an error, and it flies away. Without respite, from the beginning of our lives to the end, we are responsible for what merit we enjoy. Now the anti-Semite flees responsibility as he flees his own consciousness, and choosing for his personality the permanence of rock, he chooses for his morality a scale of petrified values. Whatever he does, he knows that he will remain at the top of the ladder; whatever the Jew does, he will never get any higher than the first rung.

We begin to perceive the meaning of the anti-Semite's choice of himself. He chooses the irremediable out of fear of being free; he chooses mediocrity out of fear of being alone, and out of pride he makes of this irremediable mediocrity a rigid aristocracy. To this end he finds the existence of the Jew absolutely necessary. Otherwise to whom would he be superior? Indeed, it is vis-à-vis the Jew and the Jew alone that the anti-Semite realizes that he has rights. If by some miracle all the Jews were exterminated as he wishes, he would find himself nothing but a concierge or a shopkeeper in a strongly hierarchical society in which the quality of "true Frenchman" would be at a low valuation, because everyone would possess it. He would lose his sense of rights over the country because no one would any longer contest them, and that profound equality which brings him close to the nobleman and the man of wealth would disappear all of a sudden, for it is primarily negative. His frustrations, which he has attributed to the disloyal competition of the Jew, would have to be imputed to some other cause, lest he be forced to look within

himself. He would run the risk of falling into bitterness, into a melancholy hatred of the privileged classes. Thus the anti-Semite is in the unhappy position of having a vital need for the very enemy he wishes to destroy.

The equalitarianism that the anti-Semite seeks with so much ardour has nothing in common with that equality inscribed in the creed of the democracies. The latter is to be realized in a society that is economically hierarchical, and is to remain compatible with a diversity of functions. But it is in protest *against* the hierarchy of functions that the anti-Semite asserts the equality of Aryans. He does not understand anything about the division of labour and doesn't care about it. From his point of view each citizen can claim the title of French man, not because he cooperates, in his place or in his occupation, with others in the economic, social, and cultural life of the nation, but because he has, in the same way as everybody else, an imprescriptible and inborn right to the indivisible totality of the country. Thus the society that the anti-Semite conceives of is a society of juxtaposition, as one can very well imagine, since his ideal of property is that of real and basic property. Since, in point of fact, anti-Semites are numerous, each of them does his part in constituting a community based on mechanical solidarity in the heart of organized society.

The degree of integration of each anti-Semite with this society, as well as the degree of his equality, is fixed by what I shall call the temperature of the community. Proust has shown, for example, how anti-Semitism brought the duke closer to his coachman, how, thanks to their hatred of Dreyfus, bourgeois families forced the doors of the aristocracy. The equalitarian society that the anti-Semite believes in is like that of mobs or those instantaneous

societies which come into being at a lynching or during a scandal. Equality in them is the product of the non-differentiation of functions. The social bond is anger; the collectivity has no other goal than to exercise over certain individuals a diffused repressive sanction. Collective impulses and stereotypes are imposed on individuals all the more strongly because none of them is defended by any specialized function. Thus the person is drowned in the crowd, and the ways of thinking and reacting of the group are of a purely primitive type. Of course, such collectivities do not spring solely from anti-Semitism; an uprising, a crime, an injustice can cause them to break out suddenly. But those are ephemeral formations which soon vanish without leaving any trace.

Since anti-Semitism survives the great crises of Jew-hatred, the society which the anti-Semites form remains in a latent state during normal periods, with every anti-Semite celebrating its existence. Incapable of understanding modern social organization, he has a nostalgia for periods of crisis in which the primitive community will suddenly reappear and attain its temperature of fusion. He wants his personality to melt suddenly into the group and be carried away by the collective torrent. He has this atmosphere of the pogrom in mind when he asserts "the union of all Frenchmen." In this sense anti-Semitism is, in a democracy, a covert form of what is called the struggle of the citizen against authority. Question any one of those turbulent young men who placidly break the law and band together to beat up a Jew in a deserted street: He will tell you that he wants a strong authority to take from him the crushing responsibility of thinking for himself. Since the Republic is weak, he is led to break the law out of love of obedience. But is it really strong authority that he wishes? In reality he demands rigorous order for others, and for

himself disorder without responsibility. He wishes to place himself above the law, at the same time escaping from the consciousness of his liberty and his isolation. He therefore makes use of a subterfuge: The Jews take part in elections; there are Jews in the government; therefore the legal power is vitiated at its base. As a matter of fact, it no longer exists, so it is legitimate to ignore its decrees. Consequently there is no disobedience-one cannot disobey what does not exist. Thus for the anti-Semite there is a real France with a government real but diffused and without special organs, and an abstract France, official, Jew-ridden, against which it is proper to rebel.

Naturally this permanent rebellion is the act of a group; the anti-Semite would under no circumstances dare to act or think on his own. And the group would be unable to conceive of itself as a minority party, for a minority party is obliged to devise a program and to determine on a line of political action, all of which implies initiative, responsibility, and liberty. Anti-Semitic associations do not wish to invent anything; they refuse to assume responsibility; they would be horrified at setting themselves up as a certain fraction of French opinion, for then they would have to draw up a program and seek legal means of action. They prefer to represent themselves as expressing in all purity, in all passivity, the sentiments of the real country in its indivisible state.

Any anti-Semite is therefore, in varying degree, the enemy of constituted authority. He wishes to be the disciplined member of an undisciplined group; he adores order, but a social order. We might say that he wishes to provoke political disorder in order to restore social order, the social order in his eyes being a society that, by virtue of juxtaposition, is egalitarian and primitive, one with a

heightened temperature, one from which Jews are excluded. These principles enable him to enjoy a strange sort of independence, which I shall call an inverted liberty. Authentic liberty assumes responsibilities, and the liberty of the anti-Semite comes from the fact that he escapes all of his. Floating between an authoritarian society which has not yet come into existence and an official and tolerant society which he disavows, he can do anything he pleases without appearing to be an anarchist, which would horrify him. The profound seriousness of his aims — which no word, no statement, no act can express — permits him a certain frivolity. He is a hooligan, he beats people up, he urges, he robs; it is all in a good cause. If the government is strong, anti-Semitism withers, unless it be a part of the program of the government itself, in which case it changes its nature. Enemy of the Jews, the anti-Semite has need of them. Anti-democratic, he is a natural product of democracies and can only manifest himself within the framework of the Republic.

We begin to understand that anti-Semitism is more than a mere "opinion" about the Jews and that it involves the entire personality of the anti-Semite. But we have not yet finished with him, for he does not confine himself to furnishing moral and political directives: he has a method of thought and a conception of the world all his own. In fact, we cannot state what he affirms without implicit reference to certain intellectual principles.

The Jew, he says, is completely bad, completely a Jew. His virtues, if he has any, turn to vices by reason of the fact that they are his; work coming from his hands necessarily bears his stigma. If he builds a bridge, that bridge, being Jewish, is bad from the first to the last span. The same action carried out by a Jew and by a Christian does not have the same meaning in the two cases, for the Jew contaminates

all that he touches with an I-know-not-what execrable quality. The first thing the Germans did was to forbid Jews access to swimming pools; it seemed to them that if the body of an Israelite were to plunge into that confined body of water, the water would be completely befouled. Strictly speaking, the Jew contaminates even the air he breathes.

If we attempt to formulate in abstract terms the principle to which the anti-Semite appeals, it would come to this: A whole is more and other than the sum of its parts; a whole determines the meaning and underlying character of the parts that make it up. There is not *one* virtue of courage which enters indifferently into a Jewish character or a Christian character in the way that oxygen indifferently combines with nitrogen and argon to form air and with hydrogen to form water. Each person is an indivisible totality that has its own courage, its own generosity, its own way of thinking, laughing, drinking, and eating.

What is there to say except that the anti-Semite has chosen to fall back on the spirit of synthesis in order to understand the world. It is the spirit of synthesis which permits him to conceive of himself as forming an indissoluble unity with all France. It is in the name of this spirit that he denounces the purely analytical and critical intelligence of the Jews. But we must be more precise. For some time, on the Right and on the Left, among the traditionalists and among the socialists, it has been the fashion to make appeal to synthetic principles as against the spirit of analysis which presided over the foundation of bourgeois democracy. Yet both sides cannot be said to act on the same principles, or, if they do, they certainly make a different use of them. What use does the anti-Semite make of these principles? We find scarcely any anti-Semitism among workers.

It is absurd to answer that that is because there are no Jews in their ranks. Suppose the fact alleged were true; that is precisely what they would have to complain of. The Nazis knew it very well, for when they wished to extend their propaganda to the proletariat, they launched the slogan of "Jewish capitalism." The working class does, however, think about the social situation synthetically, only it does not use the methods of the anti-Semites. It sees ensembles in terms of economic functions. The bourgeoisie, the peasant class, the proletariat — those are the synthetic realities with which it is concerned, and in those complexes it distinguishes secondary synthetic structures — labour unions, employers' associations, trusts, cartels, parties. Thus the explanations it gives for historical phenomena are found to agree perfectly with the differentiated structure of a society based on division of labour. History, as the working class sees it, is the result of the play of economic organisms and the interaction of synthetic groups.

The majority of the anti-Semites, on the contrary, belongs to the middle class, that is, among men who have a level of life equal or superior to that of the Jews, or, if you prefer, among the "non-producers" (employers, merchants, distributors, members of the liberal professions, parasites). The bourgeois in fact *does not produce*: he directs, administers, distributes, buys, sells. His function is to enter into direct relations with the consumer; in other words, his activity is based on a constant commerce with men, whereas the worker, in the exercise of his trade, is in permanent contact with things. Each man judges history in accordance with the profession that he follows. Shaped by the daily influence of the materials he works with, the workman sees society as the product of real forces acting in accordance with rigorous laws. His dialectical "materialism" signifies that he envisages the social world in the

same way as the material world. On the other hand, the bourgeois — and the anti-Semite in particular — have chosen to explain history by the action of individual wills. Do not the bourgeois depend on these same wills in the conduct of their affairs?<sup>3</sup> They behave toward social facts like primitives who endow the wind and the sun with little souls. Intrigues, cabals, the perfidy of one man, the courage and virtue of another — that is what determines the course of their business, that is what determines the course of the world.

Anti-Semitism, a bourgeois phenomenon, appears therefore as a choice made to explain collective events by the initiative of individuals. No doubt the proletarian caricatures "the bourgeois" on posters and in newspapers in exactly the same manner as the anti-Semite caricatures "the Jew."

But this external resemblance should not deceive us. To the worker, what constitutes the bourgeois is his bourgeois status, that is, an ensemble of external factors; and the bourgeois himself is reducible to the synthetic unity of these externally apparent manifestations. It is an ensemble of various modes of *behaviour*. For the anti-Semite, what makes the Jew is the presence in him of "Jewishness," a Jewish principle analogous to phlogiston or the soporific virtue of opium. We must not be deceived: explanations on the basis of heredity and race came later; they are the slender scientific coating of this primitive conviction. Long before Mendel and Gobineau there was a horror of the Jew, and those who felt it could not explain it except by saying, like Montaigne of his friendship for La

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<sup>3</sup> I make an exception here of the engineer, the contractor, and the scientist, whose occupations bring them closer to the proletariat, and who in fact are infrequently anti-Semitic.

Boétie: "Because he is he, because I am I." Without the presence of this metaphysical essence, the activities ascribed to the Jew would be entirely incomprehensible. Indeed, how could we conceive of the obstinate folly of a rich Jewish merchant who, we are told, makes every effort to ruin his country, whereas if he were reasonable, he would desire the prosperity of the country in which he does business? How could we otherwise understand the evil internationalism of men whom their families, their affections, their habits, their interests, the nature and source of their fortunes should attach to the destiny of a particular country?

Facile talkers speak of a Jewish will to dominate the world. Here again, if we did not have the key, the manifestations of this will would certainly be unintelligible to us. We are told in almost the same breath that behind the Jew lurks international capitalism and the imperialism of the trusts and the munitions makers, and that he is the front man for piratical Bolshevism with a knife between its teeth. There is no embarrassment or hesitation about imputing responsibility for communism to Jewish bankers, whom it would horrify, or responsibility for capitalist imperialism to the wretched Jews who crowd the rue des Rosiers. But everything is made clear if we renounce any expectation from the Jew of a course of conduct that is reasonable and in conformity with his interests, if, instead, we discern in him a metaphysical principle that drives him *to do evil* under all circumstances, even though he thereby destroy himself. This principle, one may suspect, is magical. On the one hand, it is an essence, a substantial form, and the Jew, whatever he does, cannot modify it, any more than fire can keep itself from burning. On the other hand, it is necessary in order to be able to hate the Jew-for one does not hate natural phenomena like earthquakes and plagues

of locusts-that it also have the virtue of freedom. Only the freedom in question is carefully limited: The Jew is free *to do evil*, not good; he has only as much free will as is necessary for him to take full responsibility for the crimes of which he is the author; he does not have enough to be able to achieve a reformation. Strange liberty, which instead of preceding and constituting the essence, remains subordinate to it, is only an irrational quality of it, and yet remains liberty.

There is only one creature, to my knowledge, who is thus totally free and yet chained to evil; that is the Spirit of Evil himself, Satan. Thus the Jew is assimilable to the spirit of evil. His will, unlike the Kantian will, is one which wills itself purely, gratuitously, and universally to be evil. It is *the will to evil*. Through him Evil arrives on the earth. All that is bad in society (crises, wars, famines, upheavals, and revolts) is directly or indirectly imputable to him. The anti-Semite is afraid of discovering that the world is ill-contrived, for then it would be necessary for him to invent and modify, with the result that man would be found to be the master of his own destinies, burdened with an agonizing and infinite responsibility. Thus he localizes all the evil of the universe in the Jew. If nations war with each other, the conflict does not arise from the fact that the idea of nationality, in its present form, implies imperialism and the clash of interests. No, it is because the Jew is there, behind the governments, breathing discord. If there is a class struggle, it is not because the economic organization leaves something to be desired. It is because Jewish demagogues, hook-nosed agitators, have seduced the workers.

Anti-Semitism is thus seen to be at bottom a form of Manichaeism. It explains the course of the world by the

struggle of the principle of Good with the principle of Evil. Between these two principles no reconciliation is conceivable; one of them must triumph and the other be annihilated. Look at Céline: his vision of the universe is catastrophic. The Jew is everywhere, the earth is lost, it is up to the Aryan not to compromise, never to make peace. Yet he must be on his guard: if he breathes, he has already lost his purity, for the very air that penetrates his bronchial tubes is contaminated. Does that not read like a diatribe by a Manichaeist? If Céline supported the socialist theses of the Nazis, it was because he was paid to do so. At the bottom of his heart he did not believe in them. For him there is no solution except collective suicide, non-reproduction, death. Others — Maurras or the P.P.F.<sup>4</sup> — are less discouraging. They envisage a long and often doubtful struggle, with the final triumph of Good. It is Ormazd against Ahriman. The reader understands that the anti-Semite does not have recourse to Manichaeism as a secondary principle of explanation. It is the original choice he makes of Manichaeism which explains and conditions anti-Semitism. We must therefore ask ourselves what this original choice can mean for a man of today.

Let us compare for a moment the revolutionary idea of the class struggle with the Manichaeism of the anti-Semite. In the eyes of the Marxist, the class struggle is in no sense a struggle between Good and Evil; it is a conflict of interests between human groups. The reason why the revolutionary adopts the point of view of the proletariat is, first of all, because it is *his own* class, then because it is oppressed, because it is by far the most numerous and consequently involves the fate of mankind in its own destiny, finally

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<sup>4</sup> Parti Populaire Français.

because the results of its victory will necessarily include the abolition of the class structure. The goal of the revolutionary is to change the organization of society. To do that it will no doubt be necessary to destroy the old regime. But that will not be sufficient; above all it will be necessary to build a new order. If by some impossible chance the privileged class were willing to co-operate in the socialist reconstruction and gave clear proofs of its good faith, there would be no valid reason for repulsing it.

If it is highly improbable that it will offer its support to the socialists in good faith, it is because its very situation as a privileged class prevents it from doing so, not because of some indefinable interior demon which impels it to do evil in its own despite. In any case, if portions of this class break away from it, they can be constantly assimilated to the oppressed class, and they will be judged by their acts, not by their essence. "I don't give a damn for your eternal essence," Politzer told me one day. On the other hand, the Manichaeian anti-Semite puts his emphasis on destruction. What he sees is not a conflict of interests but the damage which an evil power causes society. Therefore Good consists above all in the destruction of Evil. Underneath the bitterness of the anti-Semite is concealed the optimistic belief that harm only will be re-established of itself, once Evil is eliminated. His task is therefore purely negative: there is no question of building a new society, but only of purifying the one which exists. In the attainment of this goal the co-operation of Jews of good will would be useless and even fatal, and anyhow no Jew could be a man of good will. Knight-errant of the Good, the anti-Semite is a holy man. The Jew also is holy in his manner — holy like the untouchables, like savages under the interdict of a taboo. Thus the conflict is raised to a religious plane, and the end of the combat can be nothing other than a holy destruction.

The advantages of this position are many. To begin with, it favours laziness of mind. We have seen that the anti-Semite understands nothing about modern society. He would be incapable of conceiving of a constructive plan; his action cannot reach the level of the methodical; it remains on the ground of passion. To a long-term enterprise he prefers an explosion of rage analogous to the running amuck of the Malays. His intellectual activity is confined to *interpretation*; he seeks in historical events the signs of the presence of an evil power. Out of this spring those childish and elaborate fabrications which give him his resemblance to the extreme paranoiacs. In addition, anti-Semitism channels evolutionary drives toward the destruction of certain men, not of institutions. An anti-Semitic mob will consider it has done enough when it has massacred some Jews and burned a few synagogues. It represents, therefore, a safety valve for the owning classes, who encourage it and thus substitute for a dangerous hate against their regime a beneficent hate against particular people.

Above all this naive dualism is eminently reassuring to the anti-Semite himself. If all he has to do is to remove Evil, that means that the Good is already *given*. He has no need to seek it in anguish, to invent it, to scrutinize it patiently when he has found it, to prove it in action, to verify it by its consequences, or, finally, to shoulder the responsibilities of the moral choice he has made.

It is not by chance that the great outbursts of anti-Semitic rage conceal a basic optimism. The anti-Semite as cast his lot for Evil so as not to have to cast his lot for Good. The more one is absorbed in fighting Evil, the less one is tempted to place the Good in question. One does not need to talk about it, yet it is always understood in the discourse of the anti-Semite and it remains understood in his

thought. When he has fulfilled his mission as holy destroyer, the Lost Paradise will reconstitute itself. For the moment so many tasks confront the anti-Semite that he does not have time to think about it. He is in the breach, fighting, and each of his outbursts of rage is a pretext to avoid the anguished search for the Good.

But that is not all, and now we touch on the domain of psychoanalysis. Manichaeism conceals a deep-seated attraction toward Evil. For the anti-Semite Evil is his lot, his Job's portion. Those who come after will concern themselves with the Good, if there is occasion. As for him, he is in the front rank of society, fighting with his back turned to the pure virtues that he defends. His business is with Evil; his duty is to unmask it, to denounce it, to measure its extent. That is why he is so obsessed with piling up anecdotes that reveal the lubricity of the Jew, his appetite for money, his ruses, and his treasons. He bathes his hands in ordure. Read again *La France Juive* of Drumont; that book of a "high French morality" is a collection of ignoble or obscene stories. Nothing reflects better the complex nature of the anti-Semite. Since through fear of standing out from the crowd he has not wished to *choose* his Good, allowing everybody else's to be imposed on him, his morality is never based on an intuition of values or on what Plato calls Love. It shows itself only by the strictest taboos, by the most rigorous and most gratuitous imperatives.

What he contemplates without intermission, that for which he has an intuition and almost a taste, is Evil. He thus glut himself to the point of obsession with the recital of obscene or criminal actions which excite and satisfy his perverse leanings; but since at the same time attributes them to those infamous Jews on whom he heaps his scorn, he satisfies himself without being compromised. In Berlin

I knew a Protestant in whom sexual desire took the form of indignation. The sight of women bathing suits aroused him to fury; he willingly encouraged that fury and passed his time at swimming pools. The anti-Semite is like that, and one of the elements of his hatred is a profound sexual attraction toward Jews.

His behaviour reflects a curiosity fascinated by Evil, it above all, I think, it represents a basic sadism. Anti-Semitism is incomprehensible unless one recalls that the Jew, object of so much execration, is perfectly innocent, I should even say inoffensive. Thus the anti-Semite takes pains to speak to us of secret Jewish organizations, of formidable and clandestine freemasonries. Yet he meets a Jew face to face, it is as often as not a weak creature who is ill-prepared to cope with violence and cannot even defend himself. The anti-Semite is well aware of this individual weakness of the Jew, which hands him over to pogroms with feet and hands bound -indeed, he licks his chops over it in advance.

Thus his hatred for the Jew cannot be compared to that which the Italians of 1830 felt toward the Austrians, or that which the French of 1942 felt toward the Germans. In these instances it was a case of oppressors, of hard, cruel, and strong men who had arms, money, and power and who could do more harm to the rebels than the latter could have dreamed of doing to them. In hatreds like these sadistic leanings have no place. But since Evil, to the anti-Semite, is incarnated in unarmed and harmless men, the latter never finds himself under the painful necessity of being heroic. It is fun to be an anti-Semite. One can beat and torture Jews without fear. At most they can appeal to the laws of the Republic, but those laws are not too rigorous.

The sadistic attraction that the anti-Semite feels toward the Jew is so strong that it is not unusual to see one of these sworn enemies of Israel surround himself with Jewish friends. To be sure, he says they are "exceptional Jews," insists that "these aren't like the rest." (In the studio of the painter whom I mentioned earlier, a man who in no way spoke out against the butchery at Lublin, there was in full view the portrait of a Jew who was dear to him and whom the Gestapo had shot.) Such protestations of friendship are not sincere, for anti-Semites do not envisage, even in their statements, sparing the "good Jews," and, while they recognize some virtues in those whom they know, they will not admit that their interlocutors may have been able to meet others equally virtuous. Actually they take pleasure in protecting these few persons through a sort of inversion of their sadism; they take pleasure in keeping under their eyes the living image of this people whom they execrate. Anti-Semitic women often have a mixture of sexual repulsion and attraction toward Jews. One woman I knew had intimate relations with a Polish Jew. She would often go to bed with him and allow him to caress her breasts and shoulders, but nothing more. She enjoyed feeling him respectful and submissive, divining his violently frustrated and humiliated desire. She afterward had normal sexual intercourse with other men.

There is in the words "a beautiful Jewess" a very special sexual signification, one quite different from that contained in the words "beautiful Rumanian," "beautiful Greek," or "beautiful American," for example. This phrase carries an aura of rape and massacre. The "beautiful Jewess" is she whom the Cossacks under the czars dragged by her hair through the streets of her burning village. And the special works which are given over to accounts of flagellation

reserve a place of honour for the Jewess. But it is not necessary to look into esoteric literature. From the Rebecca of *Ivanhoe* up to the Jewess of "Gilles," not forgetting the works of Ponson du Terrail, the Jewess has a well-defined function in even the most serious novels. Frequently violated or beaten, she sometimes succeeds in escaping dishonour by means of death, but that is a form of justice; and those who keep their virtue are docile servants or humiliated women in love with indifferent Christians who marry Aryan women. I think nothing more is needed to indicate the place the Jewess holds as a sexual symbol in folklore.

A destroyer in function, a sadist with a pure heart, the anti-Semite is, in the very depths of his heart, a criminal. What he wishes, what he prepares, is the *death* of the Jew.

To be sure, not all the enemies of the Jew demand his death openly, but the measures they propose — all of which aim at his abasement, at his humiliation, at his banishment— are substitutes for that assassination which they meditate within themselves. They are symbolic murders. Only, the anti-Semite has his conscience on his side: he is a criminal in a good cause. It is not his fault, surely, if his mission is to extirpate Evil by doing Evil. The *real* France has delegated to him the powers of her High Court of Justice. No doubt he does not have occasion every day to make use of them, but we should not be misled on that account. These sudden fits of anger which seize him, these thundering diatribes which he hurls at the "Yids" are so many capital executions. The anti-Semite has chosen to be a criminal, and a criminal *pure of heart*. Here again he flees responsibilities. Though he censures his murderous instincts, he has found a means of satiating them without admitting it to himself. He knows that he is wicked, but since he does Evil *for the sake of Good*, since a whole people

waits for deliverance at his hands, he looks upon himself as a sanctified evildoer. By a sort of inversion of all values, of which we find examples in certain religions — for example, in India, where there exists a sacred prostitution — the anti-Semite accords esteem, respect, and enthusiasm to anger, hate, pillage, murder, to all the forms of violence. Drunk with evil, he feels in himself the lightness of heart and peace of mind which a good conscience and the satisfaction of a duty well done bring.

The portrait is complete. If some of those who readily assert that they detest the Jews do not recognize themselves in it, it is because in actual fact they do not detest the Jews. They don't love them either. While they would not do them the least harm, they would not raise their little fingers to protect them from violence. They are not anti-Semites. They are not anything; they are not *persons*. Since it is necessary to appear to be something, they make themselves into an echo, a murmur, and, without thinking of evil-without thinking of anything -they go about repeating learned formulas which give them the right of entry to certain drawing rooms. Thus they know the delights of being nothing but an empty noise, of having their heads filled with an enormous affirmation which they find all the more respectable because they have borrowed it. Anti-Semitism is only, a justification for their existence. Their futility is such that they will eagerly abandon this justification for any other, provided that the latter be more "distinguished." For anti-Semitism is *distinguished*, as are all the manifestations of a collective and irrational soul which seek to create an occult and conservative France. It seems to all these featherbrains that by repeating with eager emulation the statement that the Jew is harmful to the country they are performing a rite of initiation which admits them to the fireside of social warmth and energy.

In this sense anti-Semitism has kept something of the nature of human sacrifice.

It has, moreover, a considerable advantage for those people who are aware of their profound instability and are weary of it. It permits them to put on the externals of passion and, as has been fashionable since the Romantic movement, to confuse this with personality. These second-hand anti-Semites can provide themselves at little cost with an aggressive personality. One of my friends often used to tell me about an elderly cousin of his who came to dine with his family and about whom they said, with a certain air: "Jules can't abide the English." My friend doesn't recall that they, ever said anything else about Cousin Jules. But that was enough. There was a tacit understanding between Jules and his family: They ostentatiously avoided talking about the English in front of him, and that precaution gave him a semblance of existence in the eyes of those about him at the same time that it provided them with the agreeable sensation of participating in a sacred ceremony. Then on occasion after careful deliberation, someone, as if by inadvertence, would throw out an allusion to Great Britain or her dominions. Cousin Jules, pretending to become very angry, would feel himself come to life for a moment, and everybody would be happy.

Many people are anti-Semites in the way Cousin Jules was an Anglophobe, without, to be sure, realizing the true implications of their attitude. Pale reflections, reeds shaken by the wind, they certainly would not have invented anti-Semitism, if the conscious anti-Semite did not already exist. But it is they who with complete indifference assure the survival of anti-Semitism and carry it forward through the generations.

We are now in a position to understand the anti-Semite. He is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his own consciousness, of his liberty, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitariness, of change, of society, and of the world — of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not want to admit his cowardice to himself ; a murderer who represses and censures his tendency to murder without being able to hold it back, yet who dares to kill only in effigy or protected by the anonymity of the mob; a malcontent who dares not revolt from fear of the consequences of his rebellion. In espousing anti-Semitism, he does not simply adopt an opinion, he chooses himself as a person. He chooses the permanence and impenetrability of stone, the total irresponsibility of the warrior who obeys his leaders — and he has no leader. He chooses to acquire nothing, to deserve nothing; he assumes that everything is given him as his birthright-and he is not noble. He chooses finally a Good that is fixed once and for all, beyond question, out of reach; he dares not examine it for fear of being led to challenge it and having to seek it in another form. The Jew only serves him as a pretext; elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro or the man of yellow skin. The existence of the Jew merely permits the anti-Semite to stifle his anxieties at their inception by persuading himself that his place in the world has been marked out in advance, that it awaits him, and that tradition gives him the right to occupy it. Anti-Semitism, in short, is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt—anything except a man.