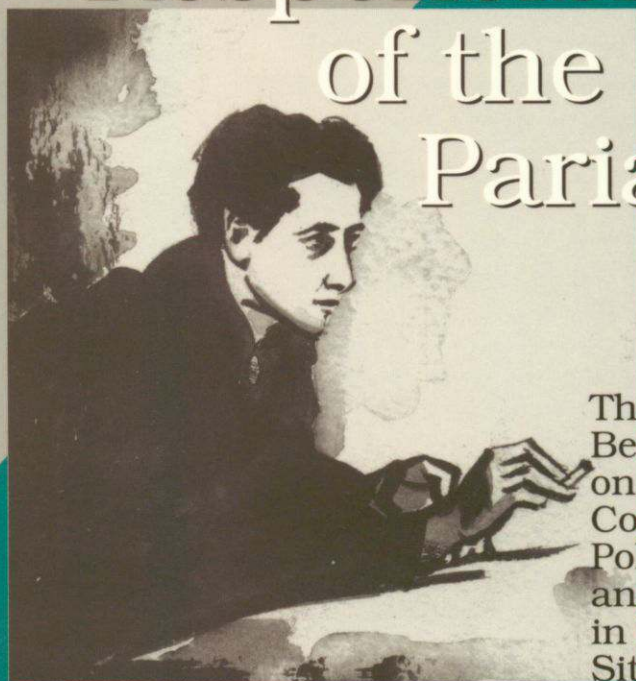


Publications of Social and Political Sciences and Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä

Tuija Parvikko

# The Responsibility of the Pariah



The Impact of  
Bernard Lazare  
on Arendt's  
Conception of  
Political Action  
and Judgement  
in Extreme  
Situations

SoPhi



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# SoPhi

Publications of Social and Political Sciences and Philosophy 7  
University of Jyväskylä

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## ABSTRACT

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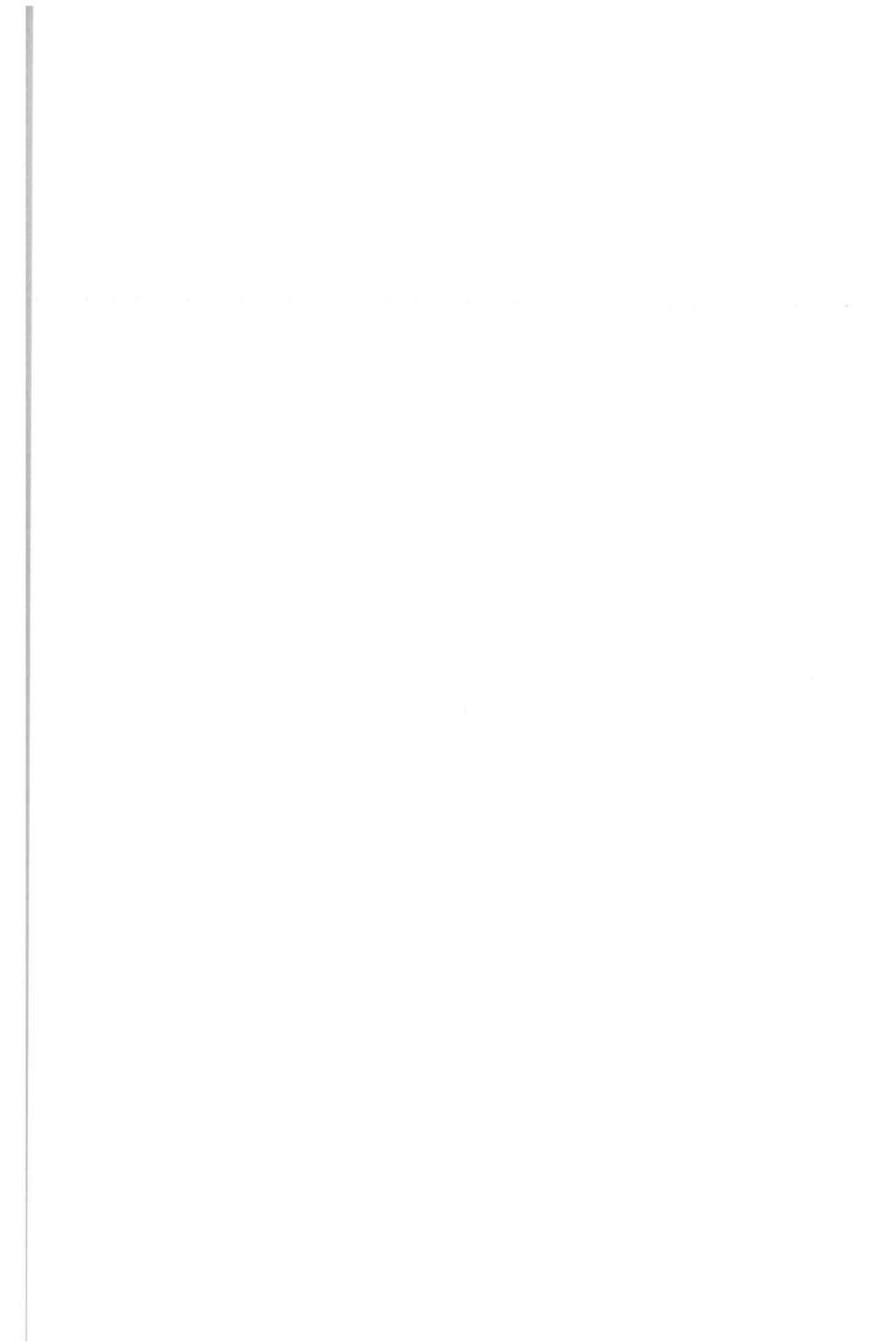
The study deals with the textual archeology and history of the formation of Hannah Arendt's conception of pariahdom. I clarify from where Arendt actually took the term pariah and how she used it. I show that the notion of the partial responsibility of the pariah which Arendt adopted from Bernard Lazare constituted one of the guiding principles of her later theorizations of politics and political judgement in extreme situations.

It is through the figure of the modern pariah as a conscious rebel that Arendt introduces her conception of pariah politics as a response to a plight of oppression and exclusion. The hallmark of this conception is a view that pariahdom as political exclusion does not offer an excuse for political ignorance and indifference. In Arendtian terms, it is the duty of the pariah to resist oppression. Although the pariah cannot be responsible for acts carried out in a polity to which she does not belong, she cannot withdraw from partial responsibility for those acts and deeds of her own which contribute to her political fate.

The study shows that Arendt's impact on political theory is not restricted to the theorization of political action in the public realm under "normal" circumstances but that her considerations of pariahdom constitute an important source for theorizing the political in extreme situations.

Arendtian responsibility stems from acceptance of the unpredictability and contingency of political action. To assume responsibility means to accept commitment to acts and deeds the results of which cannot all be foreseen. Responsibility is the price to be paid for political freedom and dignity. It is not possible to maintain one's human dignity and achieve political freedom without assuming responsibility for one's own acts and deeds.

**Keywords:** pariahdom, responsibility, political action, political judgement, extreme situation, conformism, dignity, Hannah Arendt, Bernard Lazare, Rahel Varnhagen, Max Weber



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## Abbreviations for Arendt's works

- JP The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition. *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1944. In Arendt 1978.
- OGUR Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility. *Jewish Frontier*, No. 12-13, 1945. In EU.
- ZR Zionism Reconsidered. *The Menorah Journal*. Vol. 33, No. 2, 1945. In Arendt 1978.
- JHR Jewish History, Revised. *Jewish Frontier*, No. 15, 1948. In Arendt 1978.
- OT The Origins of Totalitarianism. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1951. Harvest/HBJ edition 1979.
- RV Rahel Varnhagen. *The Life of a Jewess*. Leo Baeck Institute. London: East and West Library 1957.
- HC The Human Condition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1958.
- EJ Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil. New York: Viking Press 1963. Revised and enlarged edition 1965. Reprint, New York: Viking Penguin 1977.
- OR On Revolution. New York: Viking Press 1963. Revised edition 1965. Reprint, New York: Viking Penguin 1977.
- PRD Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship. *The Listener*, August 6, 1964.
- MDT Men in Dark Times. New York: Harcourt Brace & World 1968.
- CR Collective Responsibility. 1968. In James W. Bernauer, S.J. (ed.): *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*. Boston, Dordrecht, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff 1987.
- LOM The Life of the Mind. Vol. I Thinking. Vol. II Willing. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1978.
- EU Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954. Edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co.

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Originally, I was supposed to become a poet. However, already at young age I realized that this would require a lot of reading, writing, and hard work. For this reason I started to look for something easier. After a number of halfhearted tries, uncertainty and hesitation I ended up in research only to realize that it required....a lot of reading, writing, and hard work. In the course of years a dream matured: the only dream I have actually ever had. One day I wanted to become a doctor.

Preparing a doctoral thesis in political theory is a lonely business. However, now that my dream is eventually coming true I realize that I would never have been able to do it alone. I needed and got a lot of support. The time has come to thank all those who responded to my need.

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Jyväskylä, May 1996

*Tuija Parvikko*



# 1. Neglected Origins of Arendt's Conception of Pariahdom

## 1.1. The Hidden Tradition of Conscious Pariahdom

”Ignorance or misunderstanding of their own past were partly responsible for their fatal underestimation of the actual and unprecedented dangers which lay ahead. But one should also bear in mind that lack of political ability and judgment have been caused by the very nature of Jewish history, the history of a people without a government, without a country, and without a language. Jewish history offers the extraordinary spectacle of a people, unique in this respect, which began its history with a well-defined concept of history and an almost conscious resolution to achieve a well-circumscribed plan on earth and then, without giving up this concept, avoided all political action for two thousand years. The result was that the political history of the Jewish people became even more dependent upon unforeseen, accidental factors than the history of other nations, so that the Jews stumbled from one role to the other and accepted responsibility for none.” (OT, 8)

This is the conclusion on Jewish history, at which Arendt arrived by 1951 when the first edition of her monumental *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (OT) appeared. For the past two decades

she had tried to understand which were the political elements that made the destruction of European Jewry possible. She came to an insight according to which one of the reasons for its misery and misfortune was the lack of political ability and judgement. In 1948 she argued that the lack of political community and political history was upheld by the Jews themselves. Most clearly this is reflected in the fact that the Jewish historians of the 19th century upheld the thesis of Diaspora history, in the framework of which the Jewish people was seen as an innocent victim of a hostile and sometimes brutal environment. In other words, the Jews were seen as history-sufferers and not history-makers (JHR, 96).

The thesis of Diaspora history did not leave any room for a conception of Jewish people as an active political agent which should unite its forces to fight against oppression and for shared political goals. On the contrary, it encouraged the Jews to turn against each other by building strong inner hierarchies and trying to make oneself an exception in the eyes of Gentiles compared with other Jews.<sup>1</sup> Fragmentation of the Jewish people proved to become one of the "preconditions" of the destruction of the Jews because it made them politically weak and defenceless but this was not understood until it was too late.

In political terms, the double exclusion proved to be fateful because it did not encourage the Jews to develop independent political thinking of their own. Since they viewed themselves as temporary guests on foreign soil it did not occur to them to demand the political right to share European soil as fully authorized citizens with the other European peoples. More precisely, the Jews abstained from demanding the right of being included *as Jews* in the political organizations of the lands where they lived.

However, during the two decades spent in the company of the political history of European Jewry, Arendt discovered that the worldless irresponsibility of traditional ghetto existence and the desire to unconditionally assimilate to Gentile society were not the only traditions in Jewish history. In addition, there was an alternative but hidden tradition of conscious pariahdom which has loomed in the thinking of assimilated Jews from Solomon Maimon (1754-1800) to Franz Kafka (1883-1924) (JP, 68-69). Characteristic of



these persons was, as Moses Hadas puts it in the introduction to Maimon's autobiography, that "[m]any of those who did most to enrich European culture and traditions were Bohemians who lived outside the limits of Jewish society and still refused to become members of any other well-defined community" (Hadas 1947, xiii). In other words, these persons searched for a third alternative to traditional Judaism and pure assimilation.

The present study deals with the role of these alternative figures in Arendt's thought. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the notion of conscious pariahdom was to significantly shape Arendt's later theorizations and judgements of politics. On the basis of exemplary Jewish pariah figures in history she develops one of the guiding principles of her political judgement which is the inescapability of personal responsibility of the pariah for her<sup>2</sup> own political fate. In other words, she attempts to rethink the conditions of political accountability and commitment of the pariah as a political outcast.

Despite Arendt's sharp criticism of the apolitical self-understanding of European Jewry, she by no means argued that the political misery of the Jews would have been exclusively of their own making. She was well aware that the political peculiarity of the Jewry stemmed from their social and political history as a pariah people. More precisely, Arendt viewed the condition of European Jews as the result of a double exclusion. On the one hand, wherever they went, the Jews were excluded from the society and polity of their host peoples. From the Middle Ages this exclusion was in many places concretely enforced by compelling the Jews to live in special Jewish districts, the ghettos. On the other hand, the exclusion of the Jews was upheld also by themselves. The desire to stand apart from their host peoples principally stemmed from an ancient Jewish tradition according to which the Diaspora was only a provisory period to be followed by a return to the Promised Land. Only there the Jews would constitute anew a secular political community in harmony with Jewish religious law.

During and after the Second World War Arendt not only wrote about the fate of European Jewry on a general historical and political level, but in a number of articles introduced to the reading pub-

lic many of its individual representatives as certain types of pariahs. Among these pariah figures there were both those whom Arendt regarded as typical representatives of the desire to assimilate at any price and those whom she saw as representatives of the hidden tradition of conscious pariahdom.

The starting-point of these approaches is the notion that the concept of the Jew as pariah has loomed in the thinking of some Jewish poets, writers, and artists having assumed a variety of forms (JP, 68-69). These forms may be divided into two sub-groups. On the one hand, there are those who express traditional traits of the pariah, and on the other, there are those who express modern traits of the pariah. Arendt attempts to show that the strategy of traditional pariahdom, although it carries with it some exceptionally lovable characteristics, is not enough for ever achieving political freedom because it is also characterized by apolitical worldlessness, or an eschatological world view. In order to transgress traditional pariahdom and achieve a political solution to the exclusion of the Jews the pariah ought to go further and adopt the position of the modern pariah. Through the notion of the modern pariah as a conscious rebel Arendt introduces her understanding of the pariah position as a political stance from which social and political outcasts can approach their situation in political terms, assuming responsibility for their own acts and deeds.

The lack of a careful conceptual historical approach regarding from where Arendt actually took the term pariah and how she used it is still striking. Usually, it is taken for granted that the term comes from Max Weber, who used it to refer to the political status of the Jews as a pariah people. Those well enough acquainted with Arendt's early writings also recognize that there was another important source for her understanding of pariahdom, that of Bernard Lazare, a French Jew of the era of the Dreyfus Affair (cf. e.g. Nordmann 1987, 204; Kaplan 1989; Kessner 1989, 101; Leibovici 1989). Sometimes it is also pointed out that the term pariah entered into the European political vocabulary during the nineteenth century referring to Jews (Momigliano 1980).

However, to my knowledge there is not a single thorough historical study which focuses carefully on the conceptual background

of Arendt's understanding of pariahdom. This is a remarkable lack because it inevitably contributes – as I will show in the present study – to certain difficulties in understanding the significance of the notion of the personal responsibility of the pariah which was to remain a permanent element of Arendt's theorizations and judgments of politics. Most importantly, these difficulties concern Arendt's report of the Eichmann trial and her insight into the role the Jewish Councils played in the "Final Solution of the Jewish question". This theme is still – over thirty years after the first appearance of the book – highly controversial easily causing misunderstandings and disputes.

The present study deals with the conceptual archeology, or the textual history of the formation of Hannah Arendt's conception of pariahdom. I have two principal aims. Firstly, I will clarify from where Arendt actually took the term pariah and how she used it. In other words, I am not satisfied with the general acknowledgement that Arendt's concept of the pariah has two sources, Max Weber and Bernard Lazare, and thus I will analyse more precisely what Arendt exactly adopted from each of them.

Secondly, I will show that the omission of the origins and significance of Arendt's conception of pariahdom easily leads to misinterpretations of her later works, especially that of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) (EJ). This is because without knowing Lazare's notion of the partial responsibility of the pariah for her own acts and deeds it is hard to view Arendt's interpretation of the role of the Jewish Councils in the Eichmann book in an accurate light. More precisely, it is hard to see that her intention was not to render the victims guilty of their own destruction but rather to argue for the inescapability of partial responsibility of the pariah for her own political future.

I want to emphasize that this is not historical research *on* Arendt. My principal intention is not to normatively consider Arendt's ideas and evaluate their theoretical, analytical, and historical validity. This is why the discussion and analysis of Arendt's central concepts and conceptual distinctions is not raised. A normative approach to Arendt's ideas would immediately show that she is not a coherent thinker in every respect. However, in the framework of this study

possible incoherences in her texts are not essential as such. What is essential, instead, is to show that in order to thoroughly grasp what Arendt had in mind when she wrote about totalitarianism, conformism and Jewish politics after the Second World War one needs to be acquainted with her conception of pariahdom.

## 1.2. Reception of Arendt's Conception of Pariahdom

During the past few years growing attention has been paid to Arendt's early writings. Recently, this has been facilitated by the editing and republishing of a significant part of them including some previously unpublished correspondence (see e.g. Arendt 1978; 1985; EU; Arendt 1995a; 1995b).<sup>3</sup> In a number of books and articles, the theme of pariahdom has been theorized from different angles. These contributions may be divided in three groups. Firstly, there are approaches which focus on the theme of Jew as pariah relating it to Arendt's personal history as a Jewish pariah. In these approaches the significance of personal experience of Jewish pariahdom for Arendt's later political theory is recognized (see e.g. Feldman 1978; Shklar 1983; Barnouw 1990; Heuer 1992).

Secondly, there are contributions which draw from feminist political theory suggesting that the theme of pariahdom might be a bridge with which to reconcile Arendt's at first sight conspicuously masculine political theory with feminism. The basic argument of these writings is that if the figure of the pariah is taken into account, Arendt's theory of political action breaks away from the standard tradition of Western political thinking in which a political actor is constructed as a fully authorized citizen-actor of the public political realm (see e.g. Riot-Sarcey and Varikas 1986; Ring 1991; Dietz 1991; Honig 1992; Benhabib 1995).

Thirdly, there are approaches which deal with the theme of pariahdom in the framework of the conditions of modern politics. In these approaches pariahdom is related to either totalitarianism or modern mass society. It is suggested that modern societies characterized by highly mediated forms of politics lack a public realm in

the Arendtian sense, resulting in a totalization of pariahdom. In other words, in a modern mass society, pariahdom is no longer an anomaly represented by a minority, but it has become a general political condition of the majority of people. On the other hand, it is emphasized that the pariah might be understood as a figure who is able to transgress the political impasse caused by the emergence of mass society because the pariah does not need a democratic public space for political action but is able to fight anywhere against oppression (see e.g. Fehér 1986; dal Lago 1984).<sup>4</sup>

These approaches have contributed significantly to the understanding and reception of Arendt's political theory. It is no longer viewed, if it ever was, only as an apology of agonal political action in the public realm. On the contrary, it is recognized that Arendt's thinking might be an important source of inspiration also under such political conditions where equal political participation is not guaranteed. In other words, the pariah as an outcast from the political community inevitably introduces the themes of political exclusion and oppression to the scene. On the other hand, the conscious pariah in the Arendtian sense is far from an innocent victim of evil forces around her. More precisely, the Arendtian pariah does not live in a black and white world where people and their deeds can be easily divided into good and evil. On the contrary, the theme of conscious pariahdom reintroduces the notion of the inescapable responsibility of every human being for her own acts and deeds into the political and theoretical debate. This, in particular, is what approaches to Arendt's conception of pariahdom do not usually recognize.

One of the aims of this study is to show that it is not enough to be acquainted with Arendt's early writings and her personal history in order to fully grasp the significance and political importance of her thesis of partial responsibility. In addition, one has to be acquainted with the distinction between traditional and modern pariahdom and the positions of their historical representatives in Arendt's thinking. This is because it is through the figure of the modern pariah as a conscious rebel that Arendt introduces her conception of pariah politics as a response to a plight of oppression and exclusion. The hallmark of this conception is a view that pariahdom

as political exclusion does not offer an excuse for political ignorance or indifference. It does not, in other words, relieve one from responsibility for one's own decisions and choices. As I will show in what follows, this does not mean that the pariahs are "guilty" of their own political misery but rather that they are not simply innocent victims of evil forces around them. Although the pariah cannot be responsible for acts carried out in a polity to which she does not belong, her own acts and deeds unavoidably contribute to her political fate.

Here, a conceptual distinction between guilt and responsibility is crucial. Guilt connotes a direct causal relationship between doer, deed and its result which can be identified only after the results have occurred. In other words, guilt can only be found retroactively as no one is guilty of anything in advance. As a retroactive verdict guilt is more a moral or juridical than political category.

Responsibility, instead, does not connote any causal relationship between deed and result as in politics pure and exclusively causal relationships are rare if not impossible. In addition, responsibility is not exclusively retroactive but rather covers both past deeds and potential future deeds as well as deeds which remain undone. In other words, in contrast with guilt which can only concern a deed already done, responsibility is both past and future oriented. Responsibility refers to the inevitable accountability and commitment of the actor.

However, the pariah's responsibility is not completely identical with the ethic of the responsibility of the politician in the Weberian sense. For Weber the politician is governed by the maxim "du *sollst* dem Übel gewaltsam widerstehen, sonst – bist du für seine Überhandnahme *verantwortlich*" (Weber 1919, 56-7). Acting according to this maxim means that "man für die (voraussehbaren) *Folgen* seines Handelns aufzukommen hat" (Weber 1919, 58).

Arendt takes the politician's responsibility a step further as she argues that political responsibility is that "which every government assumes for the deeds and misdeeds of its predecessor, and every nation for the deeds and misdeeds of the past" (PRD, 185). Here, the politician is clearly responsible for deeds which she has not done herself and on which she had no direct influence as she also carries responsibility for deeds done by other members of polity in

the past. In addition, she clearly has to accept the unpredictability that is characteristic of political action. Consequently, as an active member of polity, she also has to assume responsibility for unforeseen and unpredictable future deeds carried out in the polity.

The pariah, an outcast who does not belong to any polity, cannot, of course, be responsible for deeds carried out in the polity. However, as every people is responsible for the deeds and misdeeds of its own past, also the Jewish people ought to assume responsibility for its own past. Being a pariah people, this responsibility cannot be full because as an oppressed people the Jews have not been able to independently master their own fate. But they have partially contributed to it with their own choices and decisions and thus they cannot withdraw from partial responsibility.

The decisive figure in the textual history of Arendt's conception of pariahdom is Bernard Lazare who is usually mentioned only passingly in the approaches dealing with Arendt's conception of pariahdom. More precisely, Bernard Lazare's role as Arendt's model figure of conscious pariahdom is often recognized but Lazare's own writings are badly known.<sup>5</sup> At best those of his writings which Arendt edited and translated into English (see Lazare 1948) are known but the rest of them are totally omitted. This situation may be partly explained by the poor availability of Lazare's writings. Most students of Arendt's thought do not have easy access to the archives where Lazare's works could be consulted. However, in regard to the origins of the concept of partial responsibility of the pariah the decisive book has for some time been available also in English. This is *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes* (1894) which was first published in English in 1967 and reprinted in 1995.

At the same time Bernard Lazare studies seem to be experiencing a revival in Jewish studies (see e.g. Wilson 1978; Sandrel 1985; Bredin 1992). However, in these studies emphasis is laid on Lazare's Dreyfusianism and his approaches to Jewish nationalism. Both his criticism of Jewish assimilation and the political plight of traditional Jewish communities is at best omitted and at worst viewed as a form of Jewish anti-Semitism. As a result, Arendtian and Jewish approaches to Lazare seem to come across each other only with great difficulty characterized by mutual suspicion.

Despite growing attention paid to Arendt's early writings on pariahdom the mainstream of Arendt studies still follows the by now classic distinction into two branches. Firstly, there are those who read her later works from *The Human Condition* (1958) (HC) independently of her earlier writings. This branch inevitably views Arendt principally as a theoretician and apologist of political action in the public realm. To be sure, this approach is perfectly legitimate, respecting a certain change of emphasis in Arendt's thinking in the 1950s. However, the omission of her early writings and her conception of pariahdom inevitably causes a bias in these contributions: it easily begins to look as if Arendt restricted the political to the public realm without having any insight on it under circumstances where access to the polity is not equally guaranteed and self-evident to everyone.

Secondly, there are those who view Arendt principally as a theoretician of totalitarianism. These approaches draw principally from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* recognizing it as one of the most important contributions on twentieth century totalitarianism. The debate on *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is partly intertwined with totalitarianism studies, but only partly. In fact, a striking proportion of critics of the Eichmann book are ignorant of Arendt's theory of totalitarianism. However, in my view the most important omission of both fractions of this branch stems again from the fact that very little attention is paid to Arendt's early writings. As to the approaches to totalitarianism this omission is not always drastic as Arendt's own emphasis also switches here from individual pariah figures to the study of the origins and conditions of totalitarian rule. As to the approaches to the Eichmann book, however, ignorance of Arendt's conception of pariahdom is dramatic, often causing systematic misinterpretations of almost everything she said.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3. "In Concrete". Arendt's Configurations of Pariahdom

In Arendt's considerations of pariahdom the pariah is "politically anomalous", or an "exception" who is used to explain the rest of



the society (cf. Fehér 1986, 15). Given this basic approach underlying every treatment, Arendt's pariah discussions may be divided into four types. Firstly, there is a historico-typological analysis of European anti-Semitism presented in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* which focuses on how anti-Semitism developed in the European context and in what kind of connection it was with other politically relevant elements of European culture. Here Arendt is clearly concerned with the Jews as a people – although not as a homogeneous unit<sup>7</sup> – and not with its individual representatives.

Secondly, there is a study on Rahel Levin Varnhagen (see below and chapter three) which focuses on the fate of an individual Jew in a certain historical and political context. In this study Arendt directs her attention to Rahel's personal experience as a Jewess looking at the situation of the Jews through one of its representatives. Arendt chooses the perspective of an actor trying to dig out the characteristics of the Jewish condition through personal experience of an individual.

Thirdly, there are a number of essays in which Arendt explicitly takes under scrutiny the "human types" represented by certain individual Jews in the course of European history. In these essays she focuses on the personal and political characteristics of these individuals as representatives of certain pariah types (see e.g. Arendt 1943a; 1943b; JP; 1944c; 1966a; 1968a; 1968b).

Finally, there are the essays in which Arendt approaches the Jewish condition in exile; the attention is on the position of the Jews as a group in a certain historical situation. In these essays Arendt deals with Jewish politics from the times of traditional pariahdom in the nineteenth century to the time of the foundation of the state of Israel (see e.g. Arendt 1942; 1944b; 1945a; ZR; 1946a; 1946b; 1948b).

Hannah Arendt's merit was that she never spoke of pariahdom only "in abstract" on the phenomenal level but always approached it "in concrete" combining phenomenal discussions with analyses of concrete individuals and their situations. More precisely, it is characteristic of young Arendt's "method" of analysis that she attempts to identify and capture "general rules of politics", maxims and conditions of political action by studying individuals' situa-

tions, their strategies for survival, and their political decisions and choices in concrete situations.

The strength of Arendt's approach lies in the fact that she tries to simultaneously deal with three levels of abstraction. The highest of these moves on the phenomenal level tackling phenomena such as marginality, rootlessness, and exclusion. The problem with these kinds of high abstraction is that it is very difficult to reduce them back to fit any concrete situation or actor in a situation. Once abstracted away from the "concrete world" they begin to live their own lives on an abstract theoretical level without direct connection to individual experience. On the other hand they are useful as far as they are capable of drawing together different individual experiences and situations under the same rubric, rendering theoretical discussion on these phenomena possible.

To name a person, such as Rahel Levin Varnhagen or Bernard Lazare, is already an abstraction. Making these what might be called first level abstractions is inevitable in order to speak about something or somebody at all. One could not otherwise differentiate between single individuals. This kind of first level naming is the most concrete type of abstraction: it does not give us any general information about a phenomenon. It simply singles out one particular individual or thing.

Second level abstractions are needed in order to shed some light on the life and experiences of an individual singled out by a first level abstraction. The concept of the pariah is a second level abstraction. A pariah is always somebody, an individual human being with different kinds of individual qualities such as gender, age, nationality, religion, education, class position, colour etc. Instead of blurring out these qualities it gives us one quality more of an individual which refers to her position as a social and political outsider.

Abstracting as such is always necessary in theorizing. It is not enough to name individuals and things in order to be able to theorize the political. With second level abstractions we draw certain individuals together and relate them to each other, identifying their common characteristics as well as the differences between them. In order to relate them to the human world, to the political, we need high or third level abstractions. On the other hand, the problem with all theorizing lies in the fact that at worst it re-mystifies the

phenomena under scrutiny behind high abstractions, failing to offer new understanding of them.

Hannah Arendt never fell into this trap. She continuously moved between all three levels of abstraction, attempting to relate concrete individuals and their characteristics with phenomenal discussions which opened up a framework in which to move from purely personal or structural approaches to political analysis and theorization. She was particularly keen on first and second level abstractions as she thought that nothing in the human world could replace the value of exemplary individuals in the judgement of human endeavours on the earth at large:

”That even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth...” (MDT, ix).

#### **1.4. From Apolitical Ghetto Existence to Antipolitical Conformism**

In chapter two I will discuss Weber’s interpretation of the Jews as a pariah people. I will argue that for Weber the concept of pariah people was an ideal-type. In other words, Weber’s analysis of Judaism was not religious but rather historical, sociological, and, above all, typological. Further, Weber’s ideal-types are often *directional types* which embody an *ideal-typical trend* which unfolds their inherent principles of construction in an ever purer form. The ideal-typical method is not interested in what is general or common as such but rather focuses on non-lawlike generality, referring to alternative pure cases in their specificity. Thus, what is at stake in Weber’s discussion of the Jews as a pariah people is a representation of the idea of the Jewish people in its originality. In this framework the Jews come closest to the ideal-type of pariah people: in Weberian terms important characteristics of Jews as a pariah peo-

ple may be traced as far as the second destruction of the Temple but they emerged fully only in the nineteenth century in Europe.

Hannah Arendt adopted from Weber the overall understanding of the Jews as a pariah people and the method of ideal-type which she applied in her own discussions of Jews as pariahs. For Arendt, however, the pariah was more often than not an individual type whereas Weber principally spoke of Jews as a representative type in history. In other words, she modified Weber's conception of pariah people for her own purposes. However, these two approaches are, by no means, mutually exclusive but rather complementary. Weber's approach might be called a position perspective focusing on the exilic outsider position of the Jewish people whereas Arendt's additional approach might be called an actor perspective as far as it focuses on an individual's acts and deeds in a given situation and historical context.

Arendt also drew from Weber's notion of Jewish segregation as self-produced and self-perpetuated. However, in Arendt, the idea of self-produced pariahdom was to constitute only one side of Jewish pariahdom as she strongly emphasized the two-fold or ambiguous character of Jewish pariahdom. Bernard Lazare's views on the nature of Jewish exclusion were to significantly shape Arendt's understanding of Jewish segregation, directing her attention to the inner hierarchies of Jewish communities as a source of perpetuation of the political weakness of the Jews.

In the Lazarean notion of conscious pariah there is nothing left of the Weberian notion of resentful pariah. In other words, whereas Weber's pariah seeks redemption of injustices suffered during a long period of exclusion and dreams of reformation of the ancient glory in a newly founded Godly Kingdom, Lazare's pariah fights for justice, dignity, and political freedom in a this-worldly framework. She is proud because she cannot see any reason to humble herself before her enemies but she does not feel resentment at the loss of ancient privileges.

In chapter three I deal with Arendt's first account of pariahdom. This is her early study on Rahel Levin Varnhagen who was one of the most popular Jewish salonières in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Berlin. In the study of Rahel Levin Arendt tells a

tragic story of a vain effort of a pariah to assimilate to Gentile high society. After a life-long attempt to get rid of her Jewish background Rahel is compelled to admit that breaking with Jewish pariahdom is not just a question of a personal decision to leave it behind. However, the study of Rahel Levin is by no means the story of a loser. Rather it is the story of an awakening rebellious pariah consciousness in a context where open rebellion proved to be impossible. This is because Rahel eventually remained alone with her gradually matured conviction that one should not abandon or hide one's Jewish background. In other words, in the relatively liberal atmosphere that prevailed in the late Enlightenment and early Romanticism the Jewish question was not openly politicized in Jewish terms but was rather actualized in terms of Enlightenment and under the general demand to extend political rights to cover all the previously excluded groups.

In Hannah Arendt's pariah gallery, Rahel Levin represents the ambiguous figure of a Jew who was internally a pariah but externally a parvenu, remaining somewhere between the traditional pariahdom of ghetto existence and the modern pariahdom of open rebellion. In the framework of this study, a discussion on Rahel's situation and historico-political context is important in order to grasp the difference between traditional and modern pariahdom. This why I also focus on Rahel's social and political context in addition to considering her decisions and choices in her desperate fight for assimilation.

In chapter four I deal with another representative of Arendt's pariah gallery. This is Bernard Lazare whose merit was to bring the Jewish question openly into the arena of politics. For Arendt Lazare appears as a figure who comes closest to the model type of modern conscious pariahdom. *Vice versa* she actually constructs to a great extent the criteria of this model type with the help of the concrete example offered by Lazare.

What was unique in Lazare, in Arendt's view, was the fact that he did not approach the Jewish question in narrowminded terms. Although he recognized the fact that the Jews were oppressed and excluded by the Gentiles he was not satisfied with a simple explanation of "eternal anti-Semitism" which rendered Jews innocent

victims of hostile forces in history. On the contrary, he focused his attention on Jews' own acts and deeds and discovered that there were certain traits in Jewish history which contributed to their prolonged social and and political plight.

At the heart of Jewish political misery Lazare identified a traditional Jewish tendency to replace open and unified political fight with charity. This misbehaviour stemmed from the traditionally hierarchical structure of Jewish communities. In traditional Jewish "politics" Jewish leaders used the misery of the Jewish masses as an excuse for achieving privileges for themselves. In other words, Jewish leaders did not approach the plight of the Jewish masses in secular, political terms, organizing it into a common fight against the Gentile enemy but preferred to strengthen and guarantee the strictly hierarchical structures of the Jewish communities in terms of traditional Judaism characterized by an eschatological world view.

On the other hand, those Jews who were not satisfied with traditional Jewish ghetto existence preferred to choose the route of assimilation to Gentile culture which meant leaving the rest of the community to its own fate. Lazare noticed that in the climate of growing anti-Semitism assimilation was both a false and impossible solution to the Jewish question. It was false because it was based on an individual climbing strategy and it was impossible because the assimilated Jews were, to their own surprise, faced with an invisible fence of suspicion, hostility and disdain which separated them from Gentiles.

From all this Lazare concluded that it was not enough to raise the Jewish people to fight against its Gentile oppressors but what was also needed was an internal fight against Jewish assimilationists and traditional Jewish leadership. The guiding principle of this fight, in Lazarean terms, was the conviction that it is the duty of every pariah to resist oppression without abandoning one's Jewishness: the Jews ought to demand the right to political existence as Jews, either by gaining access to Gentile polities as Jews or founding polities of their own.

On the basis of Lazare's example Arendt identified as a cornerstone of modern pariahdom a consciousness of the double nature of Jewish misery. It was obviously partly caused by external oppres-

sion by the Gentiles. However, it was equally important to see that it was partly caused by political misbehaviour of the Jews themselves. By upholding highly hierarchical traditional Jewish communities on the one hand, and by preferring an individual strategy of escape by assimilation on the other, the Jews contributed to the prolongation of their own political misery. In other words, the Jews were partially responsible for their own political fate.

The notion of partial responsibility of the pariah was to remain one of the most important evaluative criteria on the basis of which Arendt analysed and judged the expressions of pariahdom in different contexts. The context of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem was no exception in this sense. On the contrary, she raised the question of the role of the Jewish Councils in the execution of the Final Solution of the Jews, arguing that they contributed to the destruction of Jews by co-operating with the Nazis.

In chapter five I will deal with the notion of partial responsibility in Arendt's postwar political writings. In these writings Arendt focuses on political action and judgement in extreme situations. Firstly, I will consider such writings in which Arendt relates totalitarianism and aspects of modern mass society with each other. For her, modern mass society and a totalitarian regime are but two variants of basically the same form of human organization which threatens to destroy the public space of politics as a site of political freedom and equality. Consequently, they create an antipolitical atmosphere in which no one is willing to assume responsibility for her own acts and deeds.

The horror of modern mass society lies in the fact that the good family man has turned out to be the greatest criminal of the century. His criminality does not spring from evil motives but it rather springs from his entirely antipolitical mentality. He is interested only in himself and his family, concentrating on private matters. In the variant of modern mass society the hallmark of the good family man is conformism. Under totalitarian rule this same man is characterized by a blind desire to follow orders without knowing what is going on around him.

Next I will discuss Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial, focusing on her interpretation of the role of the Jewish Councils. I

will argue that Arendt's judgement of their role stems from the notion of partial responsibility of the pariah adopted from Bernard Lazare. In my view, much of the debate around the Eichmann book was caused by the fact that Arendt's critics were ignorant of her link with Lazare. Arendt's judgement of the role of Jewish Councils was seen as harsh, heartless, and unfair: it was argued that she saddled the Jews with total responsibility for their own destruction.

In addition, I will relate the question of responsibility to the thesis of the banality of evil with which Arendt characterized the quality of evil in Eichmann's deeds. At first sight, a curious parallel seems to emerge between the irresponsible irreality of traditional pariah existence and Eichmann's thoughtless evil. Both are characterized by unwillingness to assume responsibility for one's acts and deeds. Both are characterized by the belief of being victims of some external evil forces in history.

However, these parallels are partly false since they should not obscure the fact that Eichmann's crime is not comparable with the role of Jews: despite these parallels the criminals and the victims do not change places but their deeds should be judged in their own context. More precisely, even though both Eichmann's and the Jews' actions are characterized by an unwillingness to assume responsibility, their responsibility is of a different nature. Eichmann was a fully authorized member of the Nazi regime who should have assumed political responsibility for the actions of the entire regime. If he had been able to think, to critically consider both his own acts and deeds and those of others, he would have seen through the illusion of irresponsibility created by the totalitarian system. He would have understood that he was not only following the orders of his superiors but contributing to the execution of the destruction of the Jews in a dramatic manner.

The case of the Jews is different. They were not members of Nazi regime but its outcasts, doomed to death. As outcasts they could in no way be responsible for the actions of the regime. However, even as pariahs, they should have understood that they could not withdraw from responsibility for their own acts and deeds. As pariahs, their duty would have been to search for an opportunity to resist. Arendt admits that under Nazi rule, there were no opportuni-



ties for open rebellion. However, this does not annihilate the prospect of at least considering the possibilities for other forms of organized resistance in the form of passive resistance.

Finally, I will ask why Arendt's interpretation of Eichmann was so furiously attacked. I will come to the conclusion that it was not, after all, either her judgement of the Jewish Councils or her thesis of the banality of evil as such which made American intellectuals so furious. It was rather a critique of typically American conformism hidden between the lines in the Eichmann book that caused a scandal. In other words, American intellectuals were not so much hurt by an unfair judgement of the actions of European Jews as for their own sake. I will argue that if the thesis of partial responsibility is detached from its reference to the Jewish pariah and relocated in American mass society, it is no longer the duty to resist oppression but the duty to resist conformism which is at stake.

In chapter six I will draw together the main arguments presented in the previous chapters in order to compress the essential characteristics of Arendt's conception of the responsibility of the pariah. I will argue that in retrospect, a hidden subtext may be found in Arendt's considerations of pariahdom. This is a gradually developing analysis of Jewish political strategies from the apolitical ghetto existence of the nineteenth century to antipolitical conformism of the twentieth century. If Arendt's texts on Jewish pariahdom are viewed as a whole, it is possible to trace a political history of a people who refused to assume responsibility for its future fate in political terms.

Secondly, I will argue that Arendt's understanding of the inescapability of responsibility has nothing to do with the everyday understanding of political responsibility as a heavy duty of powers that be. Arendtian responsibility rather springs from her conviction that responsibility is the price to be paid for political freedom and dignity: it is not possible to maintain one's human dignity and achieve political freedom in the humanly created common world without assuming responsibility for one's acts and deeds.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The thesis of Diaspora history lead – both among Jews and Gentiles – to a conviction that Jewish history obeys exceptional laws, and that European Jews could and should be treated as exceptions without any need for a coherent solution to the Jewish question. Thus “[t]he defeat of the Jewish people started with the catastrophe of the German Jews, in whom European Jews were not interested because they suddenly discovered that German Jews constituted an exception. The collapse of German Jewry began with its splitting up into innumerable factions, each of which believed that special privileges could protect human rights – e.g. the privilege of having been a veteran of World War I, the child of a war veteran, or if such privileges were not recognized any more, a crippled war veteran of the son of a father killed at the front. Jews “*en masse*” seemed to have disappeared from the earth, it was easy to dispose of Jews “*en detail*”. The terrible and bloody annihilation of individual Jews was preceded by bloodless destruction of the Jewish people.” (Arendt 1946a, 5-6)

<sup>2</sup>In standard English the normally used generic third person singular pronoun referring equally to both sexes is he. In feminist studies it has been repeatedly argued that in spite of the apparent neutrality of this pronoun it contributes to reproducing a masculine bias in the English language. Feminists have attempted to replace it with different variations of the couple she and he which introduces sexual difference to the language. However, these she and he expressions tend to be clumsy. This is why in this study I have decided to use the pronoun she generically. This should not be too impudent as the pariah has a point in common with a “normal” she-position which is that of hierarchical inferiority.

<sup>3</sup>Jerome Kohn’s 1994 edition of Arendt’s early articles (EU) does not include her contributions on the Jewish question, modern Jewish history and culture, anti-Semitism, Zionism, Jewish politics in relation to the state of Israel, and the Eichmann controversy, because he is editing a separate collection of them (see Kohn 1994, xvii). In regard to Arendt’s intellectual history, it would be of supreme importance that her correspondence with Heinrich Blücher, her second husband, and Martin Heidegger were finally published. As Blücher never published anything, this correspondence is almost the only source material capable of identifying his possible impact on Arendt’s thinking. As to Heidegger, an uncomfortable debate is raging among intellectuals over his affair with Arendt. Without having access to the entire correspondence, it is

impossible to evaluate such contributions as Elzbieta Ettinger's recent booklet on the Heidegger-Arendt love-affair (see Ettinger 1995).

<sup>4</sup>References given here of three different types of approaches to Arendt's conception of pariahdom are far from exhaustive. They are rather mentioned as essential and representative examples of these approaches. It is important to notice that thematization of pariahdom is not restricted to any single language area or continent. Unfortunately, debates on pariahdom in different parts of the world do not always meet each other. As a rule, the more peripheral the contributor, the larger the arsenal of references she uses.

<sup>5</sup>For an exception of this rule see Leibovici 1989 who is acquainted also with Lazare's writings in originals.

<sup>6</sup>For a good general account of the reception of Arendt's thought see Forti 1994. This book also contains one of the best bibliographies of both Arendt's own writings and secondary literature on her thinking. One of its undeniable merits is an attempt to take into account as many language areas as possible.

<sup>7</sup>Throughout this study I will for the sake of convenience use such general concepts as "the Jews" and "the Gentiles" being perfectly aware that none of these terms correspond to any homogeneous or unanimous group of people.

## 2. The Concept of Pariah in Max Weber

### 2.1. Emergence of the Term Pariah in the European Vocabulary

Simultaneously with the politicization of the Jewish question during the nineteenth century, it became commonplace to refer to the Jews as pariahs. Originally the word itself did not belong to the European lexical legacy but was borrowed from an entirely different context. This context was, of course, the caste system of India in which the pariah referred to a certain group of "untouchable" people with a low status in the caste hierarchy. The term began to spread in Europe in the nineteenth century following growing acquaintance with India's caste system (Shmueli 1968, 170). In other words, its adoption into European vocabulary is connected to a growing interest in alien cultures.

Reflecting this development, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined the term pariah in 1933 as follows (cit. Shmueli 1968, 170):

1. "Name of the largest of the lower caste in Southern India;
2. Hence extended to a member of any low Hindu caste, and by Europeans when applied to one of no caste or outcaste;
3. Any person of a degraded or despised class; a social outcast."

One of the first users of the term pariah with reference to Jews was a young Jewish-German poet and playwright, Michael Beer, who

wrote a play called *Der Paria* which was performed at the Royal Theatre in Berlin in 1823. It is a story of a Hindu outcast, Gadhi, who wants to be a full-fledged man and citizen and fight for his fatherland. His oppressors, however, deny, in the name of Brahma, the pariahs' civil and human dignity and also the privilege of serving their country in warfare (see Shmueli 1968, 170).

It is noteworthy that the play was written during the time when the Jewish question had emerged into the political agenda in Prussia. A considerable portion of German Jews wanted to become good and loyal German patriots, leaving their Jewish origins in the background if not in total oblivion. Beer's play may be viewed as a metaphoric representation of this situation: there is a transparent analogy with the situation of the German Jew of the nineteenth century, denied the right of being a good citizen and serving his country also as a soldier, if needed (cf. Momigliano 1980, 313).<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, particularly during and after the Dreyfus Affair, the term pariah was often used in German and French literature in reference to Jews. Usually, it referred to Jews as social outcasts, marginals, although legally emancipated (Shmueli 1968, 171). Thus, pariahdom referred to the invisible fence of a hostile atmosphere of distrust and latent hatred (c.f. Lazare 1928, 44). It was Bernard Lazare who introduced the term pariah in a systematic fashion into the political vocabulary making a distinction between the rebellious conscious pariah and the assimilationist *parvenu* (see chapter four). Also Theodor Herzl occasionally referred to Jews as pariahs but he never developed a systematic conceptualization of the pariah comparable to that of Lazare. For example, in the memoranda for his interview with Baron Hirsch he observes: "Ihr seid Parias. Ihr müßt immer zittern, daß man Euch die Menschenrechte oder Euer Gut abnimmt" (Herzl 1935, 462).

The term pariah also penetrated scientific vocabulary. It was probably Max Weber who used the term pariah in the most systematic fashion especially in his studies of the sociology of religion but also in his contributions to the origins of modern capitalism. Recognizing its origins in the Indian caste system he developed his own definition of *das Pariavolk* with which he principally referred to two Europeanized people, the Jews and the gypsies. In fact, in

the Weberian framework, the Jews are the only representative of *Pariavolk par excellence*: the gypsies are only a minor example of a possible pariah people.

A considerable number of Arendt scholars have assumed that it was precisely from Weber that Arendt borrowed the term pariah although she used it in her own sense, far from remaining faithful to the Weberian significance of the term (cf. Momigliano 1980, 313). Thus, Ferenc Fehér argues that there was nothing left of Weber's condescending tone of the analysis of the Jewish pariah in Arendt's usage of the term, but she politicized it by using pariahdom to refer to "the absence of political community in the long history of the Jewish pariah in the Diaspora with a concomitant lack of political self-consciousness and, until it was too late, a general disinterest in the political affairs of the environment in which they lived" (Fehér 1986, 16).

The literature does not tell us anything precise about young Arendt's familiarity with Weber's texts. During the 20s, Weber was a well known figure in Germany.<sup>2</sup> However, even though many of his ideas were relatively well known in the form of slogans, his thought was usually rejected by his contemporaries as old-fashioned liberalism, individualism, and neo-Kantianism (see e.g. Bolz 1989). Nevertheless, one may assume that Arendt did not join the ranks of this widely spread criticism of Weber. This is because her teacher in Heidelberg, Karl Jaspers, was a devoted and tireless admirer of Weber. Jaspers both knew Weber personally and drew from his thinking, especially from the method of ideal-type which provided him with a permanent tool of analysis, and which he used in a more systematic fashion than Weber.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is probable that Jaspers used Weber's ideas in his teaching and possibly managed to awaken Arendt's interest in Weber's texts. In addition, it is presumable that as Arendt's own political consciousness began to develop at the beginning of the 1930s she turned her attention from "pure philosophy" to more directly political thinkers.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, on the basis of Arendt's and Jaspers' correspondence it seems that Arendt's knowledge of Weber was not very extensive before the 1950s, when she confessed in a letter to Jaspers that she is finally reading Weber "a great deal" and is enjoying

it (Arendt to Jaspers February 17, 1956, Arendt 1985, 319). However, in all probability she was very early acquainted with two concepts which are decisive in the framework of the present study: the concept of pariah people and the method of ideal-type. With equal probability her acquaintance with Weber was, especially where the concept of ideal-type is concerned, strongly shaped by Jaspers' mediation.

## 2.2. The Jews as "Pariavolk" in Max Weber

Weber used the term "pariah people" to designate the Jews for the first time in print in the introduction to his articles *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen* in 1915. Subsequently, he used it in reference to the Jews in *Hinduismus und Buddhismus* which was published posthumously in 1921. Although this study deals, of course, principally with Hinduism, it also sheds some light on Weber's conception of pariahdom.

In the Hindu context, pariahdom referred to a certain caste. In his study, Weber defines caste as a social rank or a closed status group. Status is "eine Qualität sozialer Ehre oder Ehrlosigkeit und wird, dem Schwerpunkt nach, durch eine bestimmte Art der Lebensführung sowohl bedingt wie ausgedrückt" (Weber 1921a, 41). It is best understood as distinct from classes. Whereas classes are groups of people who occupy the same economic prestige, castes are not necessarily determined by the occupational property, but instead, the caste is a matter of social evaluation. The key-criteria in this evaluation are honour and acceptance (cf. Shmueli 1968, 173).

In *Hinduismus und Buddhismus*, Weber defines the term pariah people as follows:

"Aber die Erscheinung fand und findet sich dort, – und übrigens nicht nur dort, – keineswegs vornehmlich in dieser Form des absoluten, nirgendwo bodenständigen Wandervolkes. Sondern weit häufiger in der unentwickelteren Gestalt von Stämmen, welche eigene Dorfsiedlungen zwar noch besitzen, aber die

Produkte ihres Hausfleißes oder Stammesgewerbes interlokal vertreiben..." (Weber 1921a, 11)

"Sehr oft (wenn auch nicht immer) auch so, daß diese Gastgewerbetreibenden, weil von Konnubium und Tischgemeinschaft ausgeschlossen, als rituell "unrein" gelten. Wo solche rituellen Schranken einem Gastvolk gegenüber existieren, wollen wir für unsre Zwecke dafür den Ausdruck "Pariavolk" gebrauchen." (Weber 1921a, 12)

In a footnote Weber points out that this kind of usage of the term would not fit the Hindus: "Der Ausdruck wäre, hinduistisch gesprochen, ganz unkorrekt. Die Pulayan- oder Parayan-("Pariah") Kaste Südindiens ist sehr weit davon entfernt, die sozial tiefste Schicht oder gar eine Schicht von "outcastes" darzustellen..." (Weber 1921a, 12, footnote 1).

Weber stresses that he uses the term pariah here in the usual European sense. In this special sense it should not be taken to refer to any tribe of workers considered by a local community "strange", "barbaric" or "magically impure" unless they are at the same time wholly or predominantly a guest people (Weber 1921a, 12).

And thus: "Am reinsten entspricht er diesem Typus natürlich dann, wenn er, wie die Zigeuner, und in anderer Art die Juden des Mittelalters, die *eigne Bodenständigkeit* gänzlich eingebüßt hat, ökonomisch also völlig verflochten ist in die Bedarfsdeckung anderer bodenständiger Völker." (Weber 1921a, 12)

On the basis of the definitions above, guest peoples are not always pariah peoples. Weber finds, indeed, transitional steps between guest peoples and pariah peoples. What characterizes them both is marginality, but that does not distinguish them from each other (cf. Shmueli 1968, 174). Two more characteristics are needed. These are the ritual barriers against a guest people on the one hand, and the exclusion from intermarriage and commensalism on the other (Weber 1921a, 12).

More conceptual clarification of the relationship between segregated ethnic groups and castes can be found in those parts of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, which were mostly written before 1914.



Here, Weber states that the status group evolves into a closed caste when status distinctions are not guaranteed only by conventions and laws, but also by religious sanctions concerning every physical contact with lower castes. These contacts are considered ritually impure and must be expiated by a religious act (Weber 1922, 536). In this sense, the hallmark of a pariah people is its impurity and "untouchability" from the viewpoint of higher castes.

In Weber's understanding, the status structure reaches such extreme consequences only where there are underlying differences held "ethnic". The caste is the normal form in which ethnic communities believing in blood relationship usually associate with each other. It excludes exogamous marriage and social intercourse. This caste situation is part of the phenomenon of pariah peoples (Weber 1922, 536).

Further, these people live in a diaspora strictly segregated and their situation is legally precarious. However, by virtue of their economic indispensability they are tolerated, sometimes even privileged, and they live interspersed in the political communities. Weber sees the Jews as the most impressive historical example of such people (Weber 1922, 536).

What is important in a status segregation grown into a caste is that the caste structure transforms the horizontal and unconnected coexistences of ethnically segregated groups into a vertical social system of super- and subordination. This comprehensive association integrates the ethnically divided communities into one political unit. This is due to the fact that in the caste structure ethnic distinctions as such have become 'functional' distinctions within the political association (Weber 1922, 536). Hence, a pariah people does not form a political community of its own, but it contributes in one way or another to that of a ruling caste and this hierarchical system constitutes a political unit in which different castes are mutually interdependent.

What distinguishes pariah peoples from other status and ethnic groups is their special sense of honour. Indeed, Weber argues that with a negatively privileged status group the sense of dignity takes a specific deviation. It refers to a future lying beyond the present. As such it must be nurtured by belief in a providential mission and

by belief in a specific honour before God. There is a significant difference compared with the sense of dignity that characterizes positively privileged status groups which is naturally related to their "being" and does not transcend itself (Weber 1922, 536). In other words, their kingdom is of this world, whereas the pariah people's kingdom is extra-worldly. The result is that no generally accepted honour is expected as long as the circumstances remain as they are.

Max Weber starts his study on ancient Judaism by drawing a parallel with the situation of the Jews and the pariahs of the Indian caste order: "Denn was waren, soziologisch angesehen, die Juden? *Ein Pariavolk*. Das heißt, wie wir aus Indien wissen: ein rituell, formell oder faktisch, von der sozialen Umwelt geschiedenes Gastvolk. Alle wesentlichen Züge seines Verhaltens zur Umwelt, vor allem seine längst vor der Zwangsinternierung bestehende freiwillige Ghettoexistenz und die Art des Dualismus von Binnen- und Außenmoral lassen sich daraus ableiten" (Weber 1921b, 2-5).

However, Weber points out that the situations of the Jews and the Indian pariah tribes are not similar in every respect, but there are three significant differences in their circumstances. Firstly, Jewry became a pariah people in surroundings free of castes. Secondly, the religious promises to which the ritual segregation of Jewry was tied differed from those of the Indian castes; for the latter, ritually correct conduct carried the premium of ascent by way of rebirth. This belief led to the maintenance of the caste *status quo* both on the individual and structural level based on unchangeable and ahistorical view of the world. In other words, the Indian pariah castes adhered to the same belief system as the higher castes. For the Jews, instead, the religious promise was different. The God-guided political and social revolution was to change the plight of the Jews into the opposite. The present structures of the world were conceived as a product of man's activities and hence the world was a historical and as such a changeable product (Weber 1921b, 5-6).

Thirdly, for the Jews, the revolution of the world order was to take a special direction. Ritual correctitude and the segregation from the social environment imposed by it was but one aspect of the commands upon Jewry. In other words, rational Jewish religious ethics also included a systematic ethic of everyday life, which, in

Weber's view, became the basis for Christian morality (Weber 1921b, 6).

This characterization clearly implies that Jewry's plight as a pariah people was not eternal but provisional. As such it has a beginning and is going to have an end. In *Das antike Judentum*, however, Weber does not make any predictions about Jewry's future destiny, but directs his attention to the question of how the Jewry developed into a pariah people with highly specific characteristics.<sup>5</sup>

For Weber, the key institution in the development of Jewry into a pariah people was prophecy together with the traditional ritualism of Israel. The Israelite ethic received its decisive imprint of exclusiveness through the development of the priestly Torah. Originally, ritualistic segregation from strangers was totally absent in Israel. Under the influence of the prophets, however, the commandment of ritualistic homogeneity of the people was brought into a new relation with the specific ritualistic purity of the land. Thus, Weber concludes, almost at the moment when Israel lost its concrete territorial basis the ideal value of the political territory was definitely and ritually fixated for internationally settled guest people. The religious nature of the community, resting on the prophetic promises, determined, according to Weber, the substitution of this confessional segregation for the political separation from the outside (Weber 1921b, 351-352).

Another important institution in the formation of Jewry into a pariah people was the separation of the economic in-group and out-group ethic. This dualistic economic ethic stamped as adiaborous certain forms of behaviour towards outsiders which were strictly forbidden with respect to brothers in belief (Weber 1921b, 357-358).

As to the prophets, they contributed to the glorification of the pariah situation. The situation of the pariah people and its patient endurance were thus elevated to the highest station of religious worth and honor before God, by receiving the meaning of a world historical mission. Thus developed an ethic of suffering without resistance and complaint of misery, ugliness and martyrdom (Weber 1921b, 392).

Hence, in the course of time the Jewry increasingly assumed the type of a ritualistically segregated guest people toward the out-

side world. This did not happen involuntarily. On the contrary, the decisive characteristic of it is, in Weber's view, that Jewry did it voluntarily and not under pressure of external rejection (Weber 1921b, 434).

Similarly, Weber hints that the general diffusion of "anti-Semitism" in Antiquity is of Jewry's own making. In other words, it was the negative attitude of the Jews themselves which was decisive for mutual relations with other people: "Der "Menschenhaß" der Juden war, wenn man auf den Kern sieht, der immer wieder letzte und entscheidende Vorwurf: die prinzipielle Ablehnung von Connubium, Kommensalität und jeder Art von Verbrüderung oder näherer Gemeinschaft irgendwelcher Art" (Weber 1921b, 435). Thus, in Weber's understanding, the social isolation of the Jews was primarily self-chosen and self-willed.

However exclusive the Jews might have been in their social life, proselytes were, Weber admits, welcome to the community. Proselytism was even made exceptionally easy by distinguishing three steps of affiliation. First, one could become a *ger-ha-toshab*, a friend which practically meant half-conversion. A friend accepted the monotheist belief in God and the Jewish ethic, but not Jewish ritual and his ritual behaviour was not controlled. Second, one could become a *ger-ha-sha'ar*, a proselyte of the gate, who vowed before three members of the brotherhood to honor no idols. The seven Noachidic commandments, the Sabbath, the taboo against pigs and the ritualistics were binding on him, but circumcision was not. He was a passive member of the community with limited rights of participation in religious festivals and celebrations. Finally, one could become a *ger-ha-zadek* or *ger-ha-berith*, a proselyte of righteousness, who after circumcision and assumption of ritual duties acquired full membership of the community. His descendants became fully qualified Jews in the third generation (Weber 1921b, 437).

At first sight there seems to be a contradiction between the notion of Jewish exclusiveness and a well-developed system of joining the community by proselytism. Weber even states that the Jewish Diaspora was greatly interested both in increasing its membership and winning friends on the outside (Weber 1921b, 438). This statement does not speak on behalf of voluntary and self-produced

segregation not to mention misanthropy and self-caused anti-Semitism.

Nevertheless, according to Weber, the age of proselytism came to an end with the second destruction of the Temple. After that, the reception conditions for proselytes were regulated and the reception bound to the consent of a full quorum of a rabbinical court. The opinion emerged that proselytes were as troublesome for Israel as leprosy (Weber 1921b, 441).

Thus, in Weber's interpretation, the ancient Jewry curled up into itself. He lists as its eternal characteristics the promises of the prophets, the horror and disdain for Christian polytheism, the stable tradition created by an incomparably intensive education of youth for a ritualistically structured way of life, the strength of the firmly structured social communities, the family, and the congregation. As a result of these permanent qualities of the Jewish way of life and religion, the Jewish community will, in Weber's view, "in ihrer selbstgewählten Lage als Pariavolk verharren, solange und soweit der Geist des jüdischen Gesetzes, und das heißt: der Geist der Pharisäer und spätantiken Rabbinen ungebrochen weiterbestand und weiterbesteht" (Weber 1921b, 442).

In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Weber repeats the conclusion that since the destruction of the Temple, the Jews have become a pariah people. He summarizes the definition of the pariah people as follows:

"...[ist] im hier gemeinten Sinn...: eine, durch (ursprünglich) magische, tabuistische und rituelle Schranken der Tisch- und Konnubialvergemeinschaftung nach außen einerseits, durch politische und sozial negative Privilegierung, verbunden mit weitgehender ökonomischer Sondergebarung andererseits, zu einer erblichen Sondergemeinschaft zusammengeslossene Gruppe ohne autonomen politischen Verband. Die negativ privilegierten, beruflich spezialisierten, indischen Kasten mit ihrem durch Tabuierung garantierten Abschluß nach außen und ihren erblichen religiösen Pflichten der Lebensführung stehen ihnen relativ am nächsten, weil auch bei ihnen mit der Pariastellung als solcher Erlösungshoffnungen verknüpft sind. So-

wohl die indischen Kasten wie die Juden zeigen die gleiche spezifische Wirkung einer Pariareligiösität: daß sie ihre Zugehörigen um so enger an sich und an die Pariastellung kettet, je gedrückter die Lage ist, in welcher sich das Pariavolk befindet, und je gewaltiger also die Erlösungshoffnungen [sind], die sich an die gottgebotene Erfüllung der religiösen Pflichten knüpfen." (Weber 1922, 300)

Here, in contrast to *Das antike Judentum*, Weber also focuses on the question of the Jewry's present and future destiny, comparing it with that of the Indian pariah caste. He remarks that "[d]as Band zwischen Jahve und seinem Volk wurde um so unzerreißbarer, je mörderischer Verachtung und Verfolgung auf den Juden lasteten" (Weber 1922, 300). Further, in contrast to the Hindu, whose future destiny depended upon his personal chances of rebirth, "[d]er Jude dagegen für seine Nachfahren die Teilnahme an einem messianischen Reich, welches seine gesamte Pariagemeinschaft aus ihrer Pariastellung zur Herrenstellung in der Welt erlösen wird" (Weber 1922, 300). In Weber's view, Yahweh intended to place the Jews in the typical situation of citizens of a powerful polis in Antiquity, who held as debtors and debt-slaves the inhabitants of nearby subject villages and towns (Weber 1922, 300-301).

In the Hindu framework, such a development was not possible. On the contrary, the Hindu's conception left unchanged for all time the caste stratification and the position of his own caste within it. In striking contrast, the Jew anticipated his own personal salvation through a revolution of the existing social stratification to the advantage of his pariah people (Weber 1922, 301).

The expectation of salvation led to the development of an ethics of resentment. According to Weber, "[e]s (das Ressentiment, TP) ist in Nietzsches Sinn Begleiterscheinung der religiösen Ethik der negativ Privilegierten, die sich, in direkter Umkehrung des alten Glaubens, dessen getrösten, daß die ungleiche Verteilung der irdischen Lose auf Sünde und Unrecht der positiv Privilegierten beruhe, also früher oder später gegen jene die Rache Gottes herbeiführen müsse. In Gestalt dieser Theodizee der negativ Privilegierten dient dann der Moralismus als Mittel der Legitimierung

bewußten oder unbewußten Rachedurstes” (Weber 1922, 301).

The religion of suffering acquires, however, the specific character of *ressentiment* only under special circumstances. In Weber’s understanding, a number of characteristics typical to Judaism correspond to these circumstances. Firstly, the religion of Psalms and the priestly reworkings of ancient Israelite are full of the need for vengeance. Secondly, in no other religion in the world do we find a universal deity possessing the unparalleled desire for vengeance manifested by Yahweh. The historical events, as for example the battle of Mediggo, do not fit into this theodicy of compensation and vengeance. This is why, in Weber’s view, the Jewish religion became notably a religion of retribution. The virtues enjoined by God are practiced for the sake of the hope for compensation (Weber 1922, 301-302).

As the Messiah delayed his arrival, the hope for vengeance receded in the religious thinking of intellectuals in favour of the value of an inner awareness of God or a mildly emotional trust in God’s goodness as such combined with a readiness for peace with all the world. Only during epochs of persecution the hope for retribution flamed up anew. This is why *ressentiment* should not, after all, be interpreted as the decisive element of Judaism although its influence should not be underestimated either: in Judaism the doctrine of religious resentment has an idiosyncratic quality and plays a unique role not found among the disprivileged classes of any other religion (Weber 1922, 302). Weber concludes that the belief in Yahweh’s promises actually produced within the realm of Judaism itself a strong component of the morality of *ressentiment* (Weber 1922, 303).

### 2.3. Pariah Existence as Eschatology

Weber’s comparison between the Jews and Indian pariahs was not welcomed in the scientific community. Already in 1925 Julius Guttmann argued that it is scientifically misleading without providing for the term pariah any place in sociological vocabulary (see Guttmann 1925). The same argument was repeated by Salo W. Baron

in 1937 and again by Efraim Shmueli in 1968. These repeated reservations as to the validity of Weber's comparison raise inevitably the question of what actually led him to make it.

In the background of Weber's comparison lies Nietzsche's critique of Christianity and its prehistory. Nietzsche locates the origins of Christianity in the rebellion of the lowest instincts of the lowest ranges of society against all the privileged strata. A pariah group which is not bound in an eternal and unchangeable caste order of the world but rather looks forward, in its eschatological vision, to turning the existing social order into its opposite, prepares the ground for a God-guided political and social revolution. In other words, slave morality and eschatology pave the way for the Judeo-Christian inversion of values and lead to a victory of plebeian morality in Europe. The slave rebellion in the morality begins when the *ressentiment* becomes creative and valuable (cf. Taubes 1966, 189).

The *ressentiment* became creative as a counterconcept to "natural conditions" of life. The post-exilic community turned the religion, cult, moral, and history of the early Israel into counterparts of their original value. The inversion of values took place once again in the emergence of Christianity: the Christian Church renounced every demand for originality (cf. Taubes 1966, 190). Nietzsche's conclusion is that the Judeo-Christian morality is a morality of *ressentiment*.

Taubes argues that unlike Nietzsche who is unambiguously against the ascetic ideal of slave morality attitude, Weber remains ambiguous in his judgement. For him, the attitude of messianic hope has both strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, peculiar to the Israelite expectation is the increasing intensity with which paradise and the saviour prince were projected into the future. In other words, it was only the momentum of prophecy that made Israel to a unique degree a people of hope and tarrying (Taubes 1966, 193; cf. Weber 1921b, 249).

On the other hand, however, there is an aspect in Weber's judgement which has, in the discussion on the messianic idea, remained in shadow. This is the ambiguity that the strength of the messianic idea corresponds to the weakness of Jewish history. Engaged in the messianic idea, the Jewish people in exile was not able to descend



to a concrete historical level and ended up in pariah existence. This is, in Taubes's view, the moment of truth in Weber's pariah concept despite all the critique directed to it (Taubes 1966, 193).

In other words, for Weber pariah existence refers to an existence outside of history. Even though the messianic hope casts light into the darkness of exile, it simultaneously renders life in exile passing and provisory. Life in hope is something great but at the same time it is utterly unreal. It empties every situation of its specific weight and value and renders a full earthly life impossible (Taubes 1966, 193).

In the Arendtian perspective, the Jews are clearly viewed as a nation or people as distinct from a religion which may associate many different peoples. This was also characteristic, of course, of the Jews' self-understanding: they firmly distinguished themselves from other nations or peoples both culturally and religiously. However, their self-understanding as a distinct people was shaped by an eschatological conception of the world. In other words, the cornerstone of their perspective of the future was a reunification in front of God in the Promised Land rather than among other peoples on earth.

An eschatological world view has not, of course, been characteristic exclusively of Judaism. It rather was characteristic of all the saviour monotheisms. As J.G.A. Pocock points out, the Christian doctrine of salvation ultimately made the historical vision possible, paradoxically operating for centuries to deny that possibility. More precisely, the conception of salvation through redemption introduced a possibility of historical time into the European mind as creation, fall and redemption took place in time and denoted temporal events. However, at the same time the notions of salvation and redemption implied an ultimate end to time and history. In this framework history acquired meaning through subordination to eschatology (Pocock 1975, 31-32).

Another problem related to the eschatological world view which puzzled the Christian mind was the role and significance of people's own acts in the interval of expecting the fulfillment of the programme of redemption: it was tempting to assume that God was somehow present and concerned in the happenings of secular his-

tory and directing them to soterial ends. In other words, the *saeculum* was in the drama of salvation (Pocock 1975, 32).

Augustine's response to all versions of apocalypticism was to effect a radical divorce between eschatology and history. A human being was a citizen of two separate worlds, the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*: deeds and acts in the latter could not affect the former in any way whatsoever. Human conduct on earth could not be based on apocalyptic visions of future events on the earth as the *civitas Dei* was not dependent upon earthly happenings. In other words, the salvation of a human being was not to be the outcome of a historical process which people could somehow affect but it rather was an individual matter of proper conduct on earth. In this perspective worldly affairs of men were deemed secondary in importance in their inevitable imperfection (cf. Pocock 1975, 34-35).

Thus, analogically with Judaism, the Christian eschatology tends to turn attention away from worldly affairs of men to waiting for redemption in the heavenly Kingdom of God. In other words, in an eschatological perspective earthly political organization inevitably remains secondary of importance as earthly existence is only provisional and vain in its nature.<sup>6</sup>

In the course of centuries Christian doctrine and culture responded to this dilemma in the Augustinian spirit separating the secular, worldly affairs of men from affairs of the heavenly Kingdom of God. During the Enlightenment period the process of secularization significantly strengthened and was reflected, among other things, in the separation of state and church. The process of secularization affected, of course, Jewish communities as well. The birth of Reform Judaism may be viewed as a sign of growing away from a concrete reference to the Promised Land and orthodox observance of the Judaic Law. However, attempts to rethink Jewishness in political terms on European soil did not gain any significant support. On the contrary, when the Zionist movement was born it borrowed the ancient eschatological notion of redemption in the Promised Land for its political programme.

Instead of attempting to organize itself politically, a peculiar pariah mentality developed among the Jewish people. The hallmark of this mentality was voluntary withdrawal from the mundane af-

fairs of the Gentiles and concentration on business and observance of the Jewish Law in the ghetto. As a result, the Jewish culture remained profoundly apolitical and aloof from worldly affairs. In other words, the Jews refused to recognize their own share of responsibility as to their political fate and abstained from open rebellion against their oppressed condition in order to achieve political rights and the chance of political existence as Jews.

In Arendt's view, this withdrawal from the human world and the affairs of men was possible as long as the exclusion of the Jews remained a social phenomenon. In a world which did not know equality and democracy, but in which the structures of human communities were highly hierarchical and inequitable, the Jews did not but form one oppressed group among many. However, the politicization of the Jewish question during the nineteenth century changed the situation: religion lost its significance as a principal explanation for the exclusion of the Jews and racial inferiority stepped into the foreground. At the same time, formerly excluded groups of people gradually achieved political rights in the egalitarian spirit of Enlightenment. In this new situation, in which different peoples and groups were step by step included into political communities, the Jews did not come out as a politically organized group of their own to demand political rights as Jews. Many of them preferred, instead, to attempt to assimilate into the Gentile culture as individuals breaking with their previous Jewish background. As a result, the demand to include the Jews as Jews in the European polity never entered the political agenda. Correspondingly, the idea of the partial responsibility or accountability of the Jews for their political fate never won significant popularity among the Jews.

This does not mean that the question of the role and status of the Jews in Gentile political communities and society was never raised. However, it was mainly raised in very assimilationist terms. Whereas orthodox Jews were never particularly interested in the question of inclusion of the Jews into Gentile society and polity, it was characteristic of unorthodox Enlightenment-inspired Jews to view Jewishness as a private matter not to be shown in public. Thus Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) who is usually considered the most prominent Jewish spokesman of the German Enlightenment sug-

gested that the Jews should attempt to be Jews in their homes and Germans in the street.

In sum, in the framework of eschatological expectation of the messiah and redemption earthly endeavours lose their importance and relevance. In the final analysis, at the core of Weber's concept of pariah existence is not so much the morality of resentment as its entirely extra-worldly eschatological character.

It is precisely this core of Weber's concept of pariah existence that Hannah Arendt adopts. As we will see later in the present study, in the framework of Jewish eschatology it is not so much the morality of resentment that poses an insurmountable obstacle to the political organization of the Jews but rather an inability to secularize and politicize an ancient messianic hope in the secularizing world of the nineteenth century. Instead of translating this ancient hope into political terms the European Jews preferred to reject it altogether and choose the route of assimilation. More precisely, neither assimilation nor Zionism offered a political solution to the Jewish question on European soil. On the contrary, the former was rather an antipolitical answer as it was based on concealing and getting rid of one's Jewish characteristics whereas the latter was a secularized version of ancient eschatology in the form of escape to Palestine. As Arendt points out on several occasions (see e.g. JHR, 104-105; cf. Gruenbaum 1946, 7-11), the Sabbatai Zevi movement remained the last expression of the ancient messianic hope and nothing came to replace it in secular political terms.

## **2.4. The Concept of Pariah People as an Ideal-Type**

Weber's fashion of using the concept pariah people was shaped by his methodological concept of the ideal-type. Thus, it is no surprise that as the former was attacked and criticized as scientifically irrelevant the latter was deemed to be methodologically inadequate.

Efraim Shmueli argues that the concept of the pariah people became in Weber an all-encompassing proposition, a static scheme, inadequate to cope with the historical wealth of the various systems

and sub-systems of Jewish culture. A general notion was imposed as an "ideal-type category". The problem then is that such a monolithic concept applies to the realities of only one short period, that of the beginning of the emancipation period in Europe (Shmueli 1968, 169).

According to Shmueli the ideal-type of the pariah people is a misconception on four grounds. First, Weber's analysis disregards the most relevant elements in Jewish history and accentuates a one-sided arrangement of the selected elements. The arbitrariness of the selection of elements in the analysis of the pariah people type may serve, in Shmueli's view, as an illustration of the inherent weakness of the whole ideal-type method. It is open both to the dangers of imposing typological generalizations upon complex historical material and to the fallacy of misplaced concreteness through arresting some parts of historical reality (Shmueli 1968, 182-183).

Second, the concept transfers a designation of one unique historical phenomenon, that of the pariah caste in the Indian social structure, into another unique historical phenomenon, neglecting its different qualities. The concept of the Jewish pariah people is not a typical relationship between significant components, but a unique historical, sociological, and religious phenomenon altogether. In this case, the admitted one-sided accentuation of one or more point of view may lead to a distortion of the historical realities. The method of ideal-type is, in Shmueli's understanding, totally inadequate to define the uniqueness of the relations between the Jewish people and its neighbours and hosts.

Third, up to the time of their emancipation Jews were a guest people, distinct as an ethnic and religious group, a "nation within the nations".

Fourth, following Talcott Parsons, Shmueli argues that the method of ideal-type tends to atomize the historical and sociological material into rigid unities. This typological rigidity and "trait" atomism deals with the phenomena as if they were rigid unchangeable entities and makes Weber's method unable to properly conceive transitions both from one element to another, with one ideal-type, and between the ideal-types. All this questions its validity as a conceptual tool of understanding Jewish destiny in the past.

This is a harsh judgement. Nothing seems to be left of the validity of Weber's method of ideal-type. On the basis of Shmueli's argumentation, the basic problem with it as a conceptual tool to be used in the analysis of Jewish history lies in the fact that Weber draws a false analogy between the Indian pariah caste and the Jews as a pariah people. In the Indian caste order pariahs were, after all, one structural element of that order (Shmueli 1968, 193). In other words, they did not deny the validity and truthfulness of that order, but adhered and belonged to it although constituting one of its lowest ranks. The case of Jewry was different. The Jews in the Diaspora did not adhere to the religion or even to the general social and political order of the Gentiles, but to their own religion (Shmueli 1968, 168).

Two questions arise here. Firstly, what kind of category is Weber's ideal-type, after all? And secondly, does Shmueli understand it correctly and is his critique valid?

As is well known, Weber's ideal-type was not an empirical category meant to refer directly to empirical realities. He describes it, instead, as a utopia which has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality. As such, it is neither a hypothesis nor a description of reality (Weber 1904, 190). It rather should be viewed in the framework of Weber's perspectivist epistemology.

In Weber's own words:

"Er wird gewonnen durch einseitige *Steigerung eines oder einiger Gesichtspunkte* und durch *Zusammenschluß einer Fülle von diffus und diskret, hier mehr, dort weniger, stellenweise gar nicht, vonhandenen Einzelercheinungen, die sich jenen einseitig herausgehobenen Gesichtspunkten fügen, zu einem in sich einheitlichen Gedanken bilde*. In seiner begrifflichen Reinheit ist dieses Gedankenbild nirgends in der Wirklichkeit empirisch vorfindbar, es ist eine *Utopie*, und für die *historische Arbeit erwächst die Aufgabe, in jedem einzelnen Falle festzustellen, wie nahe oder wie fern die Wirklichkeit jenem Idealbilde steht...*" (Weber 1904, 191, his italics).

Using the idea of capitalist culture as an example, Weber adds:

”Nun ist es möglich, oder vielmehr es muß als sicher angesehen werden, daß mehrere, ja sicherlich jeweils sehr zahlreiche Utopien dieser Art sich entwerfen lassen, von denen *keine* der anderen gleicht, von denen erst recht *keine* in der empirischen Wirklichkeit als tatsächlich geltende Ordnung der gesellschaftlichen Zustände zu beobachten ist, von denen aber doch *jede* den Anspruch erhebt, eine Darstellung der ”Idee” der kapitalistischen Kultur zu sein, und von denen auch *jede* diesen Anspruch insofern erheben kann, als jede tatsächlich gewisse, in ihrer *Eigenart bedeutungsvolle* Züge unserer Kultur der Wirklichkeit entnommen und in ein einheitliches Idealbild gebracht hat ... Wie es deshalb die verschiedensten ”Gesichtspunkte” gibt, unter denen wir sie (the cultural phenomena, TP) als für uns bedeutsam betrachten können, so lassen sich die allerverschiedensten Prinzipien der Auswahl der in einen Idealtypus einer bestimmten Kultur aufzunehmenden Zusammenhänge zur Anwendung bringen” (Weber 1904, 192).

In Shmueli’s understanding, the result of this kind of intellectual operation cannot be but a distortion of historical reality. But what is its significance for Weber? How does he justify its use?

Weber hastens to emphasize that an ideal-type is an analytical construct in a logical sense of the term, to be kept apart from the idea of an ethical imperative, i.e. of a ”model” of what ”ought” to exist. In other words, even though he speaks of an ideal-type as a utopia, he does not mean by it any kind of normative ideal. He then remarks that whoever accepts the proposition that the knowledge of historical reality can or should be a ”presuppositionless” copy of ”objective” facts, will deny the value of the ideal-type (Weber 1904, 192-193).

It would appear that Shmueli belongs to those who believe that it is possible to write a ”presuppositionless” history of the Jewish people which corresponds to the ”objective” facts. That there is, in other words, an unquestionable, objective ”Truth” about the Jewish people and its history. Weber, instead, thinks that our interpreta-

tions always depend on, and change as a result of the viewpoints we choose and the traits we select and reorganize into an argument from a bulk of empirical facts.

Further, in Weber's understanding, it must be decided case by case whether the ideal-type method is a scientifically fruitful method of conceptualization and theory-construction. This cannot, in other words, be decided *a priori*, but the construction of ideal-types earns its place only if it succeeds in revealing concrete cultural phenomena in their interdependence and their significance. The construction of ideal-types is, indeed, inevitable if the historian attempts to determine the cultural significance of an individual event. Otherwise his study remains a pure description of historical occurrence (Weber 1904, 193).

Correspondingly, Weber argues, the greater the need for a sharp appreciation of the significance of a cultural phenomenon, the more imperative is the need to operate with unambiguous concepts which are systematically defined. The ideal-type is this kind of conceptual construct (*Gedankenbild*). That is to say, "...welches nicht die historische Wirklichkeit oder gar die "eigentliche" Wirklichkeit ist, welches noch viel weniger dazu da ist, als ein Schema zu dienen, in welches die Wirklichkeit als *Exemplar* eingeordnet werden sollte, sondern welches die Bedeutung eines rein idealen *Grenzbegriffes* hat, an welchem die Wirklichkeit zur Verdeutlichung bestimmter bedeutsamer Bestandteile ihres empirischen Gehaltes *gemessen*, mit dem sie *verglichen* wird ... Der Idealtypus ist in dieser Funktion insbesondere der Versuch, historische Individuen oder deren Einzelbestandteile in *genetische* Begriffe zu fassen" (Weber 1904, 194).

There is, however, also another way of constructing an ideal-type. This is the construction of a *model-type*. In this case, the concept of ideal-type is not used in the logical sense but, instead, in the practical sense. "In dieser Bedeutung", Weber argues, "sind die "Ideen" dann aber natürlich nicht mehr rein *logische* Hilfsmittel, nicht mehr Begriffe, an welchen die Wirklichkeit vergleichend *gemessen*, sondern Ideale, aus denen sie wertend *beurteilt* wird" (Weber 1904, 199).

Weber admits that this division of ideal-types into two categories is fundamental, but at the same time it causes some problems as the logical and practical ways of using the term are unconsciously



confused with each other: "Im Gegensatz zu den konstant bleibenden ethischen Maßstäben... hat der moderne relativistisch eingeschulte Historiker, der die Epoche, von der er spricht, einerseits "aus ihr selbst verstehen", andererseits doch auch "beurteilen" will, das Bedürfnis, die Maßstäbe seines Urteils "dem Stoff" zu entnehmen, d. h. die "Idee" im Sinne des *Ideals* aus der "Idee" im Sinne des "Idealtypus" herauswachsen zu lassen" (Weber 1904, 199-200).

In addition, Weber makes a distinction between a simple class concept (*Gattungsbegriff*) and the ideal-type. A class concept summarizes the common features of certain empirical phenomena but as such it has no typical character whereas the goal of ideal-typical concept-construction is to make explicit the unique individual character of cultural phenomena (Weber 1904, 202).

Shmueli's critique of Weber's conception of pariah people is partly historical, partly methodological. On the one hand he tries to prove that the historical facts do not correspond to Weber's interpretation, and on the other hand that the method of ideal-type is highly inadequate in general and particularly in the case of the Jews.

At first sight it seems that the historical part of Shmueli's critique is valid – at least to a certain extent. On the basis of knowledge available today, Weber's conclusion that the Jews became a pariah people immediately after the second destruction of the Temple does not seem to correspond to the historical course of events. It must be admitted, indeed, that Weber was not explicit enough in this matter. He does not explicitly mention that he did not consider the situation of European Jews static for two thousand years, and that it was his intention to deal with the period of Diaspora later. He only points out that certain basic characteristics of a pariah people came into being after the second destruction of the Temple and have not disappeared since. Thus, it is no wonder that it is easy to misread Weber in this matter. However, he succeeds in showing that all the significant pariah qualities of the Jewish people had emerged by that time. The point is, I think, that historically, not all of them immediately acquired equally full significance to make Weber's argument sound fully convincing.

However, Shmueli's eagerness to prove Weber's method totally inadequate prevents him from any kind of sensitive reading of

Weber. He does not take seriously the fact that Weber never meant to write a history of Jewish people but was concerned with the sociology of religion. Paradoxically, Weber's concept of the Jewish pariah people is exactly what Shmueli calls it: a unique historical, sociological, and religious phenomenon. He fails to see, however, that that is what makes it an ideal-type. The notion of the Jews as a pariah people is a Weberian utopia. That is, it is a representation of the idea of the Jewish people in its uniqueness. In other words, it is not a typical relationship between significant components in the sense of a model-type, as Shmueli hints, but it is a typological relationship between significant components in the sense that it brings together into a unified ideal-construct certain traits revealing them in their interdependence.

Further, Shmueli accuses Weber of a false analogy between the Indian pariah caste and the Jewish people without paying any attention to the fact that Weber explicitly warns about using the term pariah people defined in his way to refer to the Hindu caste of pariahs. Although the term originally came from India, Weber explicitly declares that he uses it in the meaning adopted in Europe referring to the Jews.

In Shmueli's understanding the only valid method in the study of Judaism and the Jews is a historical analysis of the Rankean "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*" style. From his viewpoint, ideal-types are hopelessly static and as such inadequate in a historical analysis. However, Wolfgang Mommsen argues that this is not necessarily the case. According to him, the strategy of accentuating significant aspects renders the ideal-typical method particularly suitable for interpreting historical reality from a specific vantage-point which may differ from context to context. More importantly, the ideal-types often have to be seen as *directional* types. In other words, they embody an *ideal-typical trend* which unfolds their inherent principles of construction in an ever purer form (Mommsen 1989, 125, italics mine).

As far as I can see, in the case of the Jews, the ideal-type of pariah people has to be understood in exactly this way. As a directional type it embodies a trend of "becoming a pariah people" which unfolds its inherent principles of construction most purely in the community of European Jews of the nineteenth century.

In other words, Weber's typologization of the Jews as a pariah people should be understood as follows: the Jews come closest to the ideal-type of a pariah people. The important characteristics of the Jews as a pariah people may be traced as far as the second destruction of the Temple, but in the course of time and in different Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere these characteristics did not always represent themselves in the same way and with the same importance. The existence of the Jews as a pariah people only emerged fully in the nineteenth century in Europe.

Thus, the European Jews became a pariah people proper in the Weberian sense of the word at the beginning of the emancipation period in Europe. That is to say, to the extent to which they grew away from Judaism and began to adhere to Christianity and Gentile society at large, they ceased to be only a guest people with their own point of adherence and became pariahs in the sense of being ritually – and against their own will – separated from their social surroundings.

## **2.5. Arendt's Reception of Weber's Concept of Pariah People**

Hannah Arendt adopted from Weber the overall understanding of the Jews as a pariah people and the method of ideal-type which she applied in her own discussions of Jews as pariahs. For Arendt, the pariah was often an individual type whereas Weber principally spoke of Jews as a representative type of pariah people in history. In other words, she modified Weber's conception of pariah people for her own purposes. These two approaches are, by no means, mutually exclusive but rather complementary.

Arendt also drew from Weber's notion of Jewish segregation as self-produced and self-perpetuated. However, in Arendt, the idea of self-produced pariahdom was to constitute only one side of Jewish pariahdom. Bernard Lazare's views on the nature of Jewish exclusion were to significantly shape Arendt's understanding of Jewish segregation, directing her attention to inner hierarchies of Jewish communities as a source of perpetuation of the political weakness of the Jews.

As a result, Arendt did not emphasize the self-perpetuation of the pariahdom equally strongly as Weber, but viewed the Jewish pariahdom as two-fold or even ambiguous in its nature. In other words, for Arendt it was both externally imposed upon the Jewry and self-perpetuated at the same time: the Jewish tendency to exclusivism and eschatological world view tended to reinforce the dimension of self-perpetuation but it by no means undid the external oppression. More precisely, eschatological world view made the Jewish leaders unable and unwilling to search for a this-worldly solution to the Jewish misery. This became strikingly evident during the period of Jewish emancipation when Jewish leaders did not even try to organize the Jewish masses into a fight for the right to political existence *as Jews* on European soil.

Politically active Jews split into assimilationists and Zionists who shared a common unwillingness to politicize the Jewish question. An ancient religious eschatology changed into modern forms of secular eschatology and worldlessness. In the case of the assimilationists it turned into its own opposite in the conviction that the only possible solution to Jewish misery was an escape from Judaism. In the case of the Zionists it assumed a nationalist form based on a conviction that the only solution was an escape from Europe back to the ancient homeland.

In contrast to traditional Jewish leaders and politicians of assimilation and Zionism Bernard Lazare represents a modern conscious pariah. In Arendt's presentation, there is no trace of the Weberian resentful pariah left in this figure. Whereas the Weberian-Nietzschean pariah dreams of redemption and the restitution of ancient glory where the last come first, the Lazarean pariah does not dream of any kind of restitution. More precisely, whereas in the eschatological framework of the Weberian pariah the driving force of redemption is revenge in order to reconstitute an ancient natural right to supremacy over other people, the Lazarean pariah draws from pride and dignity seeking for a this-worldly solution to Jewish misery in the framework of mundane political principles of political freedom and justice.

However, as we will see in chapter four, there is a point in common between the Nietzschean slave morality and the fate of Bernard

Lazare. This is the unwillingness of the pariah to rebel. For Nietzsche, the problem with the emergence of the slave morality is that it leads people to prefer blind obedience instead of rebellion and criticism. Bernard Lazare was to learn that it was very difficult if not impossible to rouse the pariah to fight against oppression: both the slave and the pariah were satisfied with crumbs from the rich man's table.

In sum, Weber's ideal-typical method provided Arendt with an overall framework in which to approach Jewish pariahdom. However, more often than not, this framework remains implicit in her discussions of pariahdom. Instead of dealing with the Jews as a group it was characteristic of Arendt to pick up an individual representative of pariahdom and analyse the pariah status through this figure. This choice emphasizes Arendt's preference to use the notion of ideal-type in its *model type* variant which renders possible an evaluative judgement of the pariah. This is, indeed, what is at stake in Arendt's discussions of individual pariah-figures: she attempts to evaluatively judge the acts and deeds of individual pariahs, confronting their personal decisions and choices with the historical context in which they lived. Drawing from Weber's method of ideal-type Arendt did not mean to construct any rigid and ahistorical human types but, on the contrary, she attempted to focus on what was possible in a given situation and how well an individual pariah succeeded in exploiting opportunities available in this situation.

This is exactly how Weber meant the category of ideal-type to be used. Real, concrete individuals never completely correspond to the ideal-type with which they are compared. One and the same individual may resemble different ideal-types in different times and situations. One may also identify a number of "ideas" of the pariah (cf. Weber 1904, 192). The construction of ideal-types is a means of achieving tools for evaluating the significance of different configurations of pariah existence. The final goal of ideal-typical concept construction is to make explicit the unique individual character of pariah existence (cf. Weber 1904, 202).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Prussian Jews achieved franchise only in 1871.

<sup>2</sup>It must be kept in mind, of course, that Weber died in 1920.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Jaspers was a regular visitor to Weber's "salon" of Sunday afternoons (see Marianne Weber 1926, 369, 452, 570-571). Karl Loewenstein reports that together with Georg von Lukács and Friedrich Gundolf Jaspers belonged to Weber's *wirkliche Gesprächspartner* to whom he listened and with whom he had a continuous exchange of ideas and arguments (Loewenstein 1966, 30). Elisabeth Young-Bruehl points out that Jaspers introduced Hannah Arendt to Marianne Weber's salon after Max Weber's death (Young-Bruehl 1982, 82).

<sup>4</sup>Arendt's tutor proper in politics was Kurt Blumenfeld (1884-1963), the then president of the German Zionist Organization. From him she learned the notion of post-assimilationist Zionism as a type of Zionism appropriate to a particular Diaspora situation which made it possible to leave assimilation behind and embrace a new kind of critical Jewish consciousness (cf. Esh 1964, 236-237).

In the framework of this study, it is noteworthy that it was with all probability Blumenfeld who first acquainted Arendt with Lazare's ideas. Generally speaking, his impact was mostly on the practical level of awakening Arendt's interest in Jewish politics. However, Blumenfeld's impact on Arendt's political thinking would deserve a study of its own.

<sup>5</sup>Weber's intention was to focus on the contemporary situation of the Jewry later but he never had time to fulfil his intention (cf. Taubes 1966, 194).

<sup>6</sup>Pocock's analysis shows that eschatology characteristic of saviour monotheisms has profoundly shaped the self-understanding of European people and their conception of how human societies ought to be organized. However, since the times of Greek polis eschatological world views have been contested by more world-centred republican ideals of *vivere civile* (see Pocock 1975).

### 3. Rahel's Way: One Does not Escape Pariahdom

#### 3.1. A Case Study on the Jewish Condition

Having finished her doctoral thesis on Saint Augustine<sup>1</sup> under the supervision of Karl Jaspers, Hannah Arendt took up a study on Rahel Levin Varnhagen (1771-1833), a Jewish salonière of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Berlin. After politically careless, "worldless" years spent in the company of German philosophy she wanted to face her situation in the human world in relation to other people. Having earlier paid no attention neither to her own Jewishness nor to the Jewish question at large, she began to realize that it was something she could not pass just like that. Her interest was directed principally to the condition of Jews like herself without strong ties with Judaism and Jewish tradition.

In 1930 Arendt wrote to Jaspers to explain her approach as follows: "...auf dem Boden des Judeseins eine bestimmte Möglichkeit der Existenz erwachsen *kann*, die ich in aller Vorläufigkeit andeutungsweise mit Schicksalhaftigkeit bezeichnete. Diese Schicksalhaftigkeit erwächst gerade auf dem Grund einer Bodenlosigkeit und vollzieht sich gerade *nur* in der Abgelöstheit vom Judentum."..."Was dieses alles eigentlich ist: Schicksal, Exponiertheit, es ist mit dem Leben etwas gemeint – kann ich nicht (und merke es im Schreiben) in abstracto sagen, sondern höchstens vielleicht exemplifizierend aufweisen. Gerade deshalb will ich auch eine Biographie schreiben.

Interpretation hat hier eigentlich den Sinn der Wiederholung” (Arendt to Jaspers, March 24, 1930, Arendt 1985, 47-48).

Thus, although one of the hallmarks of contemporary German philosophy, especially in its Heideggerian form, was a striving for concreteness, Arendt began to feel that pure philosophy was too abstract to be the only or principal means of grasping the essential conditions of Jewish existence. In other words, the Jewish condition could not be approached on a purely abstract theoretical level, but should be analysed in concrete terms through concrete life-histories.

A study of Rahel Levin did not mean, however, breaking away from everything Arendt had done and learned so far. On the contrary, it offered her an opportunity to combine different threads of her own experience and scholarship. First of all, there was her experience of belonging to a lost generation uprooted from a previous cultural tradition. Only later was Arendt able to see that her generation was not, after all, unique in this respect. Looking back at the first generations of the twentieth century, she (1968b, 218-220) identified three lost generations in the European context of the early twentieth century. The first of them, which was born in the last decade of the nineteenth century and grew up in the trenches and battlefields of the First World War, invented the term because they felt that they had become unfit to live normal lives. The second of them was born in the first decade of this century and grew up in the midst of instability caused by inflation, mass unemployment and revolutionary unrest. And finally, the third of them, born in the second decade of the century, was initiated into the world by Nazi concentration camps, the Spanish Civil War and the Moscow Trials.

Hannah Arendt belonged to the second of these generations. According to Wolfgang Heuer, the peculiarity of her generation was that in the beginning, it still believed in the unbreakability of the outer world. It viewed itself with the eyes of the nineteenth century and was concerned only about its own affairs, being very egocentric. At the same time it conceived of itself as profoundly different from the rest the people. After World War I a number of students searched for patterns of thought instead of new ideas, and firm world views instead of critical thinking. In this, there were



three threats. In the first place, dissatisfaction with traditional patterns of thought easily turned into adoption of an equally firm and uncritical world view. Secondly, one could withdraw into indifference, wishing that the "destiny" would resolve all problems. And finally, one could stick at cultivating one's own originality in the spirit of German Romanticism (cf. Heuer 1992, 22-23). In other words, the lost generation was tempted to cling to fixed patterns of thought, uncritically adopting existing ideas without any confrontation with them.

The threat of falling into one of these traps was considerable because the lost generations were without any feeling of belonging to a certain tradition or coming from a certain cultural background. In other words, they neither felt they had any position of their own in the world nor any firm bases or criteria for evaluation of events and phenomena in the surrounding world. On the contrary, they felt empty inside and many of them were willing to fill this emptiness with almost anything available. Also Hannah Arendt suffered from this inner emptiness caused by too many losses and unexpected changes experienced in childhood (see Young-Bruehl 1982).<sup>2</sup> In Rahel she found a figure with whom she could compare this feeling of homelessness and traditionlessness.

Arendt's first teacher at university was Martin Heidegger, who made an indelible impression on her with his aspiration to concreteness and clarity. However, having studied under the supervision of Jaspers for several years, Arendt started to grow theoretically away from Heidegger. Although she never rejected the value of Heidegger's major philosophical ideas, especially those presented in *Sein und Zeit*, she gradually became more and more critical towards them.<sup>3</sup> She noted, with Jaspers, that Heidegger's philosophy was without love (Jaspers, cit. Young-Bruehl 1982, 76). Moreover, looking back to German philosophy of existence after the Second World War she points out that the most essential characteristic of the Heideggerian Self is its absolute egoism, its radical separation from all its fellows. The desire of being-a-Self leads Heideggerian man to anticipate death as an existential, for only in experiencing death as nothingness man has the opportunity to devote himself exclusively to being-a-Self and free himself once and for all from the world (Arendt 1946c, 181).

In Arendt's interpretation, Heidegger never manages to transcend the impass he introduces with his egoistic conception of Self but, instead, Heideggerian man remains isolated and without contact with his fellow-men on earth. Neither does he manage to create a new ontology to which he aspired in his early philosophy. In his later work, he tries to resolve the problem of isolation by drawing on concepts like folk and earth to provide his isolated selves with a shared, common ground to stand on. In Arendt's mind, however, with this move he only leads us out of philosophy into some kind of nature-oriented superstition: "All that can result from that is the organization of these Selves intent only on themselves into an Over-self in order somehow to effect a transition from resolutely accepted guilt to action" (Arendt 1946c, 181-182).

Here we can see a clear dissociation from Heideggerian philosophy. It is enforced by a deliberate move towards Jaspersian philosophizing. Indeed, Arendt argues that Jaspers is the only German philosopher of existence who has not yet said his last word but is still modern in the sense that he continues to provide direct impulses for contemporary philosophical thought. This is because for Jaspers, existence is never isolated and directed only to death. On the contrary, it exists only in communication and in awareness of others' existence. In other words, it can develop only in the shared life of human beings inhabiting a given world common to them all. In this framework, it is, in Arendt's mind, possible to accept the "fragmentation of Being" and accommodate the modern sense of alienation in the world and the modern desire to create, in a world that is no longer a home to us, a human world that could become our home (Arendt 1946c, 186).

A third thread of experience and scholarship that Arendt was able to use in her study on Rahel Levin was the knowledge of autobiographical considerations she had learned during her research on Augustine and which she did not utilize in her dissertation. In addition to this, she could draw from the knowledge of German Romanticism she had acquired while planning – before deciding to concentrate on the figure of Rahel – to write a monograph on it. And finally, she could combine this with her awakening political consciousness of the Jewish condition and all that she had learned from

Kurt Blumenfeld, her mentor in politics.

As a child, Arendt had not been conscious of her own Jewishness until she learned it from other children in the street in the form of anti-Semitic remarks. However, in the climate of growing anti-Semitism, she first learnt at home from her mother that "you mustn't let it get to you" (Arendt 1965, 8). In her childhood Arendt was advised to defend herself only against other children and their anti-Semitic remarks. Arendt recalls that "[w]hen my teachers made anti-Semitic remarks...I was told to get up immediately, leave the classroom, come home, and report everything exactly. Then my mother wrote one of her many registered letters; and for me the matter was completely settled" (Arendt 1965, 8).

The childhood lesson of the duty to defend oneself soon developed into a principle according to which one had to defend oneself as a Jew if one was attacked as a Jew (cf. Arendt 1965, 12). Arendt never abandoned this principle but it rather may be viewed as a first germ of her idea of conscious pariahdom. As we will see in the next chapter, it comes close to Bernard Lazare's principle according to which it is the duty of every human being to resist oppression.

Childhood experiences of anti-Semitism did not awake Arendt's interest in the Jewish question. Still as a young student, Hannah Arendt found the Jewish question simply boring. However, Kurt Blumenfeld managed to convince her of its political importance. In all probability this would have happened anyway as the political situation of the Jews worsened. Compared with many of her contemporaries, Hannah Arendt understood quite early what was going on in Germany; already at the beginning of the 30s she was convinced, unlike many others, that the Nazis would rise to power (Arendt 1965, 4; 10-11).

The decision to write a book on Rahel Levin had matured irrespective of meeting Kurt Blumenfeld. In 1964, in an interview with Günther Gaus, Arendt refers to this by pointing out that "[e]ven before this time I had concerned myself with the Jewish question. The book on Rahel Varnhagen was finished when I left Germany. The problem of the Jews plays a role in it. I wrote it with the idea, 'I want to understand.' I wasn't discussing my personal problem as a Jew" (Arendt 1965<sup>4</sup>, 12).

However, it is probable, as was already suggested in chapter two (see footnote 4), that it was precisely Blumenfeld who brought to Arendt's awareness the existence of the hidden tradition of conscious pariahdom, the existence of those rebellious but lonely figures – Bernard Lazare among them – in Jewish history who refused to take the school-book version of the Jewish tradition for granted, criticizing both traditional Judaism and attempts at assimilation, and went their own way proclaiming the importance of a more elevated political consciousness of the Jewish people (cf. Arendt 1965, 5). This awareness was to shape the final version of her interpretation of Rahel Levin.

This is how planned research on German Romanticism in a conventional academic form turned into a specific "case-study", written in a very original style, on one of its early representatives. Hannah Arendt tried to capture something of herself, to understand what kind of role one's Jewishness played in life by studying Rahel's experience and her intellectual development. On the other hand, her approach was by no means only a personal account. Rather, it was an effort to acquire a deeper understanding of the condition of the European Jewry at large. She tried to understand, in other words, why mere assimilation proved to be both a false and impossible solution to the exclusion of Jews and from where the unbearable feeling of rootlessness of the Jews coming out of the ghetto stemmed.

The condition of Jewish people of her own kind was having been born in an assimilated, bourgeois – though in Arendt's case in the professional sense as her parents, particularly her mother, were devoted socialists –, secularized Jewish family without strong ties with Judaism or the history and culture of the Jewish people in Europe. It meant being born in good times without urgent need to face the political reasons for the exclusion of Jewish people yet belonging to the rootless outsiders of the earth, feeling homeless and traditionless wherever one went. It meant eventually to understand that having been born a Jewess was not only a personal destiny and that there was no "personal solution" to the Jewish question, but that one's Jewishness should be conceived in its social and political context.

Hannah Arendt was not able to publish her study before she

was compelled to leave Germany in 1933<sup>5</sup>. She escaped to Paris where she mostly concentrated on concrete action for the sake of Jews, working in Jewish organizations such as the Youth Aliyah which organized Jewish children's journeys to Palestine. She felt she had left Rahel behind, being unwilling to finish her study. Walter Benjamin and Heinrich Blücher managed, after all, to convince her that the work was worth finishing and she completed it in Paris. After the Second World War, Karl Jaspers joined Blücher in insisting that the work should be published. Eventually, it was only in 1957 that it was published, first in an English translation and only two years later in a German original.<sup>6</sup>

It is legitimate to ask, however, if there was ever a German original. This is because the book was written in two periods several years apart. At first sight this fact may not seem significant as only the last two chapters remained to be written in Paris (see RV, ix). However, careful reading of the book reveals that the Arendt of the final two chapters knows something that the Arendt of the rest of the book did not. It would be tempting to think that this something is the fate of European Jewry which Arendt obviously could not foresee as she was writing the first chapters. However, this is not exactly the point although related to it. In my view, what distinguishes the final two chapters from the rest of the book is the fact that it is only there that Arendt's interpretive scheme arises in its whole sharpness. In other words, it is only there that Arendt introduces her distinction between pariah and parvenu, the rebellious outcast and the assimilationist upstart. Until then she operates principally with the distinction between schlemihldom, traditional pariahdom of the ghetto existence and assimilation, the attempt of an upstart Jew to adapt herself to Gentile society.

It is important to notice that in the first chapter of the book where Arendt discusses Rahel's starting-point, her schlemihldom, she does not even use the term pariah. This could, of course, have been a conscious conceptual and analytical choice made by Arendt; in the preface of the 1957 edition she explains that it was never her "intention to write a book *about* Rahel; about her personality", "nor about her position in Romanticism" but she was interested in narrating "the story of Rahel's life as she herself might have told it"

(RV, xi). In this, she claims to have tried to follow "as closely as possible the course of Rahel's own reflections upon herself" and so, also "the criticism corresponds to Rahel's self-criticism" (RV, xii).

In other words, Arendt did not want to put words into Rahel's mouth but to follow and analyse her own reasoning and development in her own context. Obviously, the concept of pariah did not belong to this context: as I argued in chapter two, it was only during the nineteenth century that it started to penetrate the European vocabulary. Rahel might have heard it during her lifetime, but until 1833, its exclusive reference to Jews had not been settled. Even less could Rahel have known about the concept of conscious pariahdom which appeared in European vocabulary only approximately a hundred years later with Bernard Lazare only to disappear again with his death until Kurt Blumenfeld and some other self-critical Jews found it anew.

These remarks, however, do not explain from where the distinction between pariah and parvenu come to appear in Arendt's analytical vocabulary in the end of the book. Neither does Arendt give any explanation for it. She restricts herself to remarking on a more general level that the biography was written with an awareness of the doom of German Judaism without, however, a perspective from which to view the phenomenon as a whole since the results of Nazi rule were not yet known (RV, xii).

The perspective to view the phenomenon as a whole was not available in the Paris of the 30s either. What were available, instead, were the writings of Bernard Lazare. She could now consult his writings in Parisian libraries and use his ideas both in the Rahel-study and in the lectures she gave on the history of anti-Semitism to the German branch in exile of the Women's International Zionist Organization.<sup>7</sup>

It does not follow from all this, however, that Arendt's interpretation changed dramatically in the course of her analysis. On the contrary, she keeps on doing what she promises to do in the preface: "...it must be remembered that in it only one aspect of the complex problems of assimilation is treated: namely, the manner in which assimilation to the intellectual and social life of the environment

works out concretely in the history of an individual's life, thus shaping a personal destiny" (RV, xiii).

What changed, instead, was the depth and sharpness of her conclusion. Acquaintance with Bernard Lazare's texts – his critique of Jewish assimilation and his conception of Jewish pariahdom – helped Arendt to sharpen and clarify her interpretive scheme in the conclusive remarks of the study bringing her to the conclusion that a parvenuist assimilation proved to be a false solution to Jewish exclusion. On the other hand, she carefully avoids too much hindsight as to Rahel's choices: she emphasizes that the option of rebellious modern pariahdom was not yet available in Rahel's situation, and that is why Rahel paradoxically remained between the positions of parvenu and pariah, being externally a parvenu but internally a pariah.

Hannah Arendt portrays Rahel as a person who spent her life in a vain effort to assimilate to Gentile society hiding and concealing her Jewish background as well as she could. She carefully follows Rahel's phases in her fight from traditional pariahdom to the brilliance of salonière, from one love-affair to another until her late marriage with Karl August Varnhagen. During this journey through Rahel's phases Arendt discusses a series of themes from the rational introspection of the Enlightenment cult of Reason and the imminent collapse of the German Ancien Régime to the special character of the Jewish salon and a particular female strategy, that of climbing the social ladder through good marriage, confronting them with the overall theme of the book, that of assimilation.

In the following, I will not take under scrutiny all the important themes of the book. I will, instead, focus on those themes which I consider important in the development of Arendt's understanding of pariahdom. I start by delineating the overall context of Rahel's attempt to assimilate, that of the rise of the Jewish salon, identifying its most important characteristics as a semi-public space of gathering together. Especially for women, it offered a passage to cross the border between the private and public, gaining a conspicuously feminine shape. It offered a relatively unbiased space for gathering together where its members' estates and social backgrounds did not count – or at least they counted less than formerly. What counted,

instead, was personal performance. The importance of personal performance rendered the salon a discursive space of action and speech. From the viewpoint of Jewish politics, however, the salon remained, at least in Arendtian terms, a quasi-space of appearance because the Jewish question was not touched but rather avoided. In other words, for Jewish politics, the salon failed to become a public space of debate and initiative: during the nineteenth century the debate and action for Jewish emancipation took place elsewhere.

I will then turn to Rahel's case, identifying the most significant steps on her route from schlemihldom to the double position of the pariah and the parvenu. I will discuss Rahel's starting-point, her schlemihldom, for two reasons. First, schlemihldom, as a form of traditional ghetto existence, is a counterpart both to assimilationist parvenuism and conscious pariahdom. In other words, parvenuism and conscious pariahdom are different kinds of responses to the traditional pariahdom of exclusion in the ghetto. In Arendt's analysis, the first of them proves to be a politically false solution to Jewish exclusion as it tends to see one's Jewishness as a personal problem to be solved by individual assimilation strategy. Its falseness is emphasized by its one-sidedness: it is based on a biased adaption of the minority to the culture of the majority, demanding the former to abandon all its customs and characteristics. In other words, it does not consist of any kind of prospect for an organized fight by the Jews for political freedom on their own terms. The second of them is, instead, an openly political response to a state of exclusion proclaiming organized political struggle in order to achieve political freedom and overcome the social and political misery caused by political reasons and not by natural or innate faults of the victims of oppression.

Secondly, discussion on schlemihldom is important because Arendt nowhere really explains what she means by the term. She does not do it in the Rahel study either. However, the first chapter of the book offers a clue to the concept because in it, Rahel's schlemihldom in her own words is discussed. I will add to this discussion another source of Arendt's conception of schlemihldom which is Heinrich Heine. Together, these two discussions reveal that Arendt's conception of schlemihldom is ambiguous. Although



it basically refers to a position of innocent fogeyness, Heine stands for a transitional figure who is neither a pure schlemihl nor a parvenu but rather an early representative of conscious pariahdom.

Arendt's understanding of schlemihldom is ambiguous also in another sense. Sometimes she speaks about the traditional pariah community as an exceptionally human environment where the best human qualities can flourish. However, it is false as the price of its human warmth is worldlessness, a state of irresponsible irreality without contact with or responsibility for the commonly shared world. I will leave discussion of this dimension of schlemihldom to the next chapter where I confront it with conscious pariahdom as represented by Bernard Lazare. Through this discussion I will show that the basic problem and shortcoming of traditional pariah existence is precisely its worldlessness which can be overcome only through conscious pariahdom as an adoption of political attitude towards one's exclusion.

Next, I will take a look at young Rahel's garret which was to become for a certain period the most unconventional of all the Jewish salons in Berlin. In addition to its unconventionality, it deserves separate discussion also for another reason. It was precisely in Rahel's garret that the Jewish salon as a quasi-space of appearance reached its point of culmination. Nowhere else did omission of rank and status go so far, and nowhere else were the verbal and intellectual skills valued so highly as there. Eventually none of the Jewish salons proved to be as fragile as that of Rahel's in the grip of the vicissitudes of history.

Finally, I take up Arendt's concluding discussion on parvenuism and pariahdom and the bankruptcy of assimilation. Here, for the first time, she presents her distinction between pariah and parvenu in a systematic fashion relating it, on the one hand, to Rahel's situation, and on the other hand, to the criticism of assimilation at large. She concludes that despite her life-long aspiration, Rahel failed to become a parvenu but remained a pariah without ever becoming, however, a modern conscious pariah à la Bernard Lazare. As the option of publicly fighting conscious pariah was not yet available, Rahel remained, in the final analysis, in an ambiguous position between the parvenu and the pariah, having left the traditional ghetto

existence of the Schlemihl but never really neither arriving in Gentile society nor deciding on open rebellion against it. Being externally a parvenu, pariahdom provided her with an asylum and a loophole from which to critically observe the Gentile world.<sup>8</sup>

## 3.2. The Jewish Salon

### 3.2.1. *The Salon at the Crossroads of Old and New*

A few decades earlier Rahel's story would not have been possible. For centuries, Arendt argues, the Jews had been excluded from the culture and history of the lands they lived in; in the eyes of their host peoples they had remained at a lower stage of civilization. Their social and political situation had remained unchanged for centuries and everywhere they were, in the best case, only tolerated but usually oppressed and persecuted (RV, 4).

Despite the somewhat static picture Arendt paints of the Jewish condition in European history, it is undoubtedly true that the Enlightenment period opened a new page in the history of European Jewry compared with earlier times. Until then their social and political situation had been almost exclusively that of a guest people or a pariah people (cf. chapter two) characterized by ambiguity. On the one hand, the life and actions of the Jews were restricted and controlled in a number of ways including restrictions on marriage-right, abode, and occupation. Many towns and states did not accept Jews at all, many threw them out now and then. Wherever they went, they were taxed heavily. On the other hand, as compensation for taxation, or rather, for *Schutzgeld*, protection money, they received the protection of the state even though this protection was precarious in its nature (Mosse 1995, 61).

In addition, they uphold their exclusion themselves. Their exclusiveness stemmed from the special character of Jewish tradition. The Jewish community regarded itself as directly descended from the ancient people of Israel religiously, culturally and sanguinally. According to the tradition, the Jewish nation had been

expelled from its own country into Diaspora. The Jews did not feel they belonged to the place where they lived but had only found temporary abode among other nations. Waiting for the opportunity to return to Palestine they did not want to mix with their host people but preferred to adhere to their own tradition and customs. In other words, their thinking was strongly eschatological, inspired by an ancient belief in the arrival of the messiah and redemption of the ancient glory of Israel. Although observation of the tradition did not remain absolutely unchanged as it had to be adapted repeatedly to concrete circumstances, the Jewish life of the Middle Ages and the ghetto period remained more or less one-sided, not containing much else but the earning of money and studying the Law (cf. Katz 1973, 5-6).

Overall, "[t]he Jews constituted a minority inexorably set apart from the majority by its religion, its language, culture and customs, its ancestry and its economic practices. They were looked upon as aliens whose residence in the country was of limited duration and in principle revocable, even where they had been settled for generations in one and the same locality. Wherever they lived they were – in the words of one of the official reports that paved the way towards emancipation – 'living merely on sufferance as subjects who, while enjoying the protection of the state, are not members of civic society'" (Rürup 1986, 4-5, cit. Mosse 1995, 60).

Thus, it was characteristic of the Jewish condition before the Enlightenment period that they lived in a world of their own separated from that of the Gentiles. Economic relations formed almost the only link between these two separate worlds. In other words, being protected by the state and offering indispensable economic services to the state authorities did not bestow on the Jews access to Gentile civil society. On the other hand, holding to their ancient tradition they were not even willing to mix with their host people.

The period of Enlightenment and the French Revolution brought a change to this situation. The ancient religious bias against Jews which conceived of them as misbelievers was replaced, at least partly, with more secular ways of defining the Jewish difference. They were no longer seen so much as Christ-killers but rather as a backward people with queer habits who should be brought into the

ranks of humanity. The Enlightenment ideas of universal equality, enfranchisement and emancipation were gradually extended to include the Jews also.

The Jewish salon appeared in the gap between the collapsing old system based on a strict hierarchical order of the estates and the rising bourgeois order which adopted some republican and democratic ideas in the spirit of the French Revolution. Compared with the highly closed society of the feudal system, the salon was a step away from the old order dominated by the nobility. It allowed for the extension of previous high society to an ever-widening groups of persons who often came from outside the traditional nobility (cf. Landes 1988, 24).<sup>9</sup>

However, the salon was by no means a thoroughly equal institution into which anyone regardless of status and social class position could have stepped. Rather, the salon brought a certain change in the criteria according to which a person was included or excluded. In the old feudal system inclusion was determined exclusively on the basis of one's position in the social hierarchy of the estates whereas in the salon personal behaviour and characteristics were decisive.

Joan B. Landes reminds us that the salon should not be confused with the simultaneously emerging public sphere of the cities. What distinguishes it from later forms of publicity, public debate and formation of public opinion is that it is based on performative and oral activities. In other words, the salon was an environment where one could become famous without writing a word, or at least without writing texts for the purpose of publishing them (Landes 1988, 23-24). Moreover, the institution of the salon lacked the indirect and mediated character typical of modern mass media and media publicity.

Thus, it is important to remember that the salon remained, after all, a highly restricted affair. As a rule, one participated by invitation, and to attend a salon was to know and be known by those who counted in society. The nobility still provided an exemplary way of life to be followed by those who strived to acquire social rank and status (Landes 1988, 24).

The salon-like change and extension of society could well have

happened without Jews and women. Thus, it must be asked, how was it that the Jewish salons achieved, though only for a brief period, a leading position in this new form of sociability, and how was it that certain Jewish women rose to the position of leading salonières?

The period of prosperity of the German Jewish salon lasted barely thirty years, from 1780 to 1806, emerging between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. As such it was a phenomenon of a tumultuous transition period which carried with it traits of both the past and the future. The period of prosperity of the salons overlaps with the conventional periodization of the first phase of Jewish emancipation from 1781 to 1815 (cf. Mosse 1995, 60). It is noteworthy that the French occupation in 1806 did not strengthen the Jewish version of the salon even though it otherwise increased pressure to liberalize customs and legislation.

Deborah Hertz suggests that the German Jewish salons were an anomalous episode in German social history in three respects. First, the German social structure remained more rigid and caste-like than elsewhere in Europe up to the twentieth century. Second, German Jews did not receive all the rights of citizens until 1871. And third, Jewish women tended to be more loyal to faith and family than men (Hertz 1988, 13-14).

In contrast to these backward traits of the German social and political structure the Jewish salon constituted a space for new ideas in three respects. German high society, particularly in Berlin, lacked any settled spaces for high culture and intellectual exchange as court society was not very well developed unlike, for example, in France. In this sense there was a vacuum which the Jewish women came to fill with their salons. Secondly, the Jewish salon came to offer a rare or even unforeseen opportunity of mixing and mingling for Gentiles and Jews in an atmosphere which encouraged them to abandon the ancient boundaries of sociability. Third, the Jewish salon provided educated Jewish women with an opportunity to break with the traditional patriarchal order of Jewish families.

Arendt calls the Jewish salon the product of a chance constellation in an era of social transition. In her view, it was characteristic of this chance constellation that the Jews became stop-gaps between

a declining aristocracy and a yet unstabilized social group of actors. Both of these groups stood outside the rising and empowering bourgeoisie. Unlike the bourgeoisie, whose publicity was based on showing what they had, these two groups were accustomed to representing something, to expressing themselves by displaying what they were. In these changing circumstances the Jews became a kind of neutral zone where people of culture could meet each other because they themselves stood outside society, not having any previously settled position in it (RV, 46-47).

### *3.2.2. The Salon as an Opportunity for Public Female Power*

Before the Enlightenment, Jewish women were not supposed to study, they were simply provided with a special women's literature in Yiddish. The cornerstone of their religious education was the *Tzenah Urenah*, a simplified Yiddish Bible which included moral exhortations and parables (Hertz 1988, 187). According to Patai, the Enlightenment meant such a strong switch from Yiddish to German that in many rich Jewish families Yiddish was no longer spoken at all (Patai 1977, 247). In contrast to sons who were still obliged to go through traditional study of the Torah followed by business training in Yiddish, daughters had virtually no formal education at all. In the changing circumstances this turned in their favour. Not burdened by compulsory education, rich Jewish girls were the first to benefit from the new opportunities to study European languages and literature, first German, then French and even Latin, English and Italian. When the Jewish salons were opened, some of the husbands of the Jewish salonières were too embarrassed to put in an appearance as they hardly spoke German not to mention other European languages widely used in salon conversation (Katz 1953, 84). Thus, paradoxically enough, being newcomers in the European culture themselves, the Jewish salonières became teachers of the appropriate style, dress, manners, language, art, and literature not only to their own husbands but to the newcomers in the salon environment at large.

Both Hertz (1988, 8) and Landes (1988, 24-25) suggest that the

salon was a rare opportunity for public female power. This power did not remain inside the walls of the salon, but instead women became brokers of the existing power system at large. The salonières contributed to the consolidation of the élite by introducing new members into its fold and a new system of advancement for merit, and dissociating noble values from birth and attaching them to behaviour.

Thus, the Jewish salon became a semi-public space where people were evaluated in conversation by their personal ability to represent themselves as someone. Communication was led by the hostess who, in addition to revealing her personal excellence and verbal skills, could also manipulate the manuscript of the conversation. Undoubtedly, the opinions and views of this central figure could not but influence the visitors' views on the questions discussed.

Moreover, as I mentioned above, in salon society it was possible to become famous without publishing. It is a well known fact that European literary culture has always been very male dominated. The salon offered a rare opportunity for women to become famous, respected and powerful without trying to learn the traditionally masculine skill of writing for publishing and intervening in the public debate through the written word. The salon women did write, but they mostly wrote letters, character sketches, and diaries. Unlike the present-day letter and diary, these were often semi-public documents read aloud in salon gatherings or passed forward to the next reader (cf. Hertz 1988, 179-180). However, they were rather spoken words expressed in written form. As such they are better understood as an extension of oral culture characteristic of salon society than as a form of literary culture of the published word. In other words, they were a form of semi-public oral publicity of the salon dominated by orally skilled female figures. Besides, it is noteworthy that becoming famous without publishing was easier for women than men. On the male side, publishing was far more common practice and it contributed significantly to a man's fame and reputation<sup>10</sup>.

Letters as semi-public documents constituted one aspect which rendered the distinction between private and public more flexible than it was to become later. Another important factor, which made

the private-public distinction grow dim, was that the salon gatherings took place in private houses. Both of these factors were equally important for women and made their contribution to the salon institution possible: women did not have to go out into publicity in order to enter society. On the contrary, they could invite society to their living-rooms. As Hertz points out, both letters and salons offered intellectual women a stage which they lacked in later decades when it became necessary to leave home and publish in order to participate in the public life (Hertz 1988, 180).

When discussing female power and action, the institution of marriage cannot be omitted. During the eighteenth century, marriage was still the central social act for a woman, concretely affecting her social status and standard of living. Most of the Jewish salonières married at an early age according to the old Jewish tradition. What appears noteworthy, however, is the fact that many of them did not acquiesce for the rest of their lives in these arrangements made by their parents.

In the salon environment the institution of marriage was politicized in two ways. Firstly, the salon offered an unforeseen arena for young women to meet potential marriage partners and to form a personal opinion upon them. In other words, the salon brought the aspect of personal contact onto the scene. Suddenly, it became possible for a woman to affect the conditions of her own life with an appropriate choice of fiancé after having made personal acquaintance with him.

Secondly, the institution of marriage lost something of its previously economic nature which was replaced by an aspect of personal choice. Even though most of the Jewish salonières married nobles rising conspicuously in the social hierarchy, the dimension of personal feelings was introduced to the scene. In other words, the Jewish woman did not marry only rank and status but also a man she really loved. Both of these changes can be viewed as a rebellion against the patriarchal order of the traditional Jewish community. For the first time Jewish women did not listen to their fathers but made their own choices.

The novelty of the situation is emphasized by the fact that the salon was a mixed arena of Gentiles and Jews. In other words, the



range of potential marriage partners was not restricted to Jewish youngsters only, there was also a number of often noble Gentiles available. This constellation brought yet one more novelty to the scene, that of intermarriage, which proved to be an ambiguous choice for a Jewish woman. On the one hand it offered the prospect of tremendous personal freedom as a liberation from the Jewish tradition and as such it was a violent act of breaking with personal roots and background. On the other hand it meant total isolation from the previous community without any guarantee of profound acceptance in the new one (cf. Hertz 1988, 203).

Intermarriage required conversion to Christianity as the possibility of civil marriage did not exist: for many a salon woman the decision to convert was a painful act which was often carried out only because there was no other choice. Besides, more often than not, a converted Jew remained a Jew in the eyes of her contemporaries in spite of her formal act of leaving Judaism (cf. Hertz 1988, 209).

Nevertheless, for a rich Jewish woman, despite her often fabulous wealth, an intermarriage meant a double jump up the social ladder. It meant a profound change in terms of both civic rights and privileges as the Jewish community of the time still remained far below most commoners in these terms. As the impoverished younger members of the nobility were more often than not rich only in terms of status, Jewish-noble marriages represented, indeed, an exchange of status for wealth. In this sense, as Hertz suggests, they were the culmination of the mutually complementary, long-term structural strengths and weaknesses of the noble and the Jewish estates (Hertz 1988, 214).

However important the financial factor in these marriages might have been, it was by no means the only virtue that rich Jewish girls possessed. In addition, two major merits need to be mentioned. Firstly, many salon women were strikingly beautiful. As the romantics grew enthusiastic about everything Oriental, the exotic and the sensual, Jewish women's desirability was enhanced. Secondly, as already mentioned above, Jewish women's intellectual skills were remarkable. Hertz suggests that the role of intellect might have been far more important than that of looks (Hertz 1988, 126). There is no

need, however, to put these factors in an order of importance to be able to conclude that salon women were exceptionally attractive marriage candidates. Nevertheless, one can agree with Hertz that the novelty of these marriages in their historical context rested on the fact that they were not arranged (Hertz 1988, 217).

### 3.2.3. *The Salon as a Quasi-Space of Appearance*

There seems to be a political promise in the unconventionality of the Jewish salons: a social space emerged to which people could have access irrespective of their social background. Even property standards were relatively flexible. What mattered was the individual performance on the spot.

The salon institution in general and the Jewish salon in particular seems to have something in common with a notion which appears in Arendt's later political theory. This is the notion of the space of appearance as a prerequisite for the formation of a public realm which gathers people together to begin something new concerning the common world between them. In the Arendtian public realm and its "vestibule", the space of appearance, an individual is measured on the basis of her acts and deeds which reveal *who* she is in contrast to *what* she is by virtue of her "given" personal characteristics such as class, ethnicity, sex, age etc.

In *The Human Condition* Arendt characterizes the space of appearance as follows:

"The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore pre-dates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized. Its peculiarity is that, unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men – as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed – but with the disappearance or arrest of the activi-

ties of themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.” (HC, 199)

And further:

”In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. The disclosure of ”who” in contradistinction to ”what” somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display to hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does.” (HC, 179)

It would be tempting to think that the Jewish salon constituted a kind of space of appearance in the Arendtian sense. Its unconventional openness to outsiders and outcasts seems to create an opportunity to appear and show who they are for those who earlier did not have access either to civil society or to society. This is, in fact, precisely what Seyla Benhabib argues. In her view, Rahel Levin’s salon was ”a space of sociability in which the individual desire for difference and distinctness could assume an intersubjective reality and in which unusual individuals, and primarily, certain highly talented Jewish women, could find a ”space” of visibility and self-expression” (Benhabib 1995, 17).

Benhabib links the salon as a space of sociability to an alternative genealogy of modernity to be found in Arendt’s works. Unlike the standard readings of Arendt according to which she sees in modernity the decline of the public space of politics and the rise of the ”social” as an amorphous, anonymous and uniformizing reality which displaces the concern with the political from the minds of men, Benhabib identifies three different meanings of the term ”social” in Arendt’s work: the growth of a capitalist commodity exchange economy; aspects of ”mass society”; and ”sociability”, the quality of life in civil society and civic associations (Benhabib 1995, 15).

As spaces of sociability, Benhabib argues, the salons are social

gatherings in which the joy of conversation and communication are discovered. The joy of speech culminates in friendship and mutual understanding. What distinguishes the salon from an assembly hall or a town square is the fact that it allows moments of intimacy. Salons are amorphous structures with no established rules of entry and exit for those who have formed intimacy. What is important is that the salons can be both private and public, both shared and intimate (Benhabib 1995, 17-18).

According to Benhabib, it is noteworthy that as modes of the public sphere, the salons contradict the agonal model of the public sphere of the polis that predominates in *The Human Condition* almost in every respect. She identifies four major points of contradiction. Firstly, unlike the Greek polis, the salons are spaces dominated by female presence. Secondly, unlike "the passionate drive to show one's self in measuring up against others" (HC, 194) characteristic of action in the polis, speech in the salons is playful, freely mixing the good of all with the advantage of each. Thirdly, unlike the public sphere of the polis which attempts to exclude the erotic, the salons cultivate it. And fourthly, the salons are places of continuous self-revelation and self-concealment which does not follow the principle of visibility and pure transparency of the polis as such. Nevertheless, Benhabib also finds some features in common in the salons and the polis. On the one hand both of them are based on assumptions of equality among the participants, and on the other hand both of them form bonds of civic friendship among their members (Benhabib 1995, 19).

On the basis of these remarks Benhabib concludes that the salons must be viewed as transitory precursors of a certain transgression of the boundaries between the public and the private. Further, she argues that Arendt's understanding of modernity needs re-reading: as an antistatist thinker Arendt established a possibility for the growth of a political sphere independent of the state in civic and associational society. Moreover, although Arendt was a political universalist who upheld egalitarian civil and political rights for all, she also supported nonconformism and the expression of pariahdom in social and cultural life (Benhabib 1995, 20).

As far as I can see, Benhabib's arguments require some further

discussion. First of all, she seems to celebrate the transgression of the boundaries between the public and the private as a welcome phenomenon. As to the Jewish salons, her interpretation is undoubtedly correct. As to Arendt, instead, greater precision is needed. Arendt never celebrated any transgression between the public and the private but, on the contrary, regretted the withering away of both the concrete phenomenon and the conceptual distinction between these two domains. For Arendt, political action is essentially a public phenomenon which requires a space of its own to exist at all. What distinguishes, in the final analysis, political action from other human activities is that it concerns the common world between people. Revelation of individual characteristics is not, as such, political for Arendt.

In fact, revelation of a private identity may be political only in the case of the pariahs, in the case of those who are excluded from the political realm on the basis of certain private characteristics. Also in this case, however, what is at stake is the common world. What is at stake, in other words, is the question of who has access, and on the basis of which criteria, to the public realm. Furthermore, unlike Benhabib seems to believe, the pariah's nonconformism in social and cultural life is not, for Arendt, a positive thing as such. On the contrary, it is a necessity, or rather a political duty of pariahs to rebel and defend themselves in a situation in which conformism, a desire to conform to prevailing conventions and norms, threatens to cover every expression of difference and deviation from the norm under a false veil of unanimity.

The most important clarification concerns the fact that Benhabib does not pay attention to Arendt's evaluation of the political significance of the salons. Arendt is quite explicit in her view that the Jewish salons never became playgrounds of Jewish politics. More precisely, according to her interpretation the question of Jewish emancipation was never raised in the Jewish salons but rather it was avoided. In other words, neither the question of Jews' political rights nor the question of human political rights and enfranchisement at large were touched on. This was because the dominant view among salon-Jews was that public discussion of the Jewish question and those measures by the state which would liberate by force

educated Jewish individuals together with "backward" Jews could only make their situation worse (see RV; 1946a, 17).

Despite Arendt's firm conviction that the Jewish question was a tabu in the Jewish salons, it is probable that it was touched on now and then. This should not, however, obscure the core of her argument. In my view, Arendt's point is that the Jewish salons never became central arenas of Jewish politics of emancipation but initiatives in this matter took other routes (on these routes see Katz 1973 and Mosse 1995). Indeed, it never occurred to the minds of salon-Jews that they could make the salons spaces of organization of Jewish politics. This was because most of them did not care about the Jews' political fate in general but were principally concerned with their own social arrival and assimilation to Gentile society. For them, the salons were not spaces for beginning something new in Jewish terms or spaces for pariah politics, but rather they were spaces for coming into contact with important Gentiles and realizing their individual desire to arrive in German culture.

In Arendt's view, this was proved in a paradoxical way after Napoleon's victory over Prussia when a general emancipation of the Jews seemed to be on the verge of reality: the number of Jewish conversions increased rapidly and it looked as if the educated Jews of Prussia were trying to escape general emancipation by baptism. Moreover, the real tragedy of the Jewish salons lies in the fact that they were used politically by another group, that of the rising bourgeoisie: as soon as it was strong enough to create its own cultural and political circles it turned its back on the Jewish salons which immediately lost their cultural significance, too (Arendt 1946a, 17; on conversion see Hertz 1988, 226-250).

In sum, I would like to argue that Benhabib's argument needs revision. As such, she is correct in her argument that the salons may be viewed as transitory precursors of a transgression of the boundaries between public and private. It is also quite legitimate to see the pariah as a nonconformist figure in social and cultural life. Nevertheless, neither of these arguments are in harmony with Arendt's views on public and private and the pariah. Whereas Benhabib views these factors as positive signs of the strengthening of civil society and corresponding weakening of the role of the state

which give room for individual initiative in politics, for Arendt they are rather signs of an undesirable development which leads to a situation in which a critical individual cannot but assume a nonconformist pariah position if she wants to maintain her human dignity and capacity for political judgement. In other words, in Arendtian terms the blurring of the boundaries between public and private as well as the existence of the pariahs speak on behalf of the emergence of a situation in which chances for political existence are diminishing.

As, more precisely, to the Jewish salons, for Arendt these factors do not speak on behalf of the strength of the salons, but on the contrary, on behalf of their weakness. I would like to argue that in terms of Jewish politics, the Jewish salons proved to be a kind of quasi-space of appearances whose undeniable political potential never really materialized in acts and deeds. They may be, indeed, viewed as a proof of the fragility of the space of appearance about which Arendt speaks in *The Human Condition* (HC, 199-200). In order to stabilize itself, the space of appearance needs to empower itself in continuous acts and deeds. In other words, in Arendtian terms, creating a space of appearance by gathering together does not necessarily and inevitably lead to the formation of a public space of politics. Its significance may remain passing and temporary, even false. It does not necessarily lead to a new beginning or shaking of the existing political order. For a passing moment it may create a space of counter-publicity or alternative publicity. If it does not, however, affect the existing political order in any way, it may remain insignificant and fade away.

This is exactly what happened to the Jewish salons. There was political promise in the salons as they were built upon connections between individuals coming from different backgrounds including different political networks and positions. Nevertheless, these connections were not used politically to improve the status of the Jews. The salon was not politicized in relation to the Jewish question, never becoming a battlefield of organized Jewish politics of any kind. In other words, salon-Jews failed to manifest a shared desire for Jewish emancipation in the salon gatherings, and were far too exclusively concerned with their individual aspirations of assimila-

tion and adaptation to German culture. Paradoxically they ended up contributing to the emergence and strengthening of the bourgeois civil society in which individual Jews were included only as exceptions.

As to the institution of the salon in general, it did not vanish without leaving a trace of itself. It was – together with coffee houses and table societies – a bridge between the remains of a collapsing form of courtly publicity and a new bourgeois public sphere (cf. Habermas 1962, 30). In other words, without remaining a permanent feature itself and without resulting in any new formation of public space, it contributed to the formation of a new bourgeois public sphere to which the Jews themselves did not get access as Jews. In other words, the salon-Jews ended up contributing to a project of their host-people while remaining without any immediate political profit from it.

What leads Benhabib to such a positive evaluation of the political significance of the Jewish salon? It seems to me that it is because she does not pay enough attention to the distinction between parvenu and conscious pariah and to the corresponding distinction between social and political pariahdom in Arendt's thinking.

Benhabib points out correctly that the pariah does not fare well in "society". She breaks social conventions and flouts social norms, goes against established traditions and plays with social expectations. Further, the self-conscious pariah insists on the fact of difference and distinction but does so in a manner that is not wholly individualist. On the basis of this characterization Benhabib concludes that the complete pariah would be the total outsider, the marginal bordering on suicide, insanity, or criminality (Benhabib 1995, 16).

This conclusion shows that Benhabib views pariahdom exclusively in terms of its social and personal dimensions which leads her to consider potential mental processes and responses in the situation of complete pariahdom. Moreover, for Benhabib pariahdom seems to be an individual situation not shared with fellow-pariahs. If this is the case, it may be, indeed, that there is no other choice but to choose between suicide, insanity, and criminality.

More often than not, however, Hannah Arendt's pariah figures



are politically conscious and mentally strong individuals who would choose neither of Benhabib's alternatives. For them, complete pariahdom would not be simply a phenomenon of total social exclusion, it would also have a political dimension. For them, complete pariahdom would not mean an act of personal annihilation, but instead, it would mean being annihilated. However, this is the case, I believe, only if the pariahs live under totalitarian rule which prevent them from manifestations of their pariahdom as totalitarian rule does not tolerate any kind of anomalies but annihilates them, attempting, at the same time, to force all its subjects into total obedience and observation of the norms. On the other hand, as there is no room for political freedom under totalitarian rule, the general condition of human existence becomes that of pariah existence (cf. Fehér 1986); the distinction between citizen-insiders and pariah-outcasts tends to disappear.

Thus, pariahdom may result in the marginal bordering on suicide, insanity or criminality only in two cases. Either the pariah remains totally alone without the asylum offered by a pariah community in which the condition of political non-existence could be shared with companions in misfortune or the struggle against the existing polity proves to be completely unsuccessful. Even in these cases mental collapse is only one possible result. Another is that which was adopted by most of the representatives of the hidden tradition of conscious pariahdom; most of them did not yield to the pressure of mental exhaustion but continued their lonely fight to the last breath.

In my view, there is a basic confusion in Benhabib's reasoning. This is the confusion between social and political pariahdom. Unlike Arendt, who is careful always to distinguish these two manifestations of pariahdom from each other, Benhabib situates pariah politics in the social realm and treats the pariah as someone who focuses on breaking social conventions and flouting social norms. In other words, she views the pariah as a nonconformist whose rebellion takes the form of a kind of "life-style politics". As such, it inevitably remains an individual enterprise even though Benhabib tries to see something more in it.

Benhabib does not pay attention to the fact that for Arendt, so-

cial pariahdom could take only two forms. Either it manifested itself in parvenuism, which was the basic choice of salon-Jews, or it could express itself in the decision to remain in the traditional pariah community of the outcasts (JP, 89-90). It is noteworthy that in Arendtian terms, parvenuism could offer temporary personal salvation because political pariahdom did not yet exist. In a world without universal suffrage, in a world in which most people remained without political rights, Jews were not excluded in any particularly political terms, but rather formed one social caste among many others. In this context, the exclusion of the Jews was, indeed, social in its nature. In other words, the Jews were excluded from Gentile society in its double meaning. On the one hand, they were excluded from the establishment of the high ranks of society and on the other hand they were excluded from Gentile civil society, having no concrete connections with Gentiles outside the economic sphere.

I would like to suggest that Benhabib's reading of Arendt's conception of pariahdom remains biased because it is based exclusively on Arendt's study of Rahel Levin. Even in this respect it is curiously partial because it omits the two final chapters of the book. Had Benhabib taken these chapters into account in her interpretation, she would inevitably have noticed that the core of Arendt's conception of pariahdom is not nonconformism and the expression of pariahdom in social and cultural life (cf. Benhabib 1995, 20). She would have noticed that Arendt depicts Rahel's kind of salonières as ambiguous figures who believed in the possibility of personal salvation in a situation in which the option of a collective fight did not yet exist. She would also have noticed that Arendt does not offer Rahel's choice as a model to be followed but as an example of a personal fight in a situation where collective support was not to be expected.

The partiality of Benhabib's interpretation is strengthened by the fact that she totally omits Arendt's other pariah figures, most importantly that of Bernard Lazare. For a careful reader, however, the final chapters of the Rahel book should be enough to grasp the importance of the distinction between the parvenu and the pariah.

In sum, for Arendt the problem with understanding pariahdom purely as a social phenomenon is that it leads to the adoption of purely personal strategies to overcome it as the salon-Jews did. It does not invite and encourage the pariahs to unite in a common fight in order to achieve a recognized political existence but disperses them to prefer individual survival strategies which can only separate them from each other. Most importantly, it leaves the existing political order intact: at best, it can lead to a factual toleration of a variety of life-styles and habits in a given context but it does not raise the question of the legitimacy of the existing political order. In other words, fighting against tastes and habits is not enough if it is not accompanied by a more explicitly political fight against the existing polity and its criteria for inclusion and exclusion. The rebellion of a conscious pariah in the Arendtian sense is not a form of life-style politics in the social realm, but is a form of open rebellion against the existing political order.

I will come back to the theme of conformism in chapters five and six with the aim of showing that the pariah's nonconformism is by no means happy mixing and mingling in social and cultural life but rather a lonely fight against antipolitical tendencies in a human organization where the possibilities for dignified humane existence threaten to disappear.

### **3.3. A Vain Effort to Assimilate. The Case of Rahel Levin Varnhagen**

#### *3.3.1. Schlemihldom*

The twenty-year-old Rahel wrote:

”Es wird mir nie einkommen, daß ich ein Schlemihl und eine Jüdin bin, da es mir nach den langen Jahren und dem vielen Denken drüber nicht bekannt wird, so werd ichs auch nie recht wissen.” (cit. Arendt 1959, 20)

This is, in a nutshell, Rahel Levin's life-long dilemma. Her whole life she was to fight against her Jewish background. She was not satisfied with belonging to a community of Schlemihls, but tried to escape it and conceal its traces. But what is a Schlemihl and who form a community of Schlemihls? Why was it, after all, that Rahel did not want to be a Schlemihl?

These questions are not without importance because Arendt adopts the term Schlemihl into her conceptual framework using it to refer to a certain kind of pariah existence. Without knowing what schlemihldom is, it is difficult to fully grasp the significance of its counter concept and counter position, that of conscious pariahdom. This is why both a discussion on Rahel's pariahdom and an overall understanding of Arendt's conception of pariahdom requires a look at the concept of schlemihldom.

Duden's *Universalwörterbuch* (1989) defines the term Schlemihl as follows: "[jidd. schlemiel = ungeschickte Person, unschuldiges Opfer von Streichen, H. u., viell. zu hebr. šelem = (Dank)opfer]: 1. (bildungsspr.) jmd., dem [durch eigene Dummheit] alles misslingt, Pechvogel. 2. ... Schlitzohr."

These definitions reveal an ambiguity in the meaning of the term. On the one hand it refers to a simple-minded person who repeatedly suffers punishments for other people's misdeeds because of her own stupidity. On the other it refers to a cunning and dishonest person who purposefully engages in intrigue behind the backs of decent people. These might, indeed, have been characterizations which the Gentiles preferred to give to ordinary Jews, viewing them as eternal carriers of every kind of evil. It was commonplace to think that where a Jew appeared, some kind of plague was to be expected. However, this is by no means a central dimension in Rahel's and Arendt's understanding of schlemihldom.<sup>11</sup>

The difficulty in grasping the exact significance of the term Schlemihl both in Rahel's and Arendt's vocabulary is emphasized by the fact that neither of them defines it properly. In Rahel's case it is obvious that there was no need for definitions. Yiddish was spoken in her childhood environment and Schlemihl belonged to the self-evident vocabulary of everyday life. Further, having decided to escape her childhood community, it was only natural that

Rahel attempted to also break away linguistically from it by switching from Yiddish to German; later, Yiddish terms were to appear only in diary entries and letters to intimate and absolutely reliable friends until in old age she began to reuse Hebrew characters in her letters to her brother (RV, 184-185).

Arendt's case is more ambiguous. In the Rahel study she leans on Rahel's own formulations, trusting that the reader grasps the significance of the term Schlemihl in the context. Only in 1940s writing for an American audience does she recognize the need to explain the background and the significance of the term. In this connection, however, she relates it to Heinrich Heine's vocabulary, arguing that it was Heine who first introduced Yiddish expressions into the German language, putting into practice the true blending of cultures of which others merely talked (JP, 74). Compared with Rahel, there is, indeed, a conspicuous difference. Whereas for Rahel Yiddish was a mark of Jewish inferiority to be concealed by switching to German, Heine made of Yiddish vocabulary a weapon with which to put to the test the flexibility of Gentile culture.

Apparently, Arendt uses the term Schlemihl to refer to ordinary ghetto-Jews of the nineteenth century without either the possibility or desire to transgress the ghetto existence. A second examination of her writings on pariahdom reveals, however, that the point of reference is at least three-fold. First, there are those Schlemihls who are happily ignorant of their own social and political condition and think only their daily survival and observance of the remaining part of the Judaic tradition. Second, there are those Schlemihls who, like young Rahel, do not really admit their own schlemihldom but try to escape it by concealing it and assimilating to Gentile society. Finally, there are those, like Heinrich Heine, who have realized the misery of ghetto existence. Unlike the parvenus, however, they did not simply try to escape their Jewishness by assimilation but they "tried to make of the emancipation of the Jews that which it really should have been – an admission of Jews *as Jews* to the ranks of humanity" (JP, 68). In a way, these figures are not pure Schlemihls, but rather, early representatives of conscious pariahs living under circumstances where collective rebellion is not possible.

Arendt describes these lonely figures as follows:

”Realizing only too well that they did not enjoy political freedom nor full admission to the life of nations, but that, instead, they had been separated from their own people and lost contact with the simple natural life of the common man, these men yet achieved liberty and popularity by the sheer force of imagination. As individuals they started an emancipation of their own, of their own hearts and brains. Such a conception was, of course, a gross misconstruction of what emancipation had been intended to be; but it was also a vision...”. (JP, 68)

For Arendt, the dearest and most important visionary of this kind was Heinrich Heine, even to the extent that she thought that most people were not at all able to grasp that which was essential in Heine’s admission strategy. This insight is reflected in her letter to Kurt Blumenfeld in 1959 as she asks: ”Aber wer versteht schon Heine außer uns beiden?” (Arendt to Blumenfeld, August 10, 1959, Arendt 1995a, 240)

Thus, the ambiguity of Arendt’s conception of schlemihldom stems from the fact that it has several roots, the most important of which are those of Rahel Levin and Heinrich Heine. In the following, I will first briefly discuss the concept of Schlemihl through Arendt’s characterizations of it in the first chapter of the Rahel study. I will then turn to the figure of the Schlemihl in Arendt’s reflections on Heine. Even though these two configurations of schlemihldom do not completely overlap, it is important to remember that they do not contradict each other either. Rather, they reveal different dimensions of schlemihldom.

In the Rahel study, Arendt begins by considering the relation of Schlemihl to the vicissitudes of history. In this respect, the Schlemihl is a ”hapless human being...who has anticipated nothing” (RV, 1). In other words, the Schlemihl is, on the one hand, someone who has no history of her own, and on the other hand, completely lacks any capacity for defence as to what happens to her and around her.

The incapacity to anticipate anything sprang, in Arendt’s view, from uneducation and ignorance:

”In those days Jews in Berlin could grow up like the children of

savage tribes. Rahel was one of these. She learned nothing, neither her own history nor that of the country in which her family dwelt. The earning of money and the study of the Law - these were the vital concerns of the ghetto ... Rahel's father was a dealer in precious stones who had made a fortune. That fact alone decided the complexion of her education. All her life she remained 'the greatest ignoramus'." (RV, 2-3)

This characterization draws together Arendt's view of Rahel's own understanding of her situation. Throughout her life she suffered from a feeling of ignorance and inferiority. Nevertheless, it is a historical fact that she was born into one of the wealthiest Jewish families in Berlin. In her childhood and youth she probably got used to a rather high standard of living. Even her education was not as scanty as she pretends in her letters and diaries. She did not, of course, receive any formal education, but this did not prevent her from receiving a considerable informal education under the supervision of private tutors. On the contrary, historians are convinced that for a girl, she received an exceptionally good education (e.g. Hertz 1988, 189-190; Thomann Terwarson 1987, 143).

Neither was her education particularly one-sided, since she could profit from drawing from two sources. On the one hand, there was the old Jewish tradition in which learning and education had for centuries been highly valued. On the other hand, the process of secularization of the Jewish culture was leading to a situation in which the Jews could also acquaint themselves with the German culture (cf. Thomann Terwarson 1987, 142).

What made Rahel feel the greatest ignoramus was probably the fact she did not receive anything for granted or automatically (cf. Thomann Terwarson 1987, 144). As girls did not yet receive any formal education and were easily encouraged to prefer the traditionally female area of the household, an additional effort was required from a girl to achieve an equal level with the boys who needed simply to follow an assigned university program. In other words, Rahel was probably uncertain of the sufficiency of the amount and systematicity of her private studies. As a more or less self-educated woman she could never be sure whether her efforts corresponded to

those who had received a formal education. In addition, Rahel did not compare herself with the average students but with leading figures of German cultural and intellectual life. Thus, Rahel connected ignorance with Jewish existence viewing it as one of the reasons why the latter should have been escaped and concealed.

Another feature of traditional Jewish existence belonging to the characteristics of *schlemihldom* was poverty. The striking majority of ghetto-Jews lived in conspicuous poverty without any prospect of a better future. In her own life Rahel never encountered poverty comparable to the standard ghetto existence, but she seems to have been highly alarmed even of its theoretical possibility. Besides, Rahel started from a very high standard of living against which even relative impoverishment meant a worsening of the situation and the impossibility to continue leading the previously adopted way of life.

In Rahel's case, however, the decisive factor was economic dependence on her family. Unlike most Jewish salonières, she did not marry at an early age and remained without a dowry. Until her father's death she was dependent on his benevolence and later on her mother's and brothers' generosity. In the course of years, the financial situation of her family got gradually worse. This led to recurrent disputes about how available funds should be used. Last but not least, Rahel's point of comparison in terms of material standard of living was the highest possible; only high nobility could provide her with a model. As a result of all these factors, Rahel suffered from a feeling of being poor and she was afraid that poverty would condemn her to remain a Jew and a *Schlemihl*.

The third important factor in Rahel's *schlemihldom* is also connected to nobility. More precisely, it is connected to how one's rank and status were determined. As mentioned above, the nobility still set the tone in the area of sociability and not only in customs and manners. Even though the appearance of the Jewish salon brought a break with traditional criteria of rank and status, the significance of family origin had not lost all of its importance. Individuals were still evaluated according to their status in the traditional social hierarchy. This held true particularly in Rahel's adolescence before the emergence of the first salons. Thus, the con-



sciousness of being nobody in the social hierarchy shaped Rahel's self-understanding. She felt being excluded from the circles of those who were somebody and counted in the society. She knew that "[in] the world one can live if one has a station, a place on which one stands, a position to which one belongs." Otherwise "one is nothing because one is not defined from outside" (RV, 10). In other words, schlemihldom in the sense of being nobody shaped young Rahel's life: being not known by those who counted in society she did not know how to find her way there.

There is still one further characteristic to be added to the series of Rahel-like Schlemihl traits. This is connected to Rahel's gender. She was well aware of the fact that "[b]eauty in a woman can mean power" and that "Jewish girls were frequently not married for their dowries alone" (RV, 3). Rahel was not downright ugly, but she could hardly compete with other salon women who were mostly exceptionally beautiful. She felt that she also lacked inner grace with which she could have compensated outer beauty: "Ich habe keine Grazie; nicht einmal die, einzusehen, woran das liegt: außerdem, daß ich nicht hübsch bin, habe ich auch keine innere Grazie...Ich bin unansehnlicher als häßlich...So wie manchmal Menschen keinen hübschen Zug im Gesicht, keine zu lobende Proportion am Körper haben, und doch einen gefälligen Eindruck machen;...so ist es bei mir umgekehrt" (cit. Arendt 1959, 17-18). Thus she felt that she could not even use those female weapons at other women's disposal and was afraid of remaining unmarried which would have meant, for a woman, remaining a Schlemihl.

To sum up, in Rahel's context, schlemihldom has four dimensions. First and foremost, it refers to a situation of being nobody, being excluded from society due to the lack of suitable rank and status. In other words, it refers to a situation of non-existence in the sense that in the eyes of those who count in the society a nobody-Schlemihl does not exist at all as she does not possess those qualities according to which an individual is evaluated.

Secondly, schlemihldom refers to ignorance both culturally and in terms of learnedness. In other words, culturally, the Schlemihl comes from nowhere, having no roots in any cultural tradition. On the hand, the Schlemihl is ignorant in terms of learnedness as she

has not received proper education. As a result ignorance contributes to the perpetuation of schlemihldom because as an uneducated person the Schlemihl cannot have access to society.

Thirdly, poverty constitutes the overall material framework of schlemihldom, shaping the general prospects in life and hindering every effort to rise in the social hierarchy. The poor Schlemihl cannot but concentrate all her energy making a daily living. Poverty reduces the Schlemihl's possibilities also indirectly as she cannot afford to acquire faculties, such as education, which would improve her prospects in gaining access to society.

Finally, beauty introduces the aspect of sexual difference into schlemihldom. For a female Schlemihl everything is doubly complicated as she always has to take her sexual difference into account. In a highly sexually biased human society, a woman cannot simply act in the same way as a man. In the environment of salons the female beauty proved to be a double-edged sword. Those provided with a sufficient amount of this female weapon profited from the situation, most importantly by making good marriages. On the other hand, an unpleasant appearance could turn out to be fateful, watering down every effort to succeed both on the marriage market and in society at large.

All of these dimensions of schlemihldom shaped the conditions of the Jewish existence at large. Not all of them, however, touched every single Jew with equal force and influence. As to Rahel, the dimensions of her schlemihldom were partly real and partly imaginary. The point is, that even though Rahel did not objectively suffer from them all, she subjectively believed she did. In other words, she identified with these dimensions in the Jewish existence at large and believed she was an average victim of them.

### *3.3.2. The Lord of Dreams*

Unlike Rahel, whose desire to assimilate suffered bankruptcy, Arendt views Heinrich Heine as the only German Jew who could describe himself as both German and a Jew, remaining the only outstanding example of a really happy assimilation in the entire

history of the process of it (JP, 74). What Heine achieved, was that he recognized in the figure of Schlemihl the essential kinship of the pariah to the poet: he saw that they are both alike excluded from society and never quite home in this world. By means of this analogy, Arendt argues, he illustrated the position of the Jew in the world of European culture (JP, 76).

Poetry was, indeed, Heine's weapon against both Gentile society and the Jewish community. Most explicitly he deals with the Jewish condition in his *Hebräische Melodien*. In the first poem in the collection, *Prinzessin Sabbat*, Heine portrays the situation of the Jewish people as that of a fairy prince turned by witchcraft into a dog, a figure of ridicule. Every Friday, however, the prince is freed from his canine existence and regains his mortal shape in order to be able to welcome the sabbath bride (cf. JP, 69).

Unlike the prince, that is to say the Jewish people, Heine does not turn into a dog, but "by a stroke of fortune, escapes the grueling weekly transformation of his people and...continually leads the sabbath-like existence" which is for him the only positive mark of Jewish life (JP, 69).

In Part IV of *Hebräische Melodien* Heine characterizes the poets in more detail. He claims them to be descended from *Herr Schlemihl ben Zurishadday* whose name he takes from Shelumiel ben Zurishadday, mentioned in the biblical Book of Numbers as the leader of the tribe of Simeon. What made Shelumiel ben Zurishadday a Schlemihl was the fact that he got himself killed accidentally by standing too close to his brother, the chieftain Zimri, when the latter was beheaded by the priest Phinehas for dallying with a Midianite woman (JP, 69-70).

In this context, schlemihldom comes close to its original Hebrew meaning of sacrificial lamb although it assumes a paradoxical connotation. Normally, a sacrificial lamb is, of course, sacrificed on purpose. ben Zurishadday, however, is sacrificed by accident. In this he resembles the lamb; he is selected from the horde as a scapegoat for something he does not really deserve, remaining completely ignorant of his own role in the vicissitudes. In other words, the offering assumes a negative connotation of sacrificing a scapegoat in place of the real victim. The Schlemihl's tragedy is emphasized

by the fact that sacrificing him does not suffice; the chieftain Zimri also gets killed.

What characterizes the poet-descendants of Shelumiel ben Zurishadday of all times is the lack of heroic deeds. They repeatedly fail to accomplish anything great or memorable but "[a]ll we know is that – they were schlemihls" (JP, 70). In other words, they remain fogies whose deeds are doomed to be forgotten without leaving a trace in history. Now and then their fogeyness leads to becoming sacrificed in place of someone else.

The Schlemihl as a fogey is, of course, a figure unable to be evil or consciously accomplish evil deeds. On the contrary, "[i]nnocence is the hall-mark of the schlemihl. But it is of such innocence that a people's poets – its "lords of dreams" – are born" (JP, 70).

It is against this background, in Arendt's view, that Heine portrays himself as a poet-king of a people of Jewish Schlemihls:

"Excluded from formal society and with no desire to be embraced within it, he turns naturally to that which entertains and delights the common people. He shares their social ostracism, their joys and sorrows as well as their pleasures and their tribulations. He turns from the world of men and the fashion thereof to the open and unrestricted bounty of the earth." (JP, 71)

In Arendt's view, this is precisely what Heine did, but, alas, the critics called it materialism or atheism instead of seeing in it "that simple *joie de vivre* which one finds everywhere in children and in the common people". It stems from "the basic affinity of the pariah to the people". Thus, it is only natural that "the pariah, who receives so little from the world of men that even fame is accounted to him a mere sign of schlemihldom, should look with an air of innocent amusement, and smile to himself at the spectacle of human beings trying to compete with the divine realities of nature" (JP, 71).

Indeed, the core of the Schlemihls' survival strategy is an amused indifference and aloofness from Gentile society which causes a kind of reversal of position as to who really is a Schlemihl. Confronted with the natural order of things, the fabricated order of society ap-

pears comic. It is no longer the outcast pariah who appears the Schlemihl, but those who live in the ordered ranks of society and who have exchanged the generous gifts of nature for the idols of social privilege and prejudice (JP, 71-72).

According to Arendt, it is from this shifting of the accent, from the pariah's vehement protest and attitude of denying the reality of the social order that Heine's spirit of mockery really stems. Correspondingly, it is the aloofness of the pariah that accounts for the divine laughter and the absence of bitterness in his verses. For Arendt, Heine was the first Jew to whom freedom meant more than mere liberation from the house of bondage and in whom freedom was combined with the traditional Jewish passion for justice (JP, 72).

To sum up, the core of Arendt's interpretation of Heine's version of schlemihldom is innocence. However, as in the human world innocence may be a blessing only in the case of children, it tends to adopt some unhappy manifestations. In the best case the innocent Schlemihl manages to lead a life without heroic deeds and characterized by mediocrity. Mediocrity corresponds to lack of history as the innocent Schlemihl endlessly repeats daily routines without ever being able to accomplish anything worth remembering. More often than not, however, the Schlemihl proves to be a fogey who becomes either a figure of ridicule and disdain or a concrete scapegoat who is sacrificed in place of somebody else. Here also the connotation of the bird of ill omen steps onto the scene as for the Gentiles the Schlemihl-scapegoat is the same as a bird of ill omen. In other words, the Gentiles do not conceive of innocent Schlemihls as mere scapegoats but real carriers of all the evils on the earth.

On the other hand, however, there is an alternative stance available for certain lonely figures such as Heine. The hallmarks of this stance are amused indifference and aloofness from Gentile society. In other words, aloofness may turn into a conscious distance from which it is possible to critically consider the ordered ranks of society. As a result, a reversal of positions is caused. Now it appears that in the final analysis the Schlemihl sees better the whole of society in its ridiculousness. Thus, there is a promise of critique and rebellion in this reversal. The Schlemihl can, after all, become con-

scious of her anomalous position in the composition of the human organization. She can achieve a stance of critical outsider whose existence is a proof of the unfairness of social and political order.

However, the problem is that when measured by the standard of political realities, Heine's attitude of amused indifference seems, in Arendt's view, remote and unreal. Unfortunately laughter is an ineffective weapon: it does not kill those against whom it is directed. Arendt concludes that from this standpoint the pariah is always remote and unreal; whether as Schlemihl or as "lord of dreams" she stands outside the real world and attacks it from without with ineffective weapons (JP, 73).

In fact, in Arendt's understanding, a deep remoteness and detachment from reality is an important characteristic of the Jewish culture: the Jewish tendency towards utopianism stems from the lack of social roots. Heinrich Heine was saved from succumbing to it because of his creativity. He managed to transform an otherwise paralysing political non-existence and unreality of the pariah into the effective basis of a world of art without becoming a doctrinaire who views everything through the prism of an ideology (JP, 73).

In the final passage of the Rahel study Arendt defines Heinrich Heine as Rahel's heir, on whom she had to bestow both the bankruptcy of her effort to assimilate and her rebellious spirit, quoting Rahel's letter to Heine: "Keine Wohltätigkeitsliste, kein Vivat, keine Herablassung; keine gemischte Gesellschaft, kein neues Gesangbuch, kein bürgerlicher Stern, nichts, nichts konnte mich je beschwichtigen...*Sie* werden dies herrlich, elegisch, phantastisch, einschneidend, äußerst scherzhaft, immer gesangvoll, anreizend, oft hinreißend sagen; nächstens sagen. Aber der Text aus meinem alten beleidigten Herzen wird doch dabei der Ihrige bleiben müssen." (cit. Arendt 1959, 211)

Thus, Arendt draws a connection between Rahel and Heine. This connection lies in their shared decision to remain faithful to the cause of the Jews and their attainment of equality before the law. In the final analysis both of them appear to have a connection to the tradition of conscious pariahdom even though their rebellion remained somewhat hidden or halfway shaped by the general tendency of the era of not regarding Jewish emancipation as inclusion

of the Jews as Jews in Gentile polity and civil society. Both of them adopted the widespread strategy of complete assimilation but they remained pariahs because in their hearts they knew that this was not the way things ought to be. But now we must return to Rahel to see how she eventually remained a Jew and pariah.

### *3.3.3. Rahel's Garret as a Space of Appearance for Gentile Society*

Around 1790 Rahel opened her first salon in the attic room above her parents apartment on Jägerstraße in Berlin. Until 1806 it was to be a meeting place which almost all the important intellectuals, actors and nobles of Berlin frequented. The Humboldt brothers, Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Gentz, Schleiermacher, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia and his mistress, Pauline Wiesel, the classical philologist Friedrich August Wolf, Jean Paul and Clemens Brentano belonged, among others, to those who could not resist Rahel's attraction.

Rahel's salon is frequently characterized as the most popular and the most unconventional of the Jewish salons (see e.g. Hertz 1988; Hahn and Isselstein 1987). Even its location contributed to its unconventionality. Unlike most of the salons, which were normally situated in the large living-rooms of wealthy Jewish homes, it was located in an attic. More importantly, a most unconventional and unexpected combination of people gathered there. The moment of surprise was emphasized by the fact that no invitation was required. Thus, for prominent Gentiles, visiting Rahel's garret became a kind of escape from the formalities of everyday life and an adventure into an exceptional sociability: "for a brief time everyone who counted in society had turned their backs on the social rigors and conventions, had taken flight from them. The Jewish salons in Berlin provided a social area outside of society, and Rahel's garret room in its turn stood outside the conventions and customs of even the Jewish salons" (RV, 46).

Nevertheless, even though people came to Rahel's garret to make unexpected acquaintances, they came, first of all, to meet its excep-

tional hostess. It was characteristic of all the Jewish salons that everything concentrated around the personality of the hostess, but in Rahel's case this dimension was accentuated above the average. She was famous for her originality, wit and lively freshness. It was because of her "magic", the fascination of her personality, that made people gather around her (cf. RV, 26). In other words, in an atmosphere of unconventionality and breaking with the old forms of sociability, Jewishness and female gender combined with intellectual and verbal skills proved, for a brief period, to be a merit from which someone like Rahel could wholeheartedly profit.

It was precisely in Rahel's garret where the unconventionality of all the Jewish salons reached its culmination. All that mattered was personal performance. People were appraised on the basis of their skills in conversation on the spot and not on the basis of their rank and status. In other words, people were evaluated in conversation by their personal ability to represent themselves as someone. A good knowledge of art and literature helped in this enterprise but it could not replace the ability to speak well.

Indeed, the salon was constituted by conversation: it existed only in conversation, constituting a discursive space of speech acts. Correspondingly, in her salon, Rahel was able to compensate for her lack of rank and status by creating herself in conversation as somebody. For a brief period it seemed that in the salon milieu it was possible to create an identity for oneself stemming exclusively from one's personal performance of speech-acts regardless of one's background and social status.

Nevertheless, in this sense Rahel's salon was, indeed, a typical space of appearance in its fragility. It threatened to disappear every time the conversation finished and the guests went away, and it had to be recreated again and again in new conversations and oral presentations. Likewise, Rahel's new identity as an admired salonière proved to be of a fragile nature. Repeatedly she had to recreate and reproduce it in conversation as there was no other guarantee of it. In other words, her tragedy was that the salon did not guarantee her any permanent identity independent of salon existence. On the contrary, although in her garret room and in some other spaces of sociability such as theatre she was considered a fully authorized mem-



ber of a peer group, outside this sociability she was what she had always been, a nobody.

Rahel was well aware of the fragility and fleeting nature of the salon. Even though her first salon survived roughly fifteen years, she was never satisfied with her identity as a Jewish salonière. Rather, for her, the salon was but the first step away from schlemihldom, from the unpleasant nothingness of traditional Jewishness. She wanted to arrive permanently in Gentile society and something more was needed in this enterprise. She knew that although her salon provided her with a common space of appearance with the Gentiles, she had not yet really arrived as the gates of the prominent noble houses remained closed to her.

There was only one way up the social ladder and that was marriage with a noble. The years of Rahel's garret salon correspond to her effort to fulfil this aim. She went through several love affairs and engagements with Gentiles of greater or lesser prominence without success. The bitterness of her failures grew deeper due to the fact that most other Jewish salonières she knew had success in this area (see RV, 143).

It remains partly a mystery why Rahel did not succeed. One can only wonder whether it was her lack of beauty, modest dowry, magic intelligence, passionate ambitiousness or all these factors together that contributed to her misfortune. As to looks, she was convinced that they played an important role in the business. To be sure, as I pointed out above, most of the Jewish salonières were exceptional beauties with whom Rahel was not able to compete. This cannot, however, be the only explanation as Rahel had other significant virtues. Neither can the size of her dowry explain everything as the financial situation of Rahel's family worsened decisively only after Napoleon had entered Berlin.

As far as I can see, the final two factors mentioned above played a decisive role. Even though at first sight Rahel's magic intelligence seems to have contributed only to her popularity, it might have had a negative counter-effect as well. More precisely, even though Rahel's conspicuous verbal and intellectual skills together with her astounding unconventionality rendered her an exceptionally seductive point of attraction as a salonière, the very same

characteristics might have made her a less attractive candidate as a future wife. In other words, she was, perhaps, too intelligent and independent, simply too unconventional for noble youngsters hunting for a bride. Moreover, it might have been that Rahel set her sights too high. She might have rejected a number of marriage proposals from lesser suitors. In addition, it is important to remember that her engagement to Count von Finckenstein lasted four years (1796-1800), and that to the secretary of the Spanish Legation, Don Raphael d'Urquijo, two years (1802-1804); she lost almost ten years in these failed efforts, losing one of the most important merits of female marriage candidates, that of young age.

Whatever the reasons, eventually Rahel did arrive in Gentile society. In 1814 she married Karl August Varnhagen who had proved to be a hidden noble descended from an ancient knighted family, the von Enses. Thus Rahel was baptised and assumed the name Antonie Friederike Varnhagen von Ense.<sup>12</sup> Together with Varnhagen she opened her second salon, which became the centre of the Goethe cult in Berlin. In Arendt's view, in the Varnhagen salon this cult took on a different meaning from what it had been in Rahel's garret room: it concealed parvenu manners (RV, 165-166). Nevertheless, during this last period of her life Rahel realized that assimilation had certain limits.

### *3.3.4. A Parvenu Who Remained a Pariah*

Through marriage with Varnhagen Rahel expected finally to gain full access to Gentile society as a member of its highest rank. This expectation proved, however, to be based on an illusion. All that the marriage could guarantee her was a social minimum. Even though the hostess of a famous salon, she was far from being equal among her peers in Gentile high society. On the contrary, it turned out that she was tolerated in this society only when with her husband but not at all when she was alone. This dawned on her in a very concrete way when she met Caroline von Humboldt again soon after the conclusion of the Congress of Vienna after an interval of several years. Caroline and Rahel had been friends since their youth.

Now it turned out that in the meantime Caroline had become anti-Jewish; she wiped out an old friendship by addressing Rahel using the formally polite *Sie* (RV, 171).

Caroline von Humboldt was by no means the only Gentile who had grown anti-Jewish in the meantime. On the contrary, Rahel's failure to ever really arrive in Gentile society was connected to the changed political atmosphere characterized by an anti-Semitic ban. Although Jewish emancipation progressed slowly on the formal political level, there occurred a strong backlash in civil society. Once again the Jews as a group were excluded from Gentile sociability. The novelty of the situation lies in the fact that for the first time the entire Jewish community did not respond to this exclusion with self-segregation, but many a Jew continued the struggle to assimilate.

Arendt points out that a curious hierarchical system of exceptions developed. Even the most anti-Semitic Gentiles had their exception Jews who, in their minds, did not represent the average Jew or the Jew in general. These exception Jews, who belonged to the wealthy ranks of the Jewish community, in their turn considered themselves as exceptions from the miserable and culturally backward Jewish masses of the ghettos. Many of them went as far as openly despising their co-religionists.

Growing hatred of the Jews made Rahel see what she had been her whole life: a parvenu. She realized that she had even married someone like herself, another parvenu. Gradually she came to the conclusion that the basic mistake in her life had been her desire to escape Jewishness.

In Arendt's view, the collapse of Rahel's efforts to assimilate basically stemmed from the contradiction between her personal aspiration and the general social and political circumstances. During the period of her first salon, assimilation seemed to be within her reach. It seemed to be a question of personal decision to hide and conceal one's background in order to get access to Gentile culture and society. Compared with the Enlightenment-inspired atmosphere of Gentile culture in search of new and less biased forms of sociability and cultural life, the traditional Jewish community did not look like a particularly inviting environment to stay in. After the

rise of the wave of hatred of the Jews, however, no personal effort proved to be sufficient to escape her past and arrive in Gentile society.

Arendt emphasizes that assimilationist Jews made one basic mistake. They believed that their Jewishness was a personal trait of character to be dealt with as such. This is why the majority of them also viewed assimilation as a personal aspiration to be carried out through an individual assimilation strategy. What made of this kind of assimilation a false solution to Jewish misery was the fact that it was not based on admission of the Jews *as Jews* to Gentile culture and polity, but on a strategy of parvenuism.

Here we come to the distinction between the parvenu and the pariah with which Arendt operates in the final two chapters of the Rahel study. For Arendt, parvenuism is not an exclusively Jewish characteristic and strategy, but is common to all those who wish to climb up the social ladder from the bottom. In Rahel's case, this is reflected in the fact that she succeeded in arriving only with a Gentile parvenu, Karl August Varnhagen.

Varnhagen came from an impoverished Gentile middle class family. He disliked the prospect of studying medicine, following in his father's footsteps, but preferred to join the literati. When he met Rahel, he did not have a clear picture of his future or any definite plans. He was an intellectual vagabond not talented enough to become an artist. He described himself as a beggar by the wayside by which he referred to both material and intellectual poverty in contrast to those who were given a stake to start with in the world. This poverty corresponded to an incapacity to create or produce anything and this is what made him a beggar: he could only draw on those who had these capacities (RV, 118-119).

On the basis of this self-characterization of Varnhagen, Arendt defines the beggar by the wayside as someone who "was no one; he was sans name, sans history, and sans face. He was the Unknown stranger" (RV, 119-120). Obviously, this kind of nobody has two options in life. She either can stay by the wayside in her nothingness or try to arrive in the ranks of those who count in society. Varnhagen chose the latter option, because he wished to become somebody.

The problem with this kind of arrivism lies in the fact that it is based on nothing and is shaped by fraud. More precisely, being

empty inside, the beggar by the wayside cannot lean on her personal talents, capacities and characteristics but is compelled to imitate those who she wants to resemble. Arendt characterizes this imitation based on fraudulence as follows:

”Those who are resolutely determined to rise, to ‘arrive’, must early accustom themselves to anticipating the stage they hope to attain by simulating voluntary appreciation; must early set their sights higher than the blind obedience, which is all that is demanded of them; must always act as if they were performing freely, and as their own masters, the things that are in any case expected of hirelings and subordinates. This fraud seldom has any direct influence upon their careers, but it is of the greatest value for social successes and for positions in society. By this fraud the pariah prepares society to accept his career as a parvenu.” (RV, 162)

Varnhagen became a successful parvenu, but in Arendt’s interpretation only through Rahel. In other words, it was not Varnhagen but Rahel who refined parvenuism to perfection, wishing to arrive as high as possible. Paradoxically enough, Rahel was never really esteemed as a peer in Berlin, only abroad. Arendt points out that she even won Prussian citizenship while living in the ”foreign” state of Baden. For a moment, winning citizenship seemed to be the culmination of Rahel’s efforts to arrive. Arendt quotes Rahel’s enthusiasm:

”Was ich tat, tat doch eine Preußin: und ich war bescheiden, hilfreich, gut, sanft; und beliebt, und das kam auf die Rechnung aller Preußinnen; ich hatte *die* große Satisfaktion, nicht zu Hause zu sein – wo ich immer noch *beweisen* soll, daß ich das Recht habe edel zu sein: und wo jeder *Stein* mich an solches *von sonst* erinnert, und ich durchaus die alte vorstellen soll! – und die ganz unendliche, daß ich endlich einmal auf solchem Piedestal stand, wo man, *was* ich Gutes machte und war, *auch* mitzählte. Unendlich nenne ich diese Satisfaktion, wegen ihres unendlichen Unterschiedes, ob sie einem gewährt wird oder nicht.” (cit. Arendt 1959, 190)

This quotation reveals two important things. Firstly, even though arriving has its culminations, it is never really completed. In Rahel's case, this is revealed in the fact that she could only enjoy the fruits of full acceptance abroad. In Berlin everybody remembered her background and this always cast a shadow on her status. Secondly, the rank and status of the parvenu is of a fragile nature. She never stands on a firm and self-evident pedestal since the threat of falling off is always there; Rahel felt she stood on a firm basis abroad but never in Berlin.

Rahel would probably have been quite satisfied with her new position with all its incompleteness and fragility if there had been no more to that. However, the dimension of fraudulence was too much for her:

”As a Jew Rahel had always stood outside, had been a pariah, and discovered at last, most unwillingly and unhappily, that entrance into society was possible only at the price of lying, of a far more generalized lie than simply hypocrisy. She discovered that it was necessary for the parvenu – but for him alone – to sacrifice every natural impulse, to conceal all truth, to misuse all love, not only to suppress all passion, but worse still, to convert it into a means for social climbing. Courage could not be hers, the courage to take a position outside of society, because the pariah does not voluntarily renounce; he can only assume acquired heroic poses after renunciation has been forced on him. A woman moreover, could afford social courage only if she were beautiful and had not been humiliated.” (RV, 169-170)

Thus, finally Rahel realized that her new life required too much lying and pretence. She was not able, after all, to act such as she was in Gentile society, but was compelled to pretend to be someone else than she really was. She got tired of continuously hiding her background and, above all, rejecting old acquaintances belonging to her former life who were now regarded as indecent.<sup>13</sup>

However, she had ended up in a kind of impasse from which she could not jump out. On the one hand, open rebellion and admission of her pariahdom would have been suicide, a catastrophe that

would have destroyed everything she had achieved in her life. On the other hand, suddenly it dawned on her that she had not achieved very much. She was still compelled to "remain subject to the same adverse law that [s]he revolted against when [s]he was a pariah: having to acquiesce in everything" (RV, 170). In other words, she could not set the tone of sociability, she could not dictate the rules of the game; all she could do was adapt herself to a game dominated by others.

The "diabolic dilemma" of the parvenu was shaped in Rahel's fate. On the one hand she had been deprived of social existence by general social conditions, and on the other hand she had been able to purchase a social existence only by sacrificing nature (RV, 173). She was a kind of paradox, as an honest parvenu who admits to herself that she never wanted anything specific is a paradox. If she longs to return to her pariah existence, she becomes a fool in the eyes of respectable society (RV, 170).

Eventually, Rahel remained externally a parvenu but internally led the hidden life of a pariah. In Arendt's view, this was because Rahel was never really able to rid herself of her pariah qualities, the most important of which is emotionally exaggerated sensitivity, an understanding of the dignity of every human being. This quality separated her from the privileged who were unable to grasp this understanding (RV, 174).

The eventual unwillingness to abandon her pariah qualities led Rahel also to re-evaluate her marriage. She did remain grateful to Varnhagen with whom she had been able to leave her former pariah existence and arrive in Gentile society. However, her marriage had originally been intended as a means of securing a parvenu existence.

"But in the course of the marriage it became a refuge, an offered and gratefully accepted asylum, in which the 'fugitive from Egypt and Palestine' found 'help, love and tender care'...[Her pariah qualities] opened up a loophole for her... through which the pariah, precisely because [s]he is an outcast, can see life as a whole, and the very road upon which the pariah can attain to [her] 'great love for free existence'. It is offered to

the pariah if, though unable to revolt as an individual against the whole of society, [s]he disdains the alternative of becoming a parvenu and is recompensed for [her] 'wretched situations' by a 'view of the whole'." (RV, 174-175)

### 3.3.5. *One Does not Escape Jewishness*

In the concluding chapter of the Rahel study Arendt draws together the reasons why Rahel failed to become a parvenu but remained a pariah. Rahel's original mistake had been that of viewing Jewishness as an individual fate, converting it from a historical destiny, from a shared social condition, into a personal defect of character (RV, 177). This misconception led Rahel to believe that an individual solution to her Jewishness could be found by escaping it and assimilating to and arriving in Gentile society.

The gravity of her mistake was accentuated by the fact that an individual assimilation strategy did not leave any room for common action for the general emancipation of the Jews. On the contrary, the assimilation strategy preferred by Rahel required the existence of backward masses of ghetto-Jews. If not the whole enterprise of arriving would have collapsed because general emancipation would have led to a situation in which the arrived individual Jews would not have made an exception to anything. They would not have been able to distinguish themselves from the Jewish masses (cf. RV, 179). In other words, Rahel resolutely refused to share the general fate of the Jews and to place her hopes in political measures which would benefit all (RV, 181). That is to say, she refused to approach the situation of the Jews in political terms.

Eventually, however, she was unable to adapt to all the conditions of assimilation: "In a society on the whole hostile to the Jews...it is possible to assimilate only by assimilating to anti-Semitism also" (RV, 182). For Rahel, this was too much. She was unable to exchange the old prejudices for new ones. And this is what, in Arendt's mind, made her become almost involuntarily a rebel and remain a Jew (RV, 182).<sup>14</sup>

Here, Arendt for the first time connects the dimension of rebel-



lion to pariah existence. If the pariah is conscious of her social and political conditions, if she has broken with the irreality of the traditional Schlemihl community, and if she does not choose parvenuism, she inevitably adopts, in Arendt's view, a rebellious consciousness and spirit. In other words, the pariah as a rebel is a counterpart both of traditional Judaism and parvenu arrivism. It is a consciously chosen political position in a situation where the pariahs do not have access to civil society and the political community.

In Rahel's case, however, her pariahdom never manifested itself in open rebellion. Even though in her secret asylum she became aware of the falseness of parvenu assimilation, this consciousness never materialized in an open fight.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin. Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation.* Philosophische Forschungen herausgegeben von Karl Jaspers, Heidelberg, No. 9. Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer 1929.

<sup>2</sup>The most important of these losses was the death of her father in 1913 when little Hannah was only six years old. It caused a recurrent loss of her mother who adopted the habit of spending long periods in spas without taking Hannah with her. The uncertainty of life was accentuated by World War I and subsequent political unrest in Prussia. Neither did she appreciate her mother's decision to remarry in 1920: having got used to being the centre of attention as the only child, she now had to compete with two step-sisters and her mother's new husband.

<sup>3</sup>Her distance from Heidegger was greatest from the time of her exile to Paris in 1933 until the end of the 1940s (cf. chapter 4, footnote 3; Arendt 1946c). During the second half of the 1940s she severely criticized Heidegger in her letters to Jaspers (see Arendt 1985). This criticism mostly concerned Heidegger's political behaviour under Nazi rule even though Arendt's 1946 article is harsh also regarding his philosophy. Later Arendt "forgave" Heidegger and reestablished contact with him. Their communication became gradually more regular, especially after Blücher's and Jaspers' death. As the present study mostly deals with the period during which Arendt's distance from Heidegger was at its greatest, and as the relation of Arendt's thinking to that of Heidegger would deserve a study of its own, I have dropped the entire theme out of

examination. However, generally speaking one can state that Arendt's relation to Heidegger was polemic; she rather criticized and politicized Heideggerian ideas than repeated them as such. For good examinations of the relation between Heidegger's and Arendt's thought see Taminaux 1992; Forti 1994; Villa 1996.

<sup>4</sup>The interview with Günter Gaus was transmitted in 1964 on West German television and published the following year under the title *Was bleibt? Es bleibt die Muttersprache* in Günter Gaus: *Zur Person*, München. I have used the English translation published in EU. Unlike Arendt states in the interview the book was not finished when she left Germany. See below.

<sup>5</sup>She had only been able to publish some short articles on the theme. See Arendt 1932a; 1932b; 1932c; 1932d; 1932e; 1933.

<sup>6</sup>Rahel Varnhagen. *The Life of a Jewess*. Leo Baeck Institute. London: East and West Library 1957 (RV). German original was published with the title *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik*. München: Piper 1959. I have used the English edition except in some quotations from Rahel's letters and diaries.

<sup>7</sup>These lectures provided her with material for the first lengthy article she published in America in 1942, *From the Dreyfus Affair to France Today* (cf. Young-Bruehl 1982, 142).

<sup>8</sup>In cultural history, *die Rahel Zeit* is a chapter of its own. After the 1930s, when Arendt wrote her book, it has awakened continuous interest among historians. Among them, Arendt is recognized as one of the early contributors on the theme. At the same time, she is not taken precisely as a historian. However, this does not mean that her interpretation was neglected or considered historically inaccurate as such. Her work is either seen as a branch of its own among Rahel studies or is situated in the reception history of them (see, for example, how Arendt's contribution is approached in Hahn and Isselstein 1987). In both cases it is assumed that Arendt's contribution is rather a piece of history of ideas the strength of which lies in how she outlines and analyses Rahel's intellectual landscape and its development (in this respect see also Hertz 1988).

<sup>9</sup>As Hertz points out, the word *salon* came into use to describe a public room that began to appear in wealthy European homes between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries as the "great hall" which gradually lost its private character (Hertz 1988, 14). As to "society", in the present study the term is used to refer to a specific kind of society affair, to a special group within a community, namely the fashionable and the wealthy. Thus, it has nothing to do with the contemporary usage which

refers to a body of individuals living as members of a community (cf. Hertz 1988, 14-15). When I refer to the latter I will use the term civil society although not in a strictly Hegelian sense but simply to indicate a space outside the private walls of home and public walls of state apparatus.

<sup>10</sup>It is worth noticing that even though most salon women did not publish anything under their own name, they often co-authored texts of their lovers, husbands, or relatives. In this respect, Rahel Levin is a case in point. She became famous for her well written and intelligent letters without publishing anything. However, her brother Robert used her letters in his writings, often quoting – without, of course, mentioning his source – directly from them. It never seemed to have crossed Rahel's mind that she could have made her own career as a writer: she was satisfied with seeing her words published anonymously in her brother's texts (see Vigliero 1987).

<sup>11</sup>The writing form of the term seems to vary depending on the author and according to the language in mind. Those faithful to Yiddish prefer the form *Shlemiel* or *Shlemihl* and those faithful to German use *Schlemihl*. In the literature on Arendt's conception of pariahdom one occasionally comes across some other variations. For the sake of coherence I will use the form *Schlemihl* throughout, although Arendt sometimes uses other forms, too, especially the form *Shlemihl*.

<sup>12</sup>This was not the first time her name changed. In 1810 she had begun to call herself Rahel Robert according to the surname which her brother Ludvig had assumed when he was baptised. Rahel was inclined to think that one could change identity by changing name.

<sup>13</sup>A sign of Rahel's silent rebellion against parvenuism was her friendship with Pauline Wiesel, a former mistress of Prince Louis Ferdinand, who was considered a person of the worst reputation. Rahel revived the friendship, defying her husband's conviction that she should not have had anything to do with such an indecent person (see RV, 167-169).

<sup>14</sup>In Arendt's view the only Jew who ever successfully assimilated to anti-Semitism also was Benjamin Disraeli. However, his anti-Semitism manifested itself in an inverted form as it assumed a form of extreme Jewish chauvinism (see OT, 68-79).

## 4. All the Schlemihls, Stand Up! Bernard Lazare as a Model-Type of the Conscious Pariah

### 4.1. A Journey into Conscious Pariahdom

Whereas Rahel had for years been Arendt's point of confrontation in her attempts to understand the Jewish condition, Bernard Lazare was to remain for her a permanent model figure of the conscious pariah. In Arendt's view, the merit of Lazare was the effort to bring the Jewish question openly into the arena of politics (JP, 76). Already during the war, but particularly after it, Arendt felt that she had left Rahel behind. In 1952 she wrote to Jaspers that the book on Rahel has been very remote for her for years. What has remained alive was the Jewish experience which she had made her own and a perspective on a Zionist critique of assimilation which she still considered basically justified, but almost all the rest belonged to the past (Arendt to Jaspers, September 7, 1952, Arendt 1985, 233).<sup>1</sup>

During the years of exile in Paris (1933-1940)<sup>2</sup> Arendt had an opportunity to make a deeper acquaintance with Lazare's life and work. She read a lot of what Lazare had written and later she repeatedly referred to him as a model figure of a rebellious pariah.<sup>3</sup> She also edited, with an introduction and some additional articles, an English translation on the basis of his *Le Fumier de Job*, which was a posthumous collection of his unpublished notes. On the other

hand, Arendt never wrote an entire article not to mention a book-length study on Lazare. This is why, in this chapter, Arendt's view of Lazare's pariahdom must be related to his own writings and personal history as well as historical studies on him in order to be able to identify the traits of thought that Arendt adopted from him.

Bernard Lazare (1865-1903) was by no means born a conscious pariah. His insight on the Jewish question developed in the course of years as he was to learn that one's Jewishness still inescapably shaped one's life. He developed his criticism of assimilation and located it in the context of the hierarchical structures of Jewish communities as a "bastard doctrine" of well-to-do Jews which undo any possibility of Jewish solidarity and effective politics of resistance.

One of the most prominent biographers of Lazare, Nelly Wilson, has argued that young Lazare was an anti-Semite who accepted and supported all the basic arguments of the late nineteenth century leading French ideologists of anti-Semitism, most importantly those of Eduard Drumont. In Wilson's interpretation, Lazare's insight on the Jewish question underwent a profound and relatively quick change due to the Dreyfus Affair which opened his eyes to see the fact that hatred of the Jews was not of their own making and that the Israelites of France could not distinguish themselves from other Jews in relation to the Jewish question and anti-Semitism (see Wilson 1978).

In this chapter I will argue that this interpretation is based on a very partial reading of Lazare's early texts and particularly one of his major works, *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes*. I will try show that what underwent a profound change was not so much his attitude and relation to anti-Semitism as his conception of Jewish assimilation and the political structure of Jewish communities. Unlike Wilson, I do not see any radical shift from early anti-Semitism to later philosemitism and Zionism, but rather a gradual development of ideas and insights of a highly self-critical man who was never satisfied with his own ideas but tried constantly to go beyond them and reach a deeper understanding of the problems and phenomena with which he dealt.

I will also argue that Wilson's view is based on a bizarre and

questionable definition of anti-Semitism. In her vocabulary the term seems to refer to every act of thought which contains critical ideas concerning Jews and their actions in history. All those who do not share a philosemitic standpoint are doomed to at least potential or hidden anti-Semitism. In other words, all those who are not with Jews and Judaism are inevitably against them. Thus we learn that such persons as Spinoza, Heine and Marx have a point in common and that is that they are Jewish anti-Semites (Wilson 1978, 74).

Moreover, despite being a historian, Wilson operates with the term of anti-Semitism in a strikingly unhistorical manner, using it to refer to every kind of expression of hatred of the Jews in history. Although she recognizes the commonly made distinction between traditional or old hatred of the Jews and modern anti-Semitism, she does not give much significance to the fact that the term was not introduced into the European political vocabulary until the 1870s (see e.g. Lefort 1983, 655). That is to say, she does not ask if it is legitimate to refer to the earlier expressions of hatred of the Jews with the same term as the modern expressions of it. In my view, it is more accurate to keep traditional hatred of the Jews conceptually apart from modern anti-Semitism; whereas the former has its origins in an ancient religious confrontation and xenophobia, the latter refers to an organized political movement which came into existence during the second half of the nineteenth century (cf. Gruenbaum 1946, 20).

In other words, what distinguishes modern anti-Semitism from its ancient predecessor is its highly organized and programmatic character. Although European Jews have been persecuted for centuries, prior to the nineteenth century persecution was never organized and ideologized from above in such a systematic fashion. This is the only way to be able to identify the historical matrix in which the latter was born and to avoid an antihistorical and antipolitical conclusion according to which anti-Semitism is eternal and as such eternally inscribed in the structures of the human or at least the European mind.

In the following, I will first take a short look at Bernard Lazare's life-history. I will then discuss his first contributions on the Jewish condition in 1890 in order to identify his first responses to the Jew-

ish question. Next I turn to his conception of anti-Semitism such as he presented it in *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes*. I will show that the first germs of those ideas which matured later on the Jewish condition and pariahdom are already to be found in these early texts. Then I turn to the conceptions of assimilation and nationalism as they are presented in *Le Fumier de Job* and some later articles.

Whereas Lazare's distinction between the Israelites and the Jews in his early articles and his interpretation of anti-Semitism as presented in *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes* are his first and preliminary accounts of the Jewish question, the interpretation of assimilation and Jewish nationalism in *Le Fumier de Job* and some other later writings can be seen as further developed arguments which do not always remain faithful to his early reflections. I will show, however, that some of Lazare's basic ideas on the Jewish condition are already to be found already in his early texts although perhaps in a confused and only half-conscious form. In other words, I will read *L'antisémitisme* and some of his other early writings with hindsight, searching for germs of Lazare's later ideas instead of digging out all the possible historical errors, exaggerations, logical slips and hidden prejudices. My intention, with this strategy of re-readings and confrontations, is to identify the connections between Lazare's and Arendt's understanding of pariahdom.

The publication of Eduard Drumont's *La France Juive* (1886) and its immense success was one of the events which invited Lazare to direct his attention to anti-Semitism and the Jewish question. In Wilson's view, Lazare first shared Drumont's indisputably antisemitic viewpoint (Wilson 1978, 74-77). As far as I can see, this was not exactly the case. I would rather say that Lazare took Drumont's ideas seriously and entered into debate with him. The ideas which he first shared with Drumont were widely adopted in Europe and also among French Jewry and there is nothing particularly antisemitic in them if measured by the criteria of the time. Besides, an apparent unanimity in certain questions turned out to be mostly a product of Lazare's imagination; at first he believed that Drumont's views could be influenced by reasonable argumentation.<sup>4</sup> However, this proved to be just an illusion and the two men

ended up resolving their disagreements in a duel (cf. Wilson 1978, 86-87; Bredin 1992, 175).

Another significant personality, regarding the development of Lazare's ideas, is Theodor Herzl, the founding father of the Zionist movement. There are striking similarities in the life-histories of these two men. Both of them came from assimilated backgrounds, seeing in assimilation a solution to the Jewish question. Both of them were to turn to Zionism as a response to growing anti-Semitism. For both, Zionism did not refer so much to a religious as to a political bond between the Jews. Unlike Herzl, however, Lazare never adopted the idea of Palestine-centred Zionism but attempted to find a solution to Jewish misery on European soil.

Having identified the most important characteristics of Lazare's modern conscious pariahdom I will confront it with the traditional schlemihldom discussed in the previous chapter, relating both to Arendt's view of worldlessness. I will argue that it is precisely the irresponsible irreality stemming from the state of worldlessness of traditional schlemihldom that makes it a politically problematic position. In other words, the community of Schlemihls cannot be anything but a false substitute for a political community; it can never replace political freedom born in the public, political realm.

## 4.2. An Israelite of France

Bernard Lazare came from an assimilated, Sephardic, well-to-do, middle-class merchant family and received a strongly patriotic, republican and civic education. The sort of religion practised in an assimilated Jewish milieu did not conflict with the secular morality taught at school. Young Bernard Lazare<sup>5</sup> was not, however, satisfied with the rationalised, uninspiring and middle-class Judaism of his upbringing and the republicanism of his education. He was to rebel against both (Wilson 1978, 6-10; Bredin 1992). As a demonstration of rebellion against the home milieu in Nîmes, young Bernard did not follow the merchant tradition of the family but turned to literature and the arts. He was influenced by symbolism and frequented literary salon gatherings, especially those of Mallarmé.



Soon he became increasingly preoccupied with social problems and moved from symbolism to anarchism, vehemently criticizing Republican democracy and its institutions. After moving to Paris he joined a circle of dissident socialist intellectuals who represented a curious mixture of symbolist tendencies in art and anarchist tendencies in politics without, however, ever becoming a member of any anarchist or socialist organization. These two things – anger at social injustice and fear of State socialism – were to remain the cornerstones of his political thinking his whole life (Wilson 1978, 33, 48).

What made him different and what raised his writing above the mere expression of his time and milieu was, in Arendt's view, his early recognition of the importance of the Jewish question and his consistent courage in making this recognition the central fact of his life. Unlike many others, his first reaction to the Jewish question was a decision to take anti-Semitism seriously (Arendt 1948c, 6).

In other words, it was precisely growing anti-Semitism that directed Lazare's attention to the Jewish question, although in the beginning with quite confused and contradictory feelings. He first believed that Edouard Drumont's views on the Jews presented in *La France Juive* were not directed against the Israelites of France and joined the public debate on the issue. At the same time, however, he could not quite understand the sudden revival of hatred of the Jews and found it difficult to take sides and situate himself in an atmosphere of growing anti-Semitism (cf. Wilson 1978, 74-77).

In order to bring some clarity to this confusion, Lazare turned to the history of the Jews to understand the underlying causes of anti-Semitism. The result of five years of reading and research was *L'Antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes*. Implied in the decision to make a closer examination of Jewish history and to attempt to understand the antisemitic viewpoint was a desire to discover his own Jewish roots.

His explanation of anti-Semitism followed, at least partly, the general reasoning of the time. He found the answer to it in the exclusiveness of the Jews themselves, who wanted to constitute at any price "un Etat dans l'Etat" (Lazare 1894a, 48). On the other hand, at this time Lazare still believed, in line with socialist think-

ing, that because the Jewish question was a national question, it would automatically solve itself in the general process of the denationalization of nations (Arendt 1948c, 7).

It is also plausible that Lazare's anarcho-socialist sympathies made him follow, at least partly, certain antisemitic tendencies of certain socialist writers. In a footnote to the 1948 English edition of *Le fumier de Job* Arendt points out that antisemitic tendencies among socialist writers were especially strong in France, referring to Pierre Joseph Proudhon, François-Charles-Marie Fourier and Alphonse Toussenel (Arendt's footnote 8 to Lazare 1901b in Lazare 1948, 99-100). Arendt's footnote concerns Lazare's 1901 article on nationalism and Jewish emancipation. Here, he has also become conscious of antisemitic tendencies, pointing out that "[n]'espérez-vous pas qu'avec les transformations sociales la haine du Juif disparaîtra. Voyez déjà en Autriche on commence à dire: "le socialisme sera antisémite ou il ne sera pas"." (Lazare 1901a, 167) Arendt adds another footnote in which she remarks that Christian Socialism in Austria under the leadership of the anti-Semite Lueger during the 1890s had some influence on the Socialist party, which regarded Austrian Jewry as a reactionary element (Arendt's footnote 7 to Lazare 1901b in Lazare 1948, 100).

A personal political experience was needed to turn Bernard Lazare's attention definitively and almost exclusively to the Jewish question and Zionism and make him a "conscious pariah". This was the Dreyfus Affair. When it began, in the 1890s, Lazare was at the height of his journalistic career, writing for several newspapers. Soon his anarchism, his criticism of the decadence of press and his pro-Dreyfusianism proved to be, however, too much for his environment. Suddenly, hardly anyone wanted his articles. He was excluded almost completely from the press and became a pariah in relation to it (Péguy 1910, 24-26).

In the course of the fight for the acquittal of Dreyfus, Lazare worked as a legal counselor to the Dreyfus family. He came to know the Jewish people and the Jews of France as well as the enemies of the Jewish people. The conclusion he drew from these experiences was that Zionism offered the only possible solution to the Jewish question. He did not, however, abandon his socialist insights, but

rather, united these two doctrines in a version of social-revolutionary Zionism.

Adherence to Zionism did not rescue him from pariahdom. Soon he realized that he could not follow the official line of the Zionist movement, which he found too authoritarian and Palestine-centred. Having quarreled with Theodor Herzl and cut himself off from the movement, he found himself completely isolated. He spent the last years of his life as a double-pariah being excluded both from the public realm of the Gentiles and the organizations and institutions of his own brethren. Thus, an assimilated anarcho-socialist had turned into a representative of self-critical conscious pariahdom whose inevitable fate was to be forgotten – above all among his own brethren – soon after his premature death in 1903 at the age of 38.<sup>6</sup>

### 4.3. The Israelites and the Jews

Bernard Lazare's first public contribution on the Jewish question was published in *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires* in 1890 with the title *Juifs et Israélites*. As the title indicates, Lazare makes a distinction here between the Jews and Israelites of France:

”Le Juif .. c’est celui qui est dominé par l’unique préoccupation de faire une fortune rapide, qu’il obtiendra plus facilement par le dol, le mensonge et la ruse. Il méprise les vertus, la pauvreté, le désintéressement. La bête qu’érigèrent jadis dans le désert les tribus infidèles est restée son unique adoration.” (Lazare 1890a, 177)

...Mais à côté de ce judaïsme méprisable, pourri par la cupidité, haineux des nobles gestes et des généreuses volontés, il est des êtres tout différents, il est des Israélites. Ceux-là, on ne les connaît pas et on les oublie trop. Ils n’ont pas d’histoire, on ignore leurs noms, car jamais ils ne furent mêlés des procès retentissants, à d’interlopes aventures, à des spoliations éclatantes. Depuis des années, ils vivent paisibles, attachés au sol qui les vit naître, où d’innombrables générations se sont

succédées (je parle et ne veux parler que des Israélites de France, les autres me sont indifférents et étrangers). Ils sont pauvres ou médiocrement riches, bornés dans leurs désirs, avec seulement devant eux l'étroit horizon de relatif bien-être qui est celui de la foule." (Lazare 1890a, 178)

In other words, there are, on the one hand, the poor and good Sephardim of Western Europe, and on the other hand, the rich and wicked Ashkenazim of Eastern Europe. In Lazare's view, it is important to make this distinction in order to see that the growing anti-Semitism of Drumont and others is not, in fact, directed against the good Israelites of France but, instead, against those who, after all, deserve it, the wicked Jews of the middle and eastern parts of Europe. The problem with anti-Semites is, in Lazare's view, that they indulge in conceptual confusion by using the term Jew to refer also to the French Israelites as they use the term Jew as a general and universal type or mother category for those who are too exclusive and concentrate on their own interests at others' expense (Lazare 1890a, 175).

According to Bredin (1992, 112), with this distinction Lazare takes his place in the tradition of Jewish anti-Semitism not unfamiliar even to figures such as Marx. In my view, however, this is not exactly the case. What Lazare reproduces with the distinction between Israelites and Jews is a form of traditional hierarchy in the French Jewish community and in European Jewish communities at large. The French Jewish community was far from democratic and equal. On the contrary, there was a strong inner hierarchy built on the economic, religious and social status of its members. Moreover, there was as strong an outer hierarchy between different European Jewish communities. The Sephardic French Jewry placed itself at the top of this hierarchy whereas the lowest levels were formed by the Ashkenazi communities of Russia and Galicia.

In other words, Lazare goes with the general tendency of the time to distinguish between good Sephardim, "we", constituted by the Israelites of France and bad Ashkenazim, "them", constituted by all the other Jews without noticing how hierarchical and inequitable this distinction is. The motive for making this distinction is, I

believe, a desperate desire to rescue the French Jews – the Israelites – from antisemitic attack, to show that they are loyal patriots who willingly and faithfully share the French political community with the Gentiles.

A second glance at Lazare's text shows, however, that he is not entirely ignorant, after all, of the inner hierarchies of the Jewish communities. On the contrary, describing the Israelites he remarks:

"[i]ls savent qu'il existe des financiers puissants, on leur fait croire qu'ils doivent de ces banquiers tirer leur gloire, ils ne protestent pas, ayant des millions entassés l'éblouissement coutumier au peuple; mais ils ne demandent pas à être semblables à ces ploutocratiques gentilshommes: ils savent confusément de quels pleurs leur fortune est faite. De ces Israélites, les uns sont ouvriers, les autres petits commerçants..." (Lazare 1890a, 178)

And further:

"Et tout ces Israélites sont las de se voir confondre avec une tourbe de rastaquouères et de tarés ... le tort de se laisser diriger par des indignes, celui de croire leurs supérieurs ceux qui méritent à peine de les servir, et le tort non moins grand de se laisser imposer par des hommes intéressés, une prétendue solidarité qui les assimile à des changeurs francfortois, des usuriers russes, des cabaretiers polonais, des galiciens prêteurs sur gage, avec lesquels ils n'ont rien de commun." (Lazare 1890a, 179)

Here we learn that not all French Jews are by any means good Israelites, but there are also dishonest and corrupt upstarts among them who think only of their own interests. The blind spot of Lazare's reasoning lies in the view that the corrupt upstart Jews constitute an alien element in the French Jewish community. In other words, Lazare wants to regard all the rich and corrupted bankers, money-lenders and similar as coming from the east.

However, despite its evident inadequacy in certain respects it is

precisely in the "mistake" of this conception that a germ of Lazare's later distinction between the conscious pariah and the parvenu is to be found. In other words, the distinction between Israelites and Jews is a first step on the way to his later view of conscious pariahdom opposed to parvenuism. The figure of the good and poor Israelite has some characteristics in common with the later figure of conscious pariah as a sincere representative of the Jews whereas the figure of the wicked Jew, the *rastaquouère*, shares the dishonest qualities of the parvenu.

In his attempt to rescue the good Israelites from anti-Semitism by arguing that they had nothing to do whatsoever with the other Jews Lazare also attacked the conception of Jewish solidarity which was living a period of revival. In 1890 the first modern international Jewish organization, l'Alliance Israélite Universelle was founded in Paris. It was an organization of pure philanthropy, wanting to remain neutral in politics as well in theological and religious controversies. It appealed to an ancient spirit of solidarity "which at all times united the Jews and enabled them to live through the trials of the past". On the basis of this solidarity it focused on raising the moral and intellectual status of the Jews all over the world by organizing education and building schools (The Alliance Israélite Universelle (1860-1895) 1895, 316-321).

In Bernard Lazare's mind, the Alliance leaned on a false conception of Jewishness: it conceived the Jews as a race, an ethnic group which had remained basically the same for two thousand years. For Lazare, nothing could be more wrong. In an article titled *La solidarité juive* (1890b) he tries to show that a Jewish race no longer exists and this is why organic solidarity between all Jews cannot exist either.

In this article Lazare argues that the Jewish nation was divided in two factions already during the ancient times of golden calf. On the one hand, there was the simple and pure half which worshipped God with profound piety, and on the other, the perverse half which worshipped idols. It was the former to which God gave the law through the prophets and which anathematized the powerful and the rich. It was the latter which preached to voluptuousness and riches (Lazare 1890b, 225).

In the course of time these two groups mixed and mingled with

other nations. For the pure worshippers of God this mingling was favourable and produced the Sephardim, whereas for those preaching idolatry it was unfavourable, leading to the formation of the Ashkenazim. The basic result, however, is that the Jewish race does not exist any longer and this is why Jewish solidarity cannot exist either (Lazare 1890b, 229).

On the contrary, Lazare breaks fiercely away from any kind of kinship with the Ashkenazim:

”Que m’importe à moi, Israélite de France, des usuriers russes, des cabaretiers galiciens prêteurs sur gages, des marchands de chevaux polonais, des revendeurs de Prague et des changeurs de Francfort. En vertu de quelle prétendue fraternité, irai-je me préoccuper des mesures prises par le czar envers des sujets qui lui paraissent accomplir une œuvre nuisible? Ai-je en les défendant, en les soutenant, à assumer une part de leur responsabilité? Qu’ai-je commun avec ces descendants des Huns? S’ils souffrent j’ai pour eux la naturelle pitié due à tous les souffrants, quels qu’ils soient, puisque sur la terre *le châtement est toujours disproportionné au crime*,<sup>7</sup> mais adoreraient-t-ils trois fois Jéhovah et vénéreraient-ils dix fois Moïse, je ne sentirai pas ma sympathie s’en accroître, les chrétiens de Crète auront droit aussi bien à m’émouvoir et tant d’autres, qui sont parias en ce globe, sans êtres Israélites.” (Lazare 1890b, 230)

Thus, no Jewish solidarity whatsoever for Lazare, but, instead, universal human solidarity whenever and wherever needed. It is undeniable that in this passage Lazare adopts a stance of Sephardic arrogance. However, in my view it is important to distinguish and keep apart this arrogance from anti-Semitism. More precisely, his disdain of eastern Jews did not spring from hatred of the Jews but was a result of adopting hierarchical thinking typical of the French Jewry.

What is even more important is to see the first germs of his pariah solidarity developing here at the same time as he rejects any form of universal Jewish solidarity. He did not share the view of the Alliance according to which ancient Jewish solidarity was based

on a racial bond. He believed, instead, that it sprang from shared suffering: there was a long period during which a Jew could find help and asylum only at the home of another Jew. As this suffering was withering away with the emergence of Jewish emancipation and assimilation, the basis of universal Jewish solidarity was disappearing as well. Far more important, for Lazare, were the distinctions and hierarchies of the Jewish communities although he was not yet able to locate them in a proper way.

To sum up, young Bernard Lazare was not an anti-Semite but he was a typical French Sephardic Jew who arrogantly saw other Jews as lesser human beings. He obviously was, although probably unconsciously, influenced by the racial theories of the era which reinforced his conviction that eastern Jews were of a lower caste compared with French Jews. He had, in addition, adopted the hierarchical thinking of the French Jewish community which was of ancient origin and which remained alive for decades.

Hannah Arendt faced the very same hierarchical thinking in the 1930s when she arrived in Paris and was classified as an *Ostjude*. Later, she described the inner hierarchies of the Jews in Paris as follows:

”French Jewry was absolutely convinced that all Jews coming from beyond the Rhine were what they called *Polaks* – what German Jewry called *Ostjuden*. But those Jews who really came from eastern Europe could not agree with their French brethren and called us *Jäckes*. The sons of these *Jäcke*-haters – the second generation born in France and already duly assimilated – shared the opinion of the French Jewish upper classes. Thus, in the very same family, you could be called a *Jäcke* by the father and a *Polak* by the son.” (Arendt 1943a, 62)

Lazare had adopted the idea of assimilation as a goal to be achieved: in the framework of assimilation he saw the future of French Jews in loyal patriotism, growing away from Judaism. However, in the distinction between Israelites and Jews the first germs of his later distinction into conscious pariahs and parvenus were developing. In order to mature this distinction a realization was needed that the



inner hierarchies of the Jewish communities were, indeed, far more important than the differences between western and eastern Jews.

It must be admitted, of course, that there is a dimension of naivety in Lazare's belief that anti-Semitism was not directed against the Israelites of France. Although he first fiercely separated them from other European Jews, he was soon to learn that this act did not suffice to convince the anti-Semites. Despite his efforts to save French Israelites from hatred, the anti-Semitism in his environment continued to grow. Bernard Lazare was to discover why and from where this immense wave of hatred sprang.

#### 4.4. Anti-Semitism

The standard antisemitic interpretations of anti-Semitism found its explanation in Jews themselves, in the figure of the eternal Jew, a Shylock-like usurer striving for domination over the whole world. To be sure, Lazare did not identify himself with this general figure when he published *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes*, declaring in its preface that "je ne suis ni antisémite, ni philosémite; aussi n'ai-je voulu écrire ni une apologie, ni une diatribe, mais une étude impartiale, une étude d'histoire et de sociologie" (Lazare 1894a, 39).

Nelly Wilson (1978, 90-91), strongly supported by Jean-Denis Bredin (1992, 120), argues, however, that the historical part of the book reflects Lazare's early anti-Semitism. In other words, Lazare's interpretation of the historical causes of anti-Semitism has been seen as antisemitic itself. I showed above that in the case of Lazare's very first contributions on the Jewish question the accusations of anti-Semitism levelled against him are based on a negligent reading of his texts and a bizarre conception of anti-Semitism itself. Now we need to have a closer look at *L'antisémitisme* in order to see if my argument is also valid in this case.

Throughout the book, Lazare identifies three factors from which anti-Semitism springs:

"Cela provient de trois choses: une qui est dépendante des Juifs: leur religion; la seconde, dont ils sont en partie responsables:

leur condition sociale; l'autre qui leur est extérieure: les conditions auxquelles ils ont été soumis." (Lazare 1894b, 120)

Lazare's basic argument from the beginning is that the Jews partly caused themselves their mishaps because the Jew was – due to her religion – an unsocial being. In other words, the basic feature of Jewish being was exclusivism which survived at all the times and in all the circumstances. By its nature, this exclusivism was both political and religious (Lazare 1894a, 43).

More precisely, Jewish exclusivism sprang from a peculiar politico-religious tradition which strengthened the Jews' self-understanding as a chosen people: "[p]our Israël la religion fut en même temps une éthique et une métaphysique, elle fut plus encore: elle fut une loi. Les Israélites n'eurent pas une symbolique indépendance de leur législation, non, il y eut pour eux – après le retour de la seconde captivité – Iahvé et sa loi, inséparables l'un de l'autre. Pour faire partie de la nation, il fallut accepter non seulement son dieu, mais encore toutes les prescriptions légales qui émanaient de lui et avaient un caractère de sainteté." (Lazare 1894b, 120-121)

The Jews knew they were the only people on earth who had made a contract with God and received a Law to be followed under all circumstances (Lazare 1894a, 51). In other words, in the Jewish ethical and political order the divine and the mundane were intertwined, while the religious and political order was one and the same.

It was this politico-religious tradition that made the Jews, in Lazare's understanding, self-exclusive. Wherever they went and settled they established their own exclusive community which formed "a state within a state". This is, of course, where the difficulties begin. As a religious political system Judaism is a national religion which binds Jews together effectively and leaves other people out. It leads the Jews to be faithful only to their own Law and customs. In the Diaspora the problem arises that the Jews refuse to submit to the political order of the host country. They withdraw into their own community and only respect their own Law. They tend to see themselves above other people (Lazare 1894a, 51-52).

It is this exclusivism which tends to perpetuate Jewish pariahdom. As a chosen people following the god-given law the Jews

refuse to change but cling to a tradition which they strive to keep intact over the centuries. It is precisely the Talmudic law which makes the Jews eternal conservatives and unwilling to give up anything of their tradition and culture. They are eager to make proselytes but newcomers have to accept the doctrine such as it is.

In the course of years, a peculiar Jewish character develops, a mixture of arrogance and obsequiousness which is a result of exclusivism and oppression. Arrogance springs from the conviction of possessing the Truth and belonging to the chosen people following the only true Law given by God, whereas obsequiousness springs from the necessity to acquiesce to everything under persecution, hatred and scorn (Lazare 1894b, 123-124).

Nelly Wilson sees this view as a "cruel portrait of the eternal Jew, permanent and primary cause of antisemitism". For her, "the approach is religious, symbolist, essentialist" which sees "the Jewish people and its religion as an unchanging essence" (Wilson 1978, 92).

At first sight this argument may not seem ill-founded. What else could be thought of the reasoning such as follows:

[m]ais il garda précieusement l'idée de sa suprématie, il continua à regarder avec dédain, avec mépris, tous ceux qui étaient étrangers à sa Loi. Son livre, le Talmud, animé d'un patriotisme étroit et farouche, le lui enseignait d'ailleurs. On a accusé ce livre d'être antisocial, et il y a du vrai dans cette accusation..." (Lazare 1894b, 130)

However, if one reads further, Lazare's reasoning begins to make sense. He points out that Jews are antisocial only relatively speaking, their Law has not remained uniform and their habits have changed in the course of history (Lazare 1894b, 130). This sounds quite reasonable also in modern times, but at the same time it raises the question of how it is possible that he simultaneously introduces completely contradictory ideas as to the history of the Jewish people: on the one hand he depicts them as stubborn traditionalists who keep on following their ancient Law and customs, and on the other he tells us that they have, after all, changed quite a lot.

Although it may seem paradoxical at first sight, I would like to suggest that Lazare is trying to tell us that both his arguments are valid at same time. He is trying to tell us, in other words, that there are certain conservative elements in the Jewish religion and tradition which have contributed to the exclusion and oppression of the Jews, but in reality, not all Jews have remained faithful to these conservative elements but have in many ways adjusted themselves to changing environments. However, what is decisive here is that in Lazare's mind these conservative elements have determined a kind of framework in which the Jews have acted in history, and that this is where the Jews' own partial responsibility for their historical fate springs. They have not only suffered from the acts and deeds of their oppressors, but their own responses to these deeds; their own acts and deeds have also played a role in their vicissitudes. Furthermore, it is this that standard Jewish histories do not usually admit.

An outline of the origins of Lazare's conception of Jewish pariahdom is not complete, however, without an important addition. This addition concerns his conception of Jewish assimilation. Lazare argues as follows:

”[C]ette aversion intolérante pour l'étranger a disparu. Le Talmud n'est plus lu par ces Juifs, et la morale talmudique, du moins la morale nationale du Talmud, n'a plus de prise sur eux. Ils n'observent plus les six cent treize lois, ils ont perdu l'horreur de la souillure, horreur qu'ont gardée les Juifs orientaux; la plupart ne savent plus l'hébreu; ils ont oublié le sens des antiques cérémonies; ils ont transformé le judaïsme rabbinique, en un rationalisme religieux; ils ont délaissé les observances familières, et l'exercice de la religion se réduit pour eux à passer quelques heures par an dans une synagogue, en écoutant des hymnes qu'ils n'entendent plus. Ils ne peuvent pas se rattacher à un dogme, à un symbole: ils n'en ont pas; en abandonnant les pratiques talmudiques, ils ont abandonné ce qui faisait leur unité, ce qui contribuait à former leur esprit.” (Lazare 1894b, 136-137)

What is taking place here, in my view, is a turn away from what

Arendt calls standard Jewish histories of the nineteenth century which saw the Jews as history-sufferers instead of history-makers (cf. JHR, 96). In other words, Lazare tries to prove that the Jews were not only victims of certain evil forces in history but also played their own part in it. Nowhere does he state that the fate of the Jews is solely of their own making, but he argues instead that the causes of anti-Semitism were produced *en partie* by the Jews themselves, that the Jews' own actions contributed to the course of events. As far as I can see, this is the first step towards recognizing the Jews' own responsibility for their actions which was later to become one of Lazare's basic arguments.

Further, in my estimation, it is important to bear in mind that Lazare criticized the Jews from the secular viewpoint of an unbeliever. Lazare did not share the religion of his brethren but approached it from without from the viewpoint of an assimilated, secularized Western Jew. He knew very little about the Jewish religion before his studies on anti-Semitism and was far more inspired and learned about the doctrines which spoke for an earthly socialist paradise which saw all religions as belonging to a certain phase of human development and doomed to disappear (Lazare 1894b, last chapter, esp. 282-283). As a result of this, it may be that part of his critique sounds ignorant to the ears of a believer. The right to external critique cannot, however, be denied on this basis and external critique is not, as such, a form of anti-Semitism.

Next, in the course of his treatment, Lazare powerfully questions the conception of unity and homogeneity of the Jewish communities and tries to show that they were highly hierarchical both economically and in a politico-religious sense. In his interpretation class divisions played an important role in Jewish communities, too. Here we come across a germ of his later understanding of Jewish double-slavery; an ordinary Jew is not only oppressed by the Gentiles but also by the rich members of her own community.

Finally, Lazare did not consider the inferiority of the Jews as an eternal and innate characteristic in the way the anti-Semites did, but saw it as a historically changing phenomenon which had survived in a variety of forms for almost two thousand years and which always sprang from specific historical circumstances. His point was

that certain important dimensions in the Jewish condition in relation to the societies where they lived remained almost unchanged for hundreds of years and this made anti-Semitism and the inferiority of the Jews seem eternal and forever the same.

For Bernard Lazare, the causes of anti-Semitism were national, religious, political and economic. A careful reader of *L'antisémitisme* and especially of its final chapter finds, however, one basic reason behind all these different forms of manifestation of anti-Semitism:

”A la base de l’antisémitisme de nos jours, comme à la base de l’antijudaïsme du treizième siècle, se trouvent l’horreur et la haine de l’étranger.” (Lazare 1894b, 267)

For Lazare, this is the permanent motive of anti-Semitism. But, again, there is nothing eternal in this interpretation. The argument is that as long as the horror and hatred of the stranger remains alive in this culture, new forms and manifestations of anti-Semitism may be expected because, in the final analysis, it is itself a manifestation of this basic cultural code.

I would like to suggest that recognition of the existence of the horror of the stranger reflects a change in Lazare’s own attitude. Four years earlier, in his first contributions on the Jewish question discussed above, he was still ruled by this cultural code which made him conceive of the eastern Jews as lesser human beings. Now he was going beyond his earlier view, discovering the cultural trick enshrined in it. However, he did not yet fully realize the specificity of the new extreme right and anti-Semitism as its doctrine. In other words, he was not able to see what distinguished modern anti-Semitism from earlier manifestations of hatred of the Jews. He could not foresee that this time anti-Semitism was to assume a highly organized form and establish the very core of the political doctrine of the extreme right which would lead to extreme consequences.

## 4.5. The Spurious Doctrine of Assimilation

”Je suis Juif et j’ignore tout des Juifs. Je suis désormais un paria et ne sais de quels éléments me refaire une dignité et une personnalité; il faut que je sache qui je suis et pourquoi je suis haï, et ce que je puis être.” (Lazare 1928, 64-65)

This is how Bernard Lazare defines his own situation as a Jew shortly before his early death when he was preparing a comprehensive work on the Jewish people. Much of his time during the last years of his life was spent travelling around and getting to know the realities of Jewish life in different corners of Europe, especially in the eastern corners such as Rumania ignored by him earlier. He no longer saw himself as a representative of a Sephardic élite on the top of Jewish hierarchy, but rather, as a member of a miserable nation dispersed all over the world.

The quotation above does not only refer to an uncertain self-identity and a search for a personal location in the human world but also to the general condition of the Jews as a traditionless pariah people without political self-understanding. More precisely, it refers to an unhappy condition of assimilation springing from a decision to break with roots and leading to a condition of remaining without an autonomous share of the human world.

In another fragment Lazare describes the situation of the Jews as follows:

”Réclamons sans cesse pour nos frères malheureux les droits d’homme, mais montrons-leur en même temps que l’assimilation n’est pas la fin de leur misère, mais au contraire la source de malheurs nouveaux.” (Lazare 1928, 164)

A few years earlier, Lazare had seen assimilation to Gentile culture as the only conceivable solution to the Jewish question. As this quotation shows Lazare’s argument has now turned full circle and he recognizes as the root of the Jewish mischief the *doctrine bâtarde* of assimilation (cf. Lazare 1901a, 134). In Lazare’s view it made the Jews abandon all their characteristics, individual and moral alike,

cut them off from their origin and history, drawing them away from each other and trying to be in all things like their Christian fellow citizens (Lazare 1898a, 2-3; 1901a, 134; cf. JP, 76).

As to assimilation, this was not, however, all that made it a spurious doctrine. Arendt points out that here Lazare deals with a phenomenon of Jewish life which the historian Jost called double-slavery dependence. It meant that a Jew was dependent, on the one hand, upon the hostile elements of her environment and, on the other, on her own highly-placed brethren who were somehow in league with the former, that is to say with the Gentiles (JP, 76-77).

Arendt quotes a telling passage in which Lazare argues that "je ne veux plus avoir contre moi non seulement mes propres riches qui m'exploitent et me vendent, mais encore les riches et les pauvres des autres peuples qui au nom de mes riches me persécutent et me traquent". (Lazare 1901a, 135; cf. JP, 76-77)

According to Arendt, Lazare was the first Jew to perceive the connection between these two elements and the fact that they were both equally disastrous for the pariah. From his experience of French politics he had learned that whenever the enemy seeks control, it uses some oppressed element of the population as its lackeys and henchmen, rewarding them with special privileges. This mechanism makes the privileged group of the oppressed element of the population refer to the misery of the disprivileged part of its own brethren whenever its own position is jeopardized. Thus, rich Jews sought protection behind the notorious general Jewish poverty in order to maintain their position and privileges (JP, 77).

In this situation Lazare concluded that it was not enough for ordinary Jews to rise to fight against their Gentile enemy. What was also necessary was to rouse the Jewish pariah to a fight against her assimilationist brother, the Jewish parvenu. In Lazare's understanding, there was no other way of saving her from the parvenu's inevitable fate, destruction (Lazare 1928, 41, 43). The pariah had nothing but suffering to expect from the domination of the parvenu and, in addition, it was the pariah who was destined sooner or later to pay the price of the whole wretched system (Lazare 1928, 44, 66; cf. JP, 77).

By beginning to fight the pariah does not, of course, immedi-



ately escape her pariah position. What happens, Arendt concludes, is that as soon the pariah enters the arena of politics and in so doing translates her status into political terms, she becomes perforce a rebel. Lazare's idea was that the Jew should come out openly as the representative of the pariah, because "le devoir de tout être humain attaqué est de se défendre" (Lazare 1898a, 10; cf. JP 77) and preserve her right to total development, her freedom to be himself. In other words, the pariah should relinquish once and for all the prerogative of the Schlemihl, cut loose from the world of fancy and illusion and come to grips with the world of men and women (JP, 77). In Lazare's view, "[l]'individu qui renonce à résister et qui ne sait pas se servir des armes qu'il a à sa disposition, cet individu abdique sa personnalité, consent à l'esclavage et par conséquent mérite de disparaître" (Lazare 1898a, 10).

Unfortunately, this is precisely the mistake of Western Jewry. Lazare argues: "il ne sut pas jouir dignement de sa liberté, il ne la considéra pas comme une chose qui lui était due, qu'on lui avait volée et qu'il reprenait, mais comme une chose qu'on lui accordait et qu'il devait mériter" (Lazare 1901a, 151). In Lazare's analysis, the Western Jew has, indeed, adopted the attitude of the beggar who eats from the rich man's table and has to be grateful for every crumb that falls into her mouth.<sup>8</sup> As a beggar, she is unable to fulfil her duties as a citizen even when political rights on the official level are granted to her (Lazare 1901a, 151; cf. JP, 77-78).

There is a highly demanding imperative contained in this view. In Lazarean terms, the pariah should feel that she is herself responsible for what society has done to her. In other words, every pariah who refuses to be a rebel is partly responsible for her own situation and therefore for the blot on mankind which it represents. This view stems, according to Arendt, from the general condition of humankind: "insofar as a man is more than a mere creature of nature...insofar will he be called to account for the things which men do to men in the world which they themselves condition" (JP, 78). In Arendt's view, there is no escape from this situation.

Lazare remained, however, quite alone in his rebellious ideas. Superficially, it might appear, Arendt points out, as though Lazare failed because of the organized opposition of rich, privileged Jews.

This was not, however, the principal reason for Lazare's failure, neither was it the parvenu nor the strength of the Gentile ruling class. Lazare himself was very aware that more serious and decisive was the fact that the pariah simply refused to become a rebel. There were two other strategies which she preferred. Either she assumed the role of beggar, feeding on the crumbs from the rich man's table or she played the revolutionary in the society of others but not in her own:

"Le démoralisation d'un peuple de pauvres et de persécutés, recevant la sportule de ses riches et ne s'était révolté que contre la persécution venue du dehors et non contre l'oppression du dedans. Révolutionnaires dans la société des autres et non dans la sienne. Ayant la béate admiration de ses riches, dont les honneurs rejaillissent sur le pauvre. Encore aujourd'hui dans les journaux juifs, on note les privilégiés qui arrivent aux honneurs. Il faut que le Juif s'émancipe en tant que peuple et dans sa nation." (Lazare 1928, 151)

In either case, "[s]he mortgaged [her]self to the parvenu, protecting the latter's position in society and in turn became protected by [her]" (JP, 78). Thus the pariah contributed to reproducing and prolonging the existence of a highly hierarchical system of relations lacking any solidarity.

Thus, in Lazare's interpretation, behind Jewish misery lies a system of organized charity and alms-giving which the parvenus among the Jewish people have contrived in order to secure control over it (Lazare 1901a, 151). The real tragedy of this system is the fact that once the pariah becomes a beggar she is worth nothing because she begs from those whom she ought to fight, and because she appraises her poverty by the standards of those who have caused it (JP, 78).

In sum, Lazare advocates neither assimilation and parvenuism on the one hand nor traditional schlemihldom on the other, but speaks for an organized double fight of conscious pariahs in order to achieve emancipation and political rights as Jews. In other words, the Jews ought to have the right either to establish political communities of

their own or to join political communities of Gentiles as Jews without abandoning their Jewishness. Simple assimilation is a false solution to the Jewish question because it does not really solve the basic problem: the inability of the European mind to deal with the stranger.

## 4.6. Jewish Nationalism

But why was it, after all, that the pariah refused to become a rebel? In Lazare's view it was because the Jews conceived their Jewishness in a wrong way: it was believed that the most important thing they shared with each other was a common religion. In other words they believed they were united by a religious bond (Lazare 1898a, 1-2).

Bernard Lazare was not, however, satisfied with this explanation. For him, it was, first of all, an identity of origin that constituted a link between the Jews (Lazare 1898a, 2). Secondly, the Jews were linked by a common history, which involved common traditions, customs, literature and philosophy. Although not all of them have survived equally, they have left, Lazare argues, their mark upon the Jews, given them habits and even a like attitude of mind as a result of which the Jews look upon things from the same angle. Lazare concludes that whenever a certain number of individuals have a common past, common traditions and ideas, they belong to the same group and constitute a nation. This, then is the justification of the link which unites the Jews: "[i]l y a une nation juive" (Lazare 1898a, 4).

From the viewpoint of the end of the twentieth century there seems to be nothing very radical in the notion of a common nationality as a basis for political identity and action. On the contrary, we have seen far too many times where ultra-nationalism can lead. This is why Lazare's Jewish nationalism deserves a further look. Is there anything which distinguishes it from those obscure doctrines which have caused nothing but exclusion, fanaticism and human suffering during the past two centuries? Does Lazare's Jewish nationalism differ from those versions of nationalist thinking which postulate the "nation" as some kind of natural and organic unit and erect

strong barriers of inclusion and exclusion?

Lazare argues that nationalism does not mean any kind of political or intellectual unification. He claims to stand, on the contrary, against every kind of homologation and homogenization of people under a stronger power because it inevitably leads to assimilation, to annihilation of all the specific and different traits of them (Lazare 1898a, 4).

More importantly, every human being has the right to develop herself in every fashion. In Lazare's view, this right must also be guaranteed to the Jews in an effective way. In this framework the question is, how to give this opportunity to millions of non-emancipated Jews who cannot even think about emancipation as a remedy for their situation (Lazare 1898a, 9).

Finally, in Lazare's utopia, the future organization of humankind is not made up of independent and strong nation-states, but will be a federation of free groups which are not organized in accordance with the capitalist system. The point is that these groups must be given a chance to set themselves up and take shape: the Jews should be given a chance to constitute a group among other groups. This is why Lazare sees the solution of the Jewish question in the development of Jewish nationalism. (Lazare 1898a, 10)

Lazare does not see this view as being in contradiction with commonplace notions of international socialism; in his view they share with each other the federative concept, the concept of a fragmented humanity made up of a multitude of cellular organisms. In other words, in this scheme future states are not strong and homogeneous nation-states, but are composed of freely organized autonomous groups.<sup>9</sup>

There is, however, one difference between socialist utopia and Lazare's ideas. In its ideal development socialist theory conceives that the cells which will come together are not based on any kind of ethnic, religious, or national tradition. For Lazare, the point is, that this kind of day has not yet arrived but is too far in the future. At the present time, people are not mature enough to organize themselves on the basis of some other type of affinity, but they wish to associate together by virtue of traditional principles:

”Ils invoquent pour cela certaines identités d’origine, leur commun passé, des façons semblables d’envisager les phénomènes, les êtres et les choses; une histoire, une philosophie commune. Il est nécessaire de leur permettre de se réunir.”  
(Lazare 1898a, 13)

For Lazare, nationalism is the expression of collective liberty and the condition of individual liberty. In his understanding a nation is an environment in which the individual can develop herself and expand in perfect fashion (Lazare 1898a, 10). Consequently, if one nation causes another nation to become dependent upon it, there will remain of the second nation only a certain number of denationalized individuals, persons who have lost their collective freedom (Lazare 1898a, 11).

Lazare concludes that for a Jew the word nationalism should mean freedom. The main point is not to seek to rebuild a Jewish state in Palestine and conquer Jerusalem, but to demand the right to dignity as a human being (Lazare 1898a, 12).

As a negative counterpart of this ”good nationalism” Lazare asserts that version of nationalism against which socialists fight. That nationalism is protectionist, exclusivist, chauvinistic, selfish, narrow and absurd. It leads peoples to set themselves up against each other as rivals and enemies whereas an authentic internationalism presupposes the existence of such nations which set up bonds of human brotherhood between each other (Lazare 1898a, 12).

In fact, Lazare’s nationalism presupposes the abolition of the politico-economic structure of present nations, suppressing the existing frontiers between them. In this framework Lazare sees nationalism and internationalism as complementary. For internationalism to take root, it is necessary that human groups should previously have won their autonomy; it is necessary for them to be able to express themselves freely, to be aware of what they are (Lazare 1898a, 13).

Together with defending nationalism Lazare wants to rescue human plurality. He states that men do have within their reach a certain number of general ideas which belong to the treasury of the species. However, every individual has her own special way of ex-

pressing these general ideas and conceptions. Human richness is built out of this variety. Thus, every human group is necessary and useful to mankind. It contributes in bringing beauty into the world, it is a source of forms, thoughts and images (Lazare 1898a, 14).

However, this ideal day is far away, and in the meantime the task of the Jews is to set themselves up as a group among other groups to assure them their freedom. Lazare emphasizes that it is through their own strength that they will free themselves:

”Que dès maintenant, ils sachent qu’ils ne doivent pas attendre un secours du ciel, ou bien l’aide de puissants alliés. Les Juifs ne trouveront de salut qu’en eux-mêmes. C’est par leur propre force qu’ils se libéreront, qu’ils reconquerront cette dignité qu’on leur aura fait perdre.” (Lazare 1898a, 15)

Thus, for Lazare Jewish nationalism was not, in the final analysis, a goal in itself based on an organic conception of nation as a “natural” entity but rather a means of resolving the problem of Jewish misery and discrimination and avoiding the false solution of assimilation. As an assimilated and more or less traditionless Jew he had learned by experience that assimilation did not offer a permanent solution to the Jewish question but rather turned the Jews against each other, encouraging them to choose personal strategies of parvenuism and reinforcing the hierarchical structures of Jewish communities. His practical and profoundly political attitude to Jewish nationalism is well reflected in the fact that he did not cherish any romantic or religious dreams of returning to the Holy Land but wanted, instead, to find a location for the Jewish people on European soil. He did not surrender in front of the anti-Semites who fiercely supported any idea of Jewish Exodus from Europe back to Palestine or any other corner of the world. He challenged both the Jewish tendency to reconcile oneself to everything in the face of Gentile supremacy and the Gentile desire to get rid of the Jews at any price. Thus he arrived at the notion of conscious pariahdom as a rebellious double fight against Jewish parvenuism and Gentile anti-Semitism.

## 4.7. Bernard Lazare and Zionism

Bernard Lazare was not, of course, the only advocate of Jewish nationalism in Europe but he was, rather, to become a critic of the mainstream version of it. His destiny was to remain uninfluential and even forgotten as an advocate of rebellious Jewish politics and nationalism whereas one of his contemporaries was to become the most influential figures in the Zionist movement. This man was Theodor Herzl (1860-1904).

Theodor Herzl was born in 1860 in Budapest where he spent his youth until 1878 when his parents decided to move to Vienna, planning a great future for their only son as a lawyer. He did finish his law studies without, however, either enthusiasm or any intention of dedicating his life to law. What arrested his attention was literature as he dreamt of a future as a famous and respected writer. In Vienna the centre of cultural life was theatre. Thus, it is not surprising that also young Herzl directed his literary endeavours into writing plays. In the course of years it turned out, however, that his talents lay not so much in play-writing as in journalism. He acquired his literary fame as a reporter for an esteemed Viennese newspaper, the *Neue Freie Presse*, first as its Paris correspondent and later as its literary editor in Vienna.

Young Herzl believed, with Bernard Lazare and many others, that assimilation was the only conceivable solution to the Jewish question. He felt that he was more of an Austrian patriot and a member of German culture as a Jew. He was fascinated with German nationalism without noticing its growing antisemitic undercurrent. He shared the general tendency of middle and upper class Jews to strictly distinguish themselves from miserable ghetto-Jews. Coming from Central Europe, for him the arrogant lines of distinction could not, of course, run between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, but rather between the new arrivals from the east – the *Ostjuden* – and their more assimilated precursors who were eager to adopt the attitudes as well as the looks and manners of their Teutonic fellow citizens (Pawel 1989, 43-44).

The first germ of Herzl's later Zionism lay, however, precisely in his aristocratic arrogance as it directed him to blame and criti-

cize not the aliens as such but the ghetto as a source of Jewish misery on the one hand, and a hypocritical middle-class as a source of moral corruption and intellectual vapidty on the other. In other words, he instinctively directed his mockery towards the circles of parvenuism without noticing that his criticism was in contradiction with his general idea of the blessings of assimilation.

However, it happened to him as it did to Bernard Lazare. Either Herzl could not for ever close his eyes in the face of growing anti-Semitism although he first thought identically with Lazare that it was not directed against good, assimilated, patriotic Jews.

The life-histories of these two men strikingly resemble each other in certain respects. Both came from assimilated, fairly well-to-do middle class families assuming a secular philosophy of life. As young men both of them sincerely believed that assimilation offered the only possible solution to the Jewish question. Both of them admired the literary and other cultural heritage of their home countries and wanted to share this with the Gentiles.

To a certain extent, also their political experiences and development resemble each other. In one of her first articles written in the United States, *From the Dreyfus Affair to France Today*, (1942) Arendt makes a comparison between the political profiles of these two men. For her, the most significant point in common between them was the fact that both of them were turned into Jews by anti-Semitism, as its growth opened their eyes to the fact that assimilation was not, after all, only a simple question of time to be achieved in the near future. On the contrary: "Both realized just because they were so "assimilated" that normal life was possible for them only on the condition that emancipation should not remain a dead letter, while they saw that in reality the Jew had become the pariah of the modern world" (Arendt 1942, 236-237). This realization did not, however, turn Herzl and Lazare back to Judaism as a religion but they did come back to it as a cultural and national heritage.

Secondly, as intellectuals they also observed their own brethren from a critical distance. In other words, they could not uncritically join "those narrow and parochial Jewish cliques which had somehow grown up within the framework of gentile society" (Arendt 1942, 237). They belonged to those who had escaped the



ghetto and turning back to Judaism "[it] could no longer mean to them a religion, yet to neither could it mean a half-hearted adherence to one of many cliques" (Arendt 1942, 237).

On the contrary, Arendt argues, for Herzl and Lazare their Jewish origin had a political and national significance. They could find a place for themselves in Jewry only if the Jewish people was a nation, i.e. a political entity drawn together by common political problems and common political goals.

This is why, in Arendt's mind, both men came into serious conflict with the forces which then controlled Jewish politics. These forces were formed by philanthropists who did not seek a political solution to the Jewish question but contented themselves with providing financial help to the poor. Arendt argues that in these conflicts both men "were to learn that the Jewish people was threatened not only by the anti-Semites from without but also by the influence of its own "benefactors" from within" (Arendt 1942, 237). Both Herzl and Lazare thought, indeed, that philanthropy could not offer a sincere solution to Jewish misery but rather constituted a mechanism for keeping the needy in subjection (cf. Arendt 1942, 237, footnote 155; Herzl 1922c, 218).

Despite these similarities between Herzl and Lazare, there were, however, also significant differences between them. The Dreyfus Affair made them, in fact, draw opposite conclusions as to what kind of Jewish politics was needed. Whereas Bernard Lazare began his search for political space for Jews on European soil, Theodor Herzl concluded that the only possible solution to the Jewish question was deliverance in a homeland. First he thought that it should not necessarily be Palestine, but for instance Argentina would do equally well. Decisive in his reasoning, however, was the conviction that there was no future for the Jews in Europe as all the European nations were antisemitic. In other words, he did not believe that the Jews could find a political location in Europe through united political fight against their foes and that in this fight anti-Semitism, too, could be overcome. On the contrary, he was convinced that anti-Semitism would vanish only with the concrete disappearance of the Jews from European soil (Herzl 1896, 21; Arendt 1942, 238).

This conviction led him even to the conclusion that anti-Semites

would be, in fact, the staunchest friends of the Zionists and antisemitic countries would be the Jews' best allies (Herzl 1922c, 93) as "the more antisemitic a man was the more he would appreciate the advantages of a Jewish exodus from Europe" (Arendt 1942, 238). In other words, he believed that the Zionists and anti-Semites had a common goal and that they could work happily together for the foundation of a Jewish state.

Another significant difference between Herzl and Lazare was in their way of acting politically. Whereas Lazare spoke for a Jewish mass movement and a double-fight against both Gentiles and Jewish parvenus alike, Herzl preferred from the outset high diplomacy. For him, in fact, Zionism was a personal project without any need for a mass basis. Even before the Zionist organization was founded in 1897, he started shuttling between European courts and significant Jewish bankers. His idea was to create a system of financing with which an efficient exodus could be organized and a piece of land bought in Palestine. In this the support of European great powers was needed and he believed that the easiest way to get it was to negotiate personally with political leaders. In other words, Herzl's idea was that politics must be conducted from above (cf. Arendt 1942, 239). He saw democratic ideals purely as a nuisance and a hindrance for effective politics.

Bernard Lazare and Theodor Herzl met each other for the first time in Paris in 1896 when both of them were already engaged in the Jewish question. Lazare did not, however, participate in the foundation of the Zionist organization as he was too busy with the Dreyfus Affair. When he arrived at the second Zionist congress in 1898 he was welcomed as a hero of the Affair and elected to the Action committee.

His disagreements with Herzl, which mostly concerned the undemocratic leadership of the organization, began immediately. To begin with, Lazare criticized Herzl's plan for foundation of a Jewish colonial bank. In Lazare's mind such a project should have been administered democratically while Herzl pushed his idea through without any democratic debate whatsoever (Lazare to Herzl January 4, 1899, 355; cf. Bredin 1992, 320)<sup>10</sup>.

Another disagreement concerned the Zionist workers' associa-

tions which did not have their own delegates on the Action committee. Lazare supported Saul Landau's proposal to include delegates from the existing associations but it was rejected. The congress also decided not to discuss the social conditions of the Jews in diverse countries. The final shock for Lazare was, however, a decision to send a telegram to the Sultan of Turkey: he began to take a critical distance from Herzl and the Zionist movement (cf. Bredin 1992, 320-321).

He stayed in the Action committee until March 1899, corresponding fiercely with Herzl and disagreeing with him about almost everything. He did not accept Herzl's court diplomacy with the Sultan and the Emperor of Prussia. He disliked the way the bank project was promoted. Above all, he disliked Herzl's politics from above which founded a government before creating a people:

"Vous êtes des bourgeois de pensée, des bourgeois de sentiments, des bourgeois d'idées, des bourgeois de conception sociale. Étant tels vous voulez guider un peuple, notre peuple, qui est un peuple de pauvres, de malheureux, de prolétaires. Vous ne pouvez le faire qu'autoritairement en voulant les conduire vers ce que vous croyez être le bien pour eux. Vous agissez alors en dehors d'eux, au-dessus d'eux: vous voulez faire marcher un troupeau. Avant de créer un peuple, vous instituez un gouvernement agissant financièrement et diplomatiquement et ainsi, comme tous les gouvernements, vous êtes à la merci de vos échecs financiers ou diplomatiques. Comme tous les gouvernements vous voulez farder la vérité, être le gouvernement d'un peuple qui ait l'air propre et le summum du devoir devient pour vous de 'ne pas étaler les hontes nationales'." (Lazare to Herzl, February 4, 1899, 358)

Lazare refused to support this kind of authoritarian government. He preferred, instead, to take his place among suffering Jewish people. More precisely, in his view the most urgent task of the Zionists was to recreate the Jewish nation because a solid and far-reaching Jewish politics could only be based on united action of the entire people:

”Or, je suis moi pour qu’ on les étale, pur qu’ on voie le pauvre Job sur son fumier, raclant ses ulcères avec un tesson de bouteille. Nous mourrons de cacher les hontes, de les ensevelir dans des caves profondes, au lieu de les porter à l’air pur, pour que le grand soleil les purifie ou les cautérise. Notre peuple est dans la boue la plus abjecte: il faut retrousser nos manches et aller le chercher là où il geint, là où il gémit, là où il souffre. Il faut recréer notre nation, voilà pour moi l’œuvre solide, l’œuvre forte et surtout l’œuvre première... Votre faute c’est d’avoir voulu faire d’une banque le moteur de votre œuvre, une banque n’est jamais, ne sera jamais un instrument de relèvement national, et quelle ironie de faire d’une banque le fondateur de la Nation juive!” (Lazare to Herzl, February 4, 1899, 358)

Although Lazare finished this letter affirming his everlasting friendship despite all the disagreements, the routes of these two men were obviously parting. In March Lazare wrote a letter of resignation from the Action committee. He declared that he could no longer participate in the work of the committee because he could not approve its acts and decisions: ”Je ne puis pas faire partie d’une sorte de gouvernement autocratique, érigeant en principe un inacceptable ésotérisme que rien ne peut justifier à mes yeux. Le comité d’action prétend diriger la masse juive comme un enfant ignorant, sans interroger ses besoins ni ses aspirations, sans tenir compte de son état économique, intellectuel et moral.” (Lazare to Herzl, March 24, 1899, 360)

He repeated his conviction that the foundation of the Jewish colonial bank was a mistake which would become an instrument of oppression and demoralization. Resigning from the Zionist movement did not, however, mean resignation from the Jewish people: ”Mais si je me sépare de vous, je ne me sépare pas du peuple juif, de mon peuple de prolétaires et de gueux, et c’est à sa libération que je continuerai à travailler, quoique par des voies qui ne sont pas les vôtres.” (Lazare to Herzl, March 24, 1899, 360)

This letter sealed Lazare’s and Herzl’s break. Lazare went his own way without wasting his time and energy on internal fighting in the Zionist organization. The determination to abstain from such

fight is reflected in his refusal to Chaïm Weizmann to give a speech at a counter congress of young Zionists in 1901 (see Bredin 1992, 326).

Lazare also abstained almost totally from a public fight with Herzl. Only once did he attack the latter publicly in an article on Armenian Jews in 1902. Lazare could not understand the point of Herzl's "operetta diplomacy" with the Sultan at the same time as the Turks were persecuting the Armenians (see Bredin 1992, 326).

For Arendt, the fundamental difference between Lazare and Herzl lies in their attitudes towards their own people. She points out that Lazare's criticism of his people was at least as bitter as Herzl's, but he never despised them, whereas Herzl never got rid of his aristocratic arrogance and scorn for the masses of poor ghetto Jews (Arendt 1942, 239). This disdain of ordinary Jews was reflected in Herzl's conviction that politics must be conducted from above. Lazare, on the contrary, never gave up his democratic ideals, insisting on the need for education in order to raise the Jewish masses to a level where they would be able of conducting their political fight.

The love of his people led Bernard Lazare to almost total political isolation: "Faced with the alternative of remaining politically ineffective or of including himself among the élite group of saviours, he preferred to retreat into absolute isolation where, if he could do naught else, he could at least remain one of the people" (Arendt 1942, 239). He spent the last years of his life with his people travelling in eastern Europe and writing about the misery of the Jews in Russia and Rumania (see e.g. Lazare 1902).

#### **4.8. The Conscious Pariah**

Bernard Lazare grew up in an assimilated bourgeois environment and recognized Jewish assimilation as a solution to Jewish misery. Growing anti-Semitism, however, directed his attention to the Jewish question. In the course of the years he abandoned his early conviction of the blessings of assimilation. In this chapter, I showed that this change of mind was not the result of a sudden or abrupt

awakening, but rather, the result of a longer development during which Lazare tirelessly revised his own ideas.

Above, I located the first germs of the idea he developed later of conscious pariahdom as a double-fight against both Jewish parvenuism and Gentile anti-Semitism in his – at first sight highly biased distinction – between Israelites and Jews. I argued that with this distinction he wanted to rescue French Jews from antisemitic attacks. Initially, he saw the French Jewish community as a community of equal and good Israelites disturbed by a foreign, rich and wicked element among them.

Step by step he was to realize that the decisive distinction among the Jews was not so much that between French and other Jews but rather that between parvenus and pariahs. In other words, what really separated the Jews from each other was their attitudes to assimilation. He identified in the strategy of assimilation a spurious doctrine which made Jews turn against each other and search for individual strategies to climb up the social ladder of Gentile society and compete with each other for the approval and acceptance of the Gentiles, hiding, at the same time, their Jewish background and characteristics as well as they could. Related to this insight he began to see that the French Jewish community was as unequal, undemocratic and hierarchical as other Jewish communities and human communities at large.

The distinction between the conscious pariah and the parvenu reveals that the hierarchies do not exist solely between Jewish communities but also within them. Getting to know the eastern Jewish communities revealed to Lazare that the idea of Sephardic superiority maintained by French Jews was false and contributed to the perpetuation of the position and privileges of the French Jewish upper class.

Further, Lazare discovered that because of the inner hierarchies of the Jewish communities there was not and there could not be any organic solidarity between Jewish people; the idea of solidarity had to be reintroduced to Jewish thought on a political basis, referring to the bond between rebellious pariahs against both the parvenus of their own brethren and the Gentiles.

Finally, Lazare never gave up the idea of the partial responsi-

bility of the Jews but insisted on the importance of their own role in their vicissitudes in history. The notion of conscious pariahdom, in fact, is based on the conviction that one cannot escape partial responsibility for one's own political fate. The conscious pariah recognizes the fact that reconciling oneself to everything would mean contributing to the prolonging of the prevailing state of affairs and giving silent support to the existing political order. Although taking the initiative does not guarantee the result of an action, it is characteristic of the conscious pariah that she does not hesitate in the face of oppression and discrimination but rebels openly against it.

The tradition of conscious pariahdom was, however, to remain hidden as Bernard Lazare did not find support for his ideas. Most Jews wanted to stay with either traditional philanthropism or Herzlian Zionism.

#### **4.9. From Traditional Pariahdom to Modern Conscious Pariahdom**

The implementation of the Final Solution in the Third Reich showed in a dramatic way that the traditional ways of dealing with one's Jewishness were no longer relevant. In 1944, when there was no longer doubt about the immensity of the death machinery of Nazi Germany, Hannah Arendt concluded:

"So long as the Jews of Western Europe were pariahs only in a social sense they could find salvation, to a large extent, by becoming *parvenus*. Insecure as their position may have been, they could nevertheless achieve a *modus vivendi* by combining what Ahad Haam described as "inner slavery" with "outward freedom". Moreover those who deemed the price too high could still remain mere pariahs, calmly enjoying the freedom and untouchability of outcasts. Excluded from the world of political realities, they could still retreat into their quiet corners there to preserve the illusion of liberty and unchallenged humanity. The life of the pariah, though shorn of political significance, was by no means senseless....

Social isolation is no longer possible. You cannot stand aloof from society, whether as a *schlemihl* or as lord of dreams. The old escape mechanisms have broken down, and a man cannot be a human being either as a *parvenu* using his elbows or as a *pariah* voluntarily spurning its gifts. Both the realism of the one and the idealism of the other are today utopian.” (JP, 89-90)

Hannah Arendt was as shocked and perplexed as most other people at the news coming from Europe according to which the Jews were not only being destroyed on a mass scale but were also contributing to their own destruction by co-operating with the Nazis. Unlike many others, however, she was not satisfied with explanations which sought an answer in the impossibility of resistance against an inhuman and monstrous evil. In other words, she refused to view the Jews as innocent victims of evil forces, and she refused to view Nazi rule as an unexpected and exceptional form of inhuman horror. She believed that the matrix of Nazism could be traced from European political history, as well as the political inability of the Jews could be traced from the political history of the Jewish people. It had to do with the apolitical tradition of the Jewish people. It had to do with the traditional answers adopted by Jews to their exclusion as the destruction of European Jewry had led to a situation in which both “[t]he pariah Jew and the *parvenu* Jew are in the same boat.... Both are branded with the same mark; both alike are outlaws” (JP, 90).

The conclusion that the traditional ways of dealing with one’s pariahdom were no longer relevant did not mean that Arendt disdained the traditional pariah existence as simply stupid and worthless. On the contrary, on many occasions she spoke about it warmly and in an appreciative manner. In 1964 she characterized the pariahdom of her own childhood as follows:

”But it was something very beautiful, this standing outside of all social connections, the complete open-mindedness and absence of prejudice that I experienced, especially with my mother, who also exercised it in relation to the whole Jewish community. Of course, a great deal was lost with passing of all that.



One pays for liberation.” (Arendt 1965, 17-18)

Indeed, Arendt conceives the pariah community as an exceptionally human community full of special charm, intensity, warmth and humanity which can develop only under special circumstances:

”This kind of humanity actually becomes inevitable when the times become so extremely dark for certain groups of people that it is no longer up to them, their insight or choice, to withdraw from the world. Humanity in the form of fraternity invariably appears historically among persecuted peoples and enslaved groups.... This kind of humanity is the great privilege of pariah peoples; it is the advantage that the pariahs of this world always and in all circumstances can have over others. The privilege is dearly bought; it is often accompanied by so radical a loss of the world, so fearful an atrophy of all the organs with which we respond to it – starting with the common sense with which we orient ourselves in a world common to ourselves and others and going on to the sense of beauty, or taste, with which we love the world – that in extreme cases, in which pariahdom has persisted for centuries, we can speak of real worldlessness. And worldlessness, alas, is always a form barbarism.” (Arendt 1965, 13)

Here, Arendt clearly refers to European Jews. Preferring for centuries to remain isolated in their pariah communities without rebelling against exclusion, they did not achieve a sense of political reality which can be born only in the commonly shared world.

In *The Human Condition* Arendt compares the world with a table between people which prevents them from falling over each other but at the same time relates them to each other (HC, 52-53). In the pariah community, this interspace between people, which kept them at a distance from one another, disappears and people fall exceptionally near each other. In this nearness a striking warmth of human relationships is produced which is frequently a source of exceptional vitality, kindness and goodness. The worldless pariahs enjoy the privilege of being unburdened by the care of the world (Arendt 1965, 13-14).

There is, however, a price to be paid for the exceptionally human atmosphere of the pariah community. This is the lack of a common world and a sense of reality. In the Arendtian sense, reality is constituted by appearing in the world (cf. HC, 50). Consequently, the pariahs live in a kind of irresponsible irreality; all they have is the warmth and kindness born in this almost inhuman nearness. The price to be paid for the humanity of the pariah community is a profound political innocence which easily turns into paralyzing ignorance and an unwillingness to face one's own situation in political terms.

Thus, the warmth of the pariah community cannot be but a false substitute for a common world which constitutes a sense of political reality. It is a survival strategy of those who are not able or willing to constitute a common world in action and speech with other people. As such, it can never replace the common world, but can only provide the pariahs with a provisory asylum.

In the best case, this asylum may constitute a loop-hole from which to critically consider the world as Rahel Levin did. She finally overcame political ignorance by admitting her inescapable pariahdom but remained powerless due to the lack of allies with whom to organize an open fight against oppression.

The most important problem of traditional pariah existence lies in the fact that it may develop into a self-prolonged condition of worldless irresponsibility. In other words, it may produce a view of pariahs as history-sufferers who are only innocent victims of hostile and evil forces around them. In this view, the pariahs' own actions and decisions do not play any role whatsoever.

In Arendt's view, the problem with European Jewry as a pariah people proved to be that it never succeeded in transgressing the framework of traditional pariahdom characterized by political ignorance and inability. In other words, it refused to organize itself politically into a common fight against both Gentile oppressors and assimilationist Jews, demanding the opportunity for an autonomous political existence as Jews. The Zionist movement proved to be far too Palestine-centred to offer any alternative to those Jews who searched for a solution to the Jewish question on European soil. On the contrary, many Zionists considered anti-Semitism an eternal

phenomenon which would disappear only with the disappearance of the Jews. Jewish leaders upheld the insight of the Jews as history-sufferers who cannot but blame their oppressors for everything.

In Hannah Arendt's pariah gallery, it was Bernard Lazare who declared that the pariahs could no longer withdraw into the traditional pariah community, breaking away from their own partial responsibility for their political destiny. This is what makes of Lazare a representative of modern conscious pariahdom.

The starting point for Lazare's conscious pariahdom is the conviction that it is every human being's duty to resist oppression. This insight enshrines a view according to which no human being is solely an object of the deeds of others but that everyone is responsible for her own acts and deeds. In other words, although no one is an omnipotent master and architect of her own fate, everyone contributes to the vicissitudes of history.

Thus, the modern pariah cannot choose the alternative of traditional pariahdom because it leads to the rejection of personal responsibility. What is demanded from the modern pariah, instead, is an admission of the inescapability of personal responsibility. In other words, even though excluded from the world, the pariah is, in the final analysis, committed to it and cannot escape her accountability in relation to the human world.

In sum, Hannah Arendt never forgot the lesson of conscious pariahdom she learned from Bernard Lazare. Although she did not absorb Lazare's social-revolutionary version of Zionism word for word, she adopted from him a number of insights concerning the conditions of modern pariahdom. Most importantly, she found in Bernard Lazare the distinction between the conscious pariah and the parvenu which was to remain the basic conceptual distinction in her approaches to Jewish pariahdom. She thought, in line with Lazare, that instead of climbing the social ladder of Gentile society and becoming a parvenu, and "in contrast to his unemancipated brethren who accept their pariah status automatically and unconsciously, the emancipated Jew must awake to an awareness of his position and, conscious of it, become a rebel against it – the champion of an oppressed people" (JP, 76).

Related to this, she became very critical of Jewish assimilation

and began to see it as a politically false solution to the Jewish question and to the problem of political exclusion at large. Inscribed in this view of conscious pariahdom is the conviction that "every pariah who refused to be a rebel was partly responsible for his own position" (JP, 77). In other words, at the heart of Arendt's conception of pariahdom is the notion of the partial responsibility of the pariahs; although oppressed and excluded, they cannot wash their hands of what happens to them; their own choices and decisions contribute to the vicissitudes of their own history making them committed to the human world and human affairs.

Thirdly, Lazare strengthened Arendt's conviction that escape to Palestine was no solution for European Jewry, because in the course of two thousand years of Diaspora the Jews had become a European people and a solution to their exclusion should be sought in a European framework. This insight only reinforced itself after the destruction of European Jewry as it showed that the Jewish question was not only a question of Jews but concerned the whole of European culture and its (in)ability to deal with problems produced by itself.

The conception of the inescapability of personal responsibility was to constitute one of the cornerstones of Arendt's later political theory and concrete political analysis. She was to learn, however, that this view was not easily accepted among post-war American Jewry. It turned out that the tradition of conscious pariahdom remained as hidden as it had always been.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Neither did Arendt consider Rahel a suitable model figure of conscious pariah in her 1944 article on the hidden tradition of conscious pariahdom where she does not even mention her, but selects as accurate models Heinrich Heine, Charlie Chaplin (whom she treats as if he was a Jew), Bernard Lazare and Franz Kafka (see JP).

<sup>2</sup>In 1940 Arendt was interned in Gurs. She succeeded in getting liberation papers in the chaos caused by the defeat of France. She did not return to Paris but went to Montauban to a friend's house. In January 1941 she left for Lisbon with her second husband, Heinrich Blücher, whom she

had married the previous year. In spring 1941 the couple left for America.

<sup>3</sup>When Hannah Arendt arrived in Paris she was deeply disappointed with German intellectuals who gave in to the changed political climate at the outset of the Nazi era and even attempted to "rationalize" Nazism after 1933 (see Arendt 1965, 10-11). She was probably most disappointed with Heidegger whose thought had deeply inspired her during her university studies. This disappointment is reflected in her article on Existenz philosophy in 1946. In a footnote she points out that "[in] his political behavior... Heidegger has provided us with more than ample warning that we should take him seriously. (As is well known, he entered the Nazi Party in a very sensational way in 1933 – an act which made him stand out pretty much by himself among colleagues of the same calibre. Further, in his capacity as rector of Freiburg University, he forbade Husserl, his teacher and friend, whose lecture chair he had inherited, to enter the faculty, because Husserl was a Jew. Finally, it has been rumored that he has placed himself at the disposal of the French occupational authorities for the re-education of the German people)...Heidegger is really (let us hope) the last Romantic...whose lack of responsibility is attributable to a spiritual playfulness that stems in part from delusions of genius and in part from despair." (Arendt 1946c, 187)

<sup>4</sup>The notion that anti-Semites could be influenced by rational argumentation was widely adopted in the Zionist movement. Many Zionists, Herzl among them, believed that anti-Semites were the Jews' "best friends" in the sense that both of them had the same goal: to move the Jews away from Europe. Thus it was assumed that an agreement with the anti-Semites could be achieved as to how the Jews' escape from Europe would be organized. Cf. subchapter 4.7. below.

<sup>5</sup>Originally his name was Lazare Marcus Manassé Bernard but he assumed Bernard as his first name and Lazare as his family name with the publication of his first literary work in 1888 (see Wilson 1978, 3).

<sup>6</sup>Becoming forgotten was not, however, total. Charles Péguy (1910) and Léon Blum (1935) wrote about him in their memoirs. The first biography of Lazare by Baruch Hagani appeared in 1919.

<sup>7</sup>The Italics are mine. Here we come across one of Arendt's transcontextualizations: in 1944 she repeats this phrase almost word by word when discussing Chaplin's tramp as a Schlemihl-pariah. She points out that "*the punishment does not always fit the crime* (my italics again), and that for the man who is in any case suspect there is no relation between the offense he commits and the price he pays" (JP, 80).

<sup>8</sup>Surprisingly enough, this expression reappears in Arendt's Eichmann book

in a connection where she discusses the scanty of the evidence that the defence brought to court. She notes that the defence mostly used the material prepared by the prosecution and remarks: "Obviously, the defense had received the crumbs from the rich man's table" (EJ, 221).

<sup>9</sup>Here, there is a step away from conceiving of political agency in spatial terms, as a spatially organized unit of a more or less homogeneous group. Arendt shared the dream of fragmented humanity with Lazare and the socialists. She expressed it to Jaspers in a letter after the Second World War: "Woran mir liegen würde, und was man heute nicht erreichen kann, wäre eigentlich nur eine solche Änderung der Zustände, daß jeder frei wählen kann, wo er seine politischen Verantwortlichkeiten auszuüben gedenkt und in welcher kulturellen Tradition er sich am wohlsten fühlt. Damit endlich die Ahnenforschung hüben und drüben ein Ende hat." (Arendt to Jaspers, June 30, 1947, Arendt 1985, 127)

<sup>10</sup>Lazare's letters to Herzl were edited and published as an appendix in Silberner 1953.

## 5. The Hidden Subtexts of Arendt's Postwar Political Writings

### 5.1. Bernard Lazare in Arendt's Postwar Texts

One might speculate with the idea that as a journalist and a man of action Bernard Lazare was not so much an intellectual as a political model for Arendt. This holds, of course, partly true: what is at stake in the notion of modern conscious pariahdom is an active political response to a situation of oppression and exclusion. Besides, it is not surprising that his impact on Arendt's thinking is not generally recognized as Arendt only rarely refers to him directly.<sup>1</sup>

However, in the present study, I have argued that also Lazare's ideas shaped Arendt's later theorizations and judgements on politics. Although Arendt never wrote an entire study on Bernard Lazare his ideas survived in Arendt's texts. This does not mean that she remained faithful to them, repeating them without change irrespective of context and connection. They rather constitute hidden "subtexts" in Arendt's writings which are always intertwined with a number of other subtexts and sources of inspiration.

More precisely, certain ideas adopted from Lazare constitute a framework of judgement which illuminates Arendt's approaches to questions related to action and responsibility in extreme situations. The most important of these is the notion of the responsibility of the pariah for her own acts and deeds and subsequent partial responsibility of the pariah for her own political fate which provides

Arendt with a critical perspective from which to evaluate and judge not only the acts and deeds of political outcasts but the conditions of political action at large.

This chapter deals with the manifestations of originally Lazarean ideas in Arendt's postwar political writings. I will consider how the ideas of pariahdom and responsibility are thematized in Arendt's texts from the postwar period. I will outline and discuss two different contexts in which these ideas play a significant role. The first of these covers the second half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s when Arendt dealt in her writings mostly with Zionism, Jewish history, totalitarianism and the political future of the Western world after the collapse of Nazi totalitarianism.

I will show that the thesis of the partial responsibility of the pariah for her own political fate emerges already here and not only in the Eichmann book in the 1960s. In the 1940s and 1950s it appears in two connections which are partly intertwined with each other. On the one hand, Arendt discusses the question of responsibility under totalitarian rule, contrasting and comparing it with conformism in modern mass society, and on the other hand she criticizes the Zionists' Palestine politics. In fact, the first "excommunication" of Arendt takes place precisely during this period as she plays herself out of Zionist circles as a result of her critique of Zionist politics.

Arendt recurrently attacked and criticized the American desire to conform and avoid self-critical thinking. I will argue that in her critique of conformism Arendt adapts the Lazarean critique of assimilation and acquiescence and her own critique of thoughtlessness<sup>2</sup> to the postwar American context. The notion of the incapability of personal responsibility adopted from Lazare provided Arendt with a loop-hole from which to critically consider postwar America and the entire Western world and – politically speaking – what she saw was not very encouraging.

In fact, in the framework of the Arendtian critique of conformism the great criminal of the twentieth century is the good *paterfamilias* who is always ready to turn into a mob man for the sake of his family's security. In the Arendtian perspective it turns out that modern mass society is, politically speaking, almost equally ex-



treme a situation as totalitarian rule: instead of cultivating civic virtues and encouraging political judgement it spurs on conformism and blind obedience. It threatens to destroy the public space of political freedom – the common world between us – making people curl into their private matters without insight or interest in public affairs (for Arendt's critique of modern mass society see HC). If mass society develops into a totalitarian regime it is as if normalcy and evil have changed places as the most normal of men become capable of committing the most horrible of crimes.

The second context of the responsibility of the pariah is Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial, published in 1963. It caused immense debate and Arendt became "excommunicated" for the second time. This time the excommunicators were American Jewish intellectuals. To this day nobody has been able to exhaustively explain why Arendt's report came in for such furious attack. Most of her critics admitted that she did not suggest anything entirely new which had not been said and heard before. Simultaneously, most of her critics argued that there was something impudent in her style of writing on Jewish co-operation and the banal evil of Eichmann's actions. I will suggest that Arendt's style is, indeed, the clue to the furious reaction. More precisely, I will argue that American Jewish intellectuals read a hidden critique of their own assimilation and conformism between the lines of the Eichmann book.

Moreover, I will show that what really directed Arendt's attention to the role of the Jewish Councils as well as to the banality of evil in Eichmann's case was her thorough conviction of the inescapability of personal responsibility of the pariah adopted from Bernard Lazare. I will argue that it was precisely this idea that illuminated Arendt's analysis of the role of the Jewish Councils. A careful reader of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is struck by its overall Lazarean tone of argument: Arendt is severe and ruthless in her judgement of the actions of the Jewish leadership, at the same time never criticizing ordinary Jews of anything. She compares the Jewish leadership to the figure of the conscious pariah coming to the conclusion that it failed to carry out that what – in Lazarean terms – is the duty of every human being, to resist oppression and parvenuism. In the Arendtian framework Jewish co-operation may be read

as an extreme chapter in traditional Jewish policy based on a mixture of eschatology, charity, appeal, negotiation, obedience, and acquiescence. In addition to Lazare's ideas, Arendt's evaluation of the Jewish leadership under Nazi rule was strongly shaped by Raul Hilberg's then recent interpretation of the destruction of European Jewry (see Hilberg 1961). These two sources are by no means in contradiction with each other; rather, they are complementary, being, surprisingly, virtually consistent in their general line of argument.

This chapter is not supposed to be a study of the reception of Arendt's ideas in postwar America. This is why I will not attempt to present an exhaustive analysis of everything Arendt wrote on the responsibility of the pariah after the Second World War. Rather, I try to show the recurrence of the theme of modern conscious pariahdom in Arendt's thinking by discussing a selection of representative articles. Even the question of why American Jewish intellectuals became so furious about her Eichmann book is dealt with in this very same framework. More precisely, my intention is not to decide if their rage was legitimate or not but rather to show an unrecognized undercurrent in their reaction which was due to the fact that Arendt managed to shake the very core of their survival strategy and philosophy of life.

## 5.2. Responsibility and Conformism

### 5.2.1. *Irresponsibility of the Paterfamilias*

"The totalitarian policy, which has completely destroyed the neutral zone in which the daily life of human beings is ordinarily lived, has achieved the result of making the existence of each individual in Germany depend either upon committing crimes or on complicity in crimes." (OGUR, 124)

This is how Arendt characterizes the German dilemma in 1945. During the war the idea of "collective guilt" or "collective respon-

sibility” of all Germans was widespread among both the Allies and the Nazis. However, Arendt never accepted this idea but searched for an alternative way of approaching the ”German problem”. For her, the problem was ”how to bear the trial of confronting a people among whom the boundaries dividing criminals from normal persons, the guilty from the innocent, have been so completely effaced that nobody will be able to tell in Germany whether in any case he is dealing with a secret hero or with a former mass murderer” (OGUR, 125).

She points out that in Germany, the number of those who are responsible *and* guilty is relatively small. At the same time there are many who share responsibility without visible proof of guilt and many who have become guilty without being in the least responsible. Moreover, among the responsible in a broader sense must be included those who aided Hitler’s rise to power and continued to be sympathetic to him (OGUR, 125).

In Arendt’s view, what characterizes those responsible in a broader sense is the fact that they did not know what they were doing. Although being co-responsible for Hitler’s crimes in a broader sense, they did not incur any guilt in a stricter sense. In fact, the greatest ”crime” of these people was their inability to judge modern political organizations. They became ”irresponsible correspondents” who supported the Nazi regime by following orders and acting as cogs in a machine of mass murder (OGUR, 125-128). In trying to understand what led people to act as cogs Arendt directs attention to the characteristic personality of these people, especially to the person who boasted of being the organizing spirit of the murder. This man was Heinrich Himmler.

Arendt argues that Himmler was neither a Bohemian like Goebbels, nor a sex criminal like Streicher, nor a perverted fanatic like Hitler, nor an adventurer like Göring. He was rather a good *paterfamilias* with all the outer signs of respectability, incapable of betraying his wife and anxious to seek a secure and decent future for his children (OGUR, 128).

For Arendt the real horror of the twentieth century lies in the fact that this kind of good family man was the greatest criminal of the century:

"We had been so accustomed to admire or gently ridicule the family man's kind concern and earnest concentration on the welfare of his family, his solemn determination to make life easy for his wife and children, that we hardly noticed how the devoted *paterfamilias*, worried about nothing so much as his security, was transformed under the pressure of the chaotic economic conditions of our time into an involuntary adventurer, who for all his industry and care could never be certain what the next day would bring...It became clear that for the sake of his pension, his life insurance, the security of his wife and children, such a man was ready to sacrifice his beliefs, his honor, and his human dignity." (OGUR, 128)

Thus, this man was prepared to do anything for the security of his family. The only condition he set was that "he should be fully exempted from responsibility for his acts" (OGUR, 129). In other words, the good family man of the twentieth century felt no responsibility whatsoever for public affairs, the only responsibility he felt being towards his own family.

What takes place here, in Arendt's analysis, is the transformation of the family man from a responsible member of society interested in public affairs into a "bourgeois" concerned only with his private existence. The bourgeois is the exact opposite of the *citoyen*. In other words, he is the modern man of the masses who is able to transform himself into the mob man and become an instrument of all kinds of madness and horror. If he is told that he is being held accountable for what he does, his only possible reaction is to feel that he has been betrayed (OGUR, 129-130).

The good family man is not, of course, a pariah. On the contrary, he is an accepted member of the existing regime be it a mass society or totalitarian regime. As such his relation to responsibility is different from that of the pariah. Whereas the pariah cannot assume responsibility for the polity from which she has been excluded, the family man refuses to assume responsibility which pertains to him. The result is a paradoxically irresponsible co-responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

However, what connects the family man to the pariah is the fact that both of them live in an extreme situation. In other words, in the

Arendtian framework, both modern mass society which transforms citizen into bourgeois and totalitarian rule which destroys the neutral zone of daily life and individual existence in it are unforeseen phenomena of the twentieth century where the nineteenth century's principles of political conduct are no longer valid. Although the family man and the pariah are not parallel figures they both come across the question of responsibility. The family man refuses to assume responsibility which pertains to him whereas the pariah as an outcast easily believes she is outside the realm of responsibility altogether. In other words, both figures easily imagine that responsibility does not concern them.

Nevertheless, in Arendt's view neither the family man nor the pariah can escape personal responsibility for their own acts and deeds. In other words, the family man's inclination to withdraw from all responsibility does not do away with the fact that he is co-responsible for the consequences of his own actions.

Arendt shared the refusal to accept the idea of collective guilt of the Germans with Jaspers who also intervened in the debate on the "German Problem". She helped him to get *Die Schuldfrage* published in English in an abridged version (see Jaspers 1946). Although Arendt and Jaspers largely agreed with each other on the problem of guilt, there also are some interesting differences in their argument which they discussed in their private correspondence.

Arendt did not accept Jaspers' definition of Nazi policy as a crime, which was based on his distinction between criminal, political, moral and metaphysical guilt. For Jaspers, the Nazis' criminal guilt stemmed from the fact that crimes are acts capable of objective proof and violate unequivocal laws. Jurisdiction rests with the court, which in formal proceedings can be relied upon to find the facts and apply the law (Jaspers 1946, 31).

For Arendt, the problem of this definition lies in the fact that the Nazi crimes explode the limits of the law. In other words, in contrast to all criminal guilt, the Nazis' guilt oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems. Moreover, the inhumanity of the Nazis' guilt is oddly paralleled by the inhumanity of the innocence of the victims: "So unschuldig wie alle miteinander vor dem Gasofen waren..., so unschuldig sind Menschen überhaupt nicht. Mit einer

Schuld, die jenseits des Verbrechens steht, und einer Unschuld, die jenseits der Güte oder der Tugend liegt, kann man menschlich-politisch überhaupt nichts anfangen." (Arendt to Jaspers, August 17, 1946, Arendt 1985, 90-91). Consequently, for the Nazi crimes, no punishment is severe enough.

Jaspers was not very comfortable with Arendt's critique because in his view a guilt that goes beyond all criminal guilt inevitably takes on a streak of satanic greatness which is inappropriate for the Nazis. Jaspers suggested that the Nazis' crimes should be seen in their total banality and prosaic triviality because that is what truly characterizes them. (Jaspers to Arendt, October 19, 1946, Arendt 1985, 98-99).

It is interesting to notice that Arendt did not yet fully accept Jaspers' idea of the banality of Nazi crimes. She replied that she accepted his criticism as far as satanic greatness was concerned. In other words, she admitted that she had come dangerously close to this concept which she did not accept. On the contrary, she thought that all impulses to mythologize the horrible should be combated in order to understand what went on (Arendt to Jaspers, December 17, 1946, Arendt 1985, 106).

Certain ideas were to develop further in Arendt's judgement of Nazism. As we will see below, she first proceeded to the conception of the radicality of evil presented in OT and it was only in her Eichmann book that she adopted the thesis of the banality of evil which was already maturing in Jaspers' thinking in the 1940s.

As the above discussion shows, Arendt was concerned with the theme of responsibility immediately after the war. In the context of the "German problem" she did not focus on the Jewish pariah but rather analysed the role of the ordinary man both under totalitarian rule and in modern mass society at large. In other words, she outlined and identified a type of modern family man which does not appear only under totalitarian rule but throughout the modern mass societies of the twentieth century. The irresponsibility of the modern family man and his unwillingness to consider the consequences of his blind desire to obey characterize modern mass society at large and not only its totalitarian variant.

It is important to notice a connection with Arendt's overall in-

terpretation of the origins of totalitarian regimes. She views them as manifestations of a rupture in relation to the European political tradition of the nineteenth century. But what precedes the emergence of a totalitarian system is precisely the emergence of modern mass society where republican civic virtues lose their value and ordinary people concentrate on their private matters (cf. OT). Thus, between the lines of her criticism of the family man under totalitarian rule there is criticism of the bourgeois of modern mass society at large: Arendt did not, after all, discuss only the "German problem" but she was already here discussing the "American problem", too.<sup>4</sup>

The astuteness of modern mass society lies in the fact that it is not based on coercion or violence. On the contrary, it is based on conformism "which needs no threats or violence, but arises spontaneously in a society that conditions each of its members so perfectly to its exigencies that no one knows that he is conditioned" (Arendt 1954c, 424).

The danger of conformism lies in the fact that it threatens freedom. In other words, "terror and violence may not be necessary in order for freedom to disappear" because "[t]he danger of conformism and its threat to freedom is inherent in all mass societies" (Arendt 1954c, 425). Arendt concludes that a transition from mass society to totalitarian regime could happen almost without notice:

"Under conditions of an already existing mass society...it is not inconceivable that totalitarian elements could for a limited time rely on conformism, or rather on the activation of a dormant conformism, for its own ends. In the initial stages, conformism could conceivably be used to make terror less violent and ideology less insistent; thereby it would serve to make the transition from a free climate into the stage of a pre-totalitarian atmosphere less noticeable." (Arendt 1954c, 425)

This discussion shows that for Arendt, the emergence of totalitarian rule was a permanent threat in the modern world of mass societies. The disappearance of political freedom would inevitably mean the disappearance of freely and openly assumed responsibility. Even

under contemporary circumstances "the non-violent coercion of public disapproval is so strong that the dissenter has nowhere to turn in his loneliness and impotence, and in the end will be driven either to conformity or to despair" (Arendt 1954c, 425). Thus, in shapeless mass society which threatens to destroy political freedom there seems to be scarcely a chance for the responsible pariah to appear on the scene: the tradition of conscious pariah seems to remain as hidden as it always has been.

### *5.2.2. Shortcomings of Zionist Politics*

During the 1940s Arendt carefully followed the developments of Jewish politics and Zionism. More often than not she was very critical towards the mainstream of Zionism, particularly its Revisionist branch. In 1945 she observed that the Revisionist programme had won the internal struggle regarding the Zionists' policy of Palestine. This was reflected in the 1944 resolution of the American Zionist Organization which demanded a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth which would embrace the whole of Palestine, undivided and undiminished (ZR, 131).

The point was that this time the Arabs were not even mentioned. Arendt ironically remarks that whereas in the earlier resolutions, such as the Biltmore Program of 1942, the Jewish minority had granted minority rights to the Arab majority, now the Arabs were left with a choice between voluntary emigration and second-class citizenship (ZR, 130). Even worse, if the Revisionists had really been able to decide on the fate of the Arabs, the result might have been a transfer of all Palestine Arabs to Iraq (ZR, 133).<sup>5</sup>

Arendt points out that in order to understand how the Zionists arrived at demanding the whole of Palestine for themselves without caring about the fate of the Arabs one needs to have a look at the history of Zionist movement. She reminds us that the movement was split from the beginning between the social-revolutionary forces of Eastern Europe and the aspiration for national emancipation as formulated by Herzl and his followers.

Originally, the social-revolutionary branch of the movement was



a people's movement springing from the eastern European Jewish masses. Unlike one might expect, this mass basis did not lead to a well developed political consciousness and the ability to take the circumstances in Palestine into account. On the contrary, when the socialist Zionists settled in Palestine they became self-centred and self-contented, not having even the slightest suspicion of possible national conflict with the present inhabitants of the Promised Land.

In Arendt's view, the entirely unpolitical character of the social-revolutionary Zionist movement was reflected in the fact that even though it was composed of rebels, these rebels did not rebel so much against the oppression of their own people as against ghetto life and injustices in social life in general (ZR, 137). In other words, they did not assume an attitude of conscious pariah of the Lazarean type, claiming the right to political existence as Jews on European soil.

Further proof of the unpolitical character of social-revolutionary Zionism was that not even the events of 1933 aroused the political interest of socialist Zionists in Palestine. Rather, they saw in them "a God-sent opportunity for an undreamt-of wave of immigration to Palestine" (ZR, 139). They did not oppose the decision to do business with Hitler, to trade German goods against the wealth of German Jewry, thus making a mockery of the boycott of German-made articles. In Arendt's analysis, consenting to the Nazi-Zionist transfer agreement is only one outstanding instance among many of the political failure of the aristocracy of Palestine Jewry who rather tended to avoid exercising their force in Zionist politics (ZR, 139).

Despite their revolutionary background the socialist Zionists did not level criticism at the Jewish bourgeoisie outside Palestine or attack the role of Jewish finance in the political structure of Jewish life. In other words, they did not rouse the Jewish pariah against her upstart or upper class brother in Lazarean terms. Despite their socialist ideas they did not attack the highly hierarchical and unjust structures of Jewish communities but rather implanted new hierarchies on top of which stood the *kibbutzniks*. Arendt concludes that "[t]hus the social-revolutionary Jewish national movement...has ended...not against the foes of the Jewish people but against its possible friends and present neighbors" (ZR, 140).

In Arendt's estimation, the so-called political Zionists of the Herzlian branch were not necessarily more politically aware in decisive respects than those of the social-revolutionary branch. The most fundamental mistake – shared by every branch of Zionism – lies in their conception of anti-Semitism. The political Zionists, too, viewed anti-Semitism as an eternal character of Gentiles. Arendt identifies three major problems with this view. Firstly, the notion of the eternity of anti-Semitism in a world eternally composed of nations denies the Jewish part of responsibility for existing conditions: in this framework the Jewish people appears as an innocent victim of evil forces without any contribution whatsoever to its own vicissitudes in history. Secondly, this attitude toward anti-Semitism led to a dangerous misappraisal of political conditions in each country. In other words, antisemitic parties and movements were taken at their face value, were considered genuinely representative of the whole nation and as such not worth fighting against (ZR, 147).

In addition, since anti-Semitism was taken to be a natural corollary of nationalism, the Zionists believed that it could not be foisted against that part of world-Jewry established as nation. In other words, once settled in Palestine, the Jews would be safe from their enemies (ZR, 149-150). Arendt ironically remarks that nothing proved to be more mistaken when Rommel's troops approached from North Africa.

Arendt also points out that Herzl developed an absurd doctrine of the nation as a group of people held together by a common enemy which led to the conclusion that without anti-Semitism the Jewish people would not have survived in the countries of the Diaspora. Subsequently Herzl realized that the anti-Semites were in fact the Zionists' most reliable friends since they shared a common goal (ZR, 148). Against this background the Zionists' negotiations and co-operation with the Nazis appear simply a continuation of a strategy assumed far earlier which did not distinguish between different Gentiles.

Another mistake made by the political Zionists was that they did not organize the Jewish masses into a common fight against a common enemy but rather imitated and copied the hierarchical structures of traditional Jewish communities, preferring to establish an

organization led from above. Jewish leaders were not interested in listening to the Jewish masses but preferred to use the ancient channels of charity and negotiating privileges for their own purposes.

It is in her critique of the elitism of Jewish leadership that Arendt most clearly draws from Lazare. She argues that Lazare was the only man in the Zionist Organization who ever demanded that the Jewish people should have been organized in order to negotiate on the basis of a great revolutionary movement. The Lazarean fight would, of course, have been the double-fight of the conscious pariah. The Lazarean alternative would have meant acquiring sufficient political strength to achieve freedom in political terms instead of being transported to freedom in a more or less eschatological framework (ZR, 152-153).

Arendt points out that in the course of centuries Jewish charity had come very close to organizing world Jewry into a curious sort of body politic. It was precisely charity, a leftover of the once autonomous Jewish communities, which had proved strong enough to prevent the destruction of the interrelationship of the Jewish people throughout the world. However, it was characteristic of this truly international organization that one had to be either on the receiving or on the giving end in order to be accounted for as a Jew (ZR, 145). In other words, a charity organization was far from capable of replacing a political organization of the Jews. It rather tended to prolong the hierarchical *status quo* of the Jewish communities and replace political activity with charity.

The "charity principle" was adopted also to Zionist "foreign policy". More precisely, analogically with the ordinary ghetto Jew who throughout the centuries had sought the protection of her wealthy brethren, the Zionists went on seeking the protection of the Great Powers, trying to trade it against possible services. Zionist leaders preferred court diplomacy and high level negotiations, imagining that political freedom could be bought with money.

It was Bernard Lazare's dream to combine the political freedom of Jewish people with "good nationalism". He sincerely believed that socialist nationalism could provide the framework of political organization for the Jews. In this respect, Hannah Arendt did not remain faithful to Lazare but conceived of all variants of

nationalism as politically equally dangerous. More importantly, she classified Zionism among the most dangerous manifestations of nationalism:

”It is nothing else than the uncritical acceptance of German-inspired nationalism. This holds a nation to be an eternal organic body, the product of inevitable natural growth of inherent qualities; and it explains peoples, not in terms of political organizations, but in terms of biological superhuman personalities. In this conception European history is split up into the stories of unrelated organic bodies, and the grand French idea of the sovereignty of the people is perverted into the nationalist claims to autarchical existence. Zionism, closely tied up with that tradition of nationalist thinking, never bothered much about sovereignty of the people, which is the prerequisite for the formation of a nation, but wanted from the beginning that utopian nationalist independence.” (ZR, 156)

Nevertheless, there was a point in common in Lazare’s and Arendt’s ultimate dream. Lazare, too, dreamt of a human world in which people would be freely organized in freely chosen political groups or cells on a non-national basis. Whereas Lazare considered this dream unrealistic, Arendt saw in it both Europe’s and Palestine’s only hope after the Second World War. More precisely, she spoke for a federative principle to be applied both in European postwar political re-organization and in Palestine, desperately warning that the establishment of a Jewish national state would be a serious mistake. Palestine should be shared with the Arabs in friendship and not divided in enmity (for Palestine see e.g. Arendt 1948b; 1950a, and for Europe e.g. Arendt 1950b; 1954a; 1954b; 1954c).

It is not surprising that due to these ideas there was no place for Hannah Arendt in the ranks of the Zionists. For a short period she found a kindred soul in Judah Magnes, the founding father of the Ikhud party who for decades had spoken for the federative principle (see Young-Bruehl 1982, 222-233). However, generally speaking Arendt remained isolated with her unconventional views and was practically excommunicated from the American Zionist community.<sup>6</sup>

## 5.3. The Case of Adolf Eichmann

### 5.3.1. *A Conscious Pariah in Jerusalem*

On May 13, 1962 Adolf Eichmann was hanged in Jerusalem. Two years earlier, on May 11, 1960 he had been caught in a suburb of Buenos Aires and smuggled to Israel by the Israeli intelligence service. Unlike many other escaped Nazi criminals, he was not sentenced *in absentia* at Nuremberg immediately after the war and would probably have lived under a false name in Argentina the rest of his life if the Israeli authorities had not wanted to bring him to court in Jerusalem.

Hannah Arendt attended the trial as a reporter for *The New Yorker* which published her account in February and March 1963. A revised version of the report appeared as a book later in the same year with the title *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. A storm was immediately followed both in America and Europe. Arendt was accused of all kinds of distortions, from those concerning the conduct of the trial to those of twisting historical facts. Although the attack on Arendt lasted three years and made her irrevocably and against her own will into a public figure, it was never able to destroy her reputation as a prominent scholar of totalitarianism and political theory.<sup>7</sup> However, it seems that the controversy never really ended. Today it is not uncommon to hear somebody calling the Eichmann book the best book Arendt ever wrote, but neither is it uncommon to see somebody heating up the old arguments against her as happened for example at Bard College in 1993 on the occasion of a conference on Mary McCarthy when the literary historian Alan Wald called Arendt "Hannah Eichmann" (see Brightman's preface to Arendt 1995b, xxviii).

Historical or other distortions of the facts were not, however, the fundamental reason why so many people were shocked about Arendt's report. In other words, the problem was not in the invalidity of the facts presented by Arendt but rather in her interpretive arguments. Among these arguments there are two theses, intertwined with each other, which are of great importance in the framework of the present

study and its theme. The first concerns the role of the Jewish Councils in the Final Solution and the second is the banality of evil.

The question of the role of the Jewish Councils in the Final Solution was not raised by Arendt but emerged in the trial, following faithfully the wide spread postwar debate over why the Jews did not resist or fight back. For Arendt this was not a problem. She was thoroughly aware of the fact that during the implementation of the genocide of the Jews there were no real opportunities for open rebellion. However, unlike the prosecution she was not satisfied with the average explanation of the impossibility of resistance under totalitarian rule. She considered it necessary to have a second glance at what the Jews, or more precisely the Jewish leaders actually did when faced with deportations. She argued that whatever the motives of the Jewish leadership might have been, they factually ended up supporting Nazi rule by co-operating with the Nazi authorities, thus facilitating deportations of the Jews.

The theme of the banality of evil is linked to Adolf Eichmann and his role in the Final Solution. Arendt's argument is that Eichmann was neither an architect of the plan of destruction of the Jews nor a particularly evil or perverse person. In his case the horror lies in the fact that he was too normal, even. In other words, he was basically an average and decent man who wanted to do his job well and follow orders without asking questions. The evil lies precisely in this unquestionable desire to follow orders because it connotes, in Eichmann's case, an incapacity to think, or to personally consider what one is exactly carrying out when following orders. In other words, he was the good family man discussed above. This kind of evil is banal because there is nothing inhuman, monstrous or Faustian about it. It is simply banal, average, mediocre. It is neither a mark of hopeless stupidity nor over-intelligent monstrosity but is rather a result of intellectual laziness frighteningly common to human behaviour both under totalitarian rule and in modern mass society at large.

What binds the Jewish Councils and the banality of evil together is the omission of responsibility. It did not occur either to Jewish leaders or to Eichmann that they might, with their unquestioning obedience, be contributing to something they did not really

want to. They simply believed they were doing what they had to do under the circumstances without assuming responsibility for their own acts and deeds. In other words, both of them were far too bound to their obligations to ever question the guiding principles of their own actions or tempted to speculate on the situation. Even worse, the Jewish Councils believed they could save many by sacrificing a few while Eichmann just did his job without personally considering the Jews as lesser beings worth destroying.

Even though Arendt's report was attacked in almost every detail most of the debate revolved around the Jewish Councils and the banality of evil. Thus one could imagine that these were the themes to which she dedicates most space in the book. Quantitatively, this is not the case. Arendt devotes some ten pages to the Jewish Councils and deals with Eichmann's personality in no more than a couple of chapters. She dedicates most space to a description of the proceedings of the trial and reporting on what emerged regarding the implementation of the Final Solution during the trial. However, the debate was right to push the themes of the Jewish Councils and the banality of evil to the forefront because they actually reveal the basic points of Arendt's argument.

In this section I will argue that there is a link between conscious modern pariahdom à la Bernard Lazare and Arendt's interpretation of the role of the Jewish Councils in the Final Solution. The notion of partial responsibility of the pariah appears dramatically in her "verdict" on the role of the Jewish Councils. In Arendt's view, although there is no chance for open resistance under totalitarian rule, there might have been an alternative of doing nothing<sup>8</sup> given that the result of co-operation could be foreseen.

I will show that what really directed Arendt's attention to the role of the Jewish Councils as well as to the banality of evil in Eichmann's case was her solid conviction as to the inescapability of personal responsibility of the pariah adopted from Bernard Lazare. I will argue that it was precisely this idea that illuminated Arendt's analysis of the role of the Jewish Councils. In addition, I will show that she leaned heavily on Raul Hilberg's interpretation of the role of the Jewish Councils.<sup>9</sup> Most of those who criticized Arendt also criticized Hilberg for leaning too heavily on German sources. How-

ever, one of the peculiarities of the Eichmann debate was that whereas Hilberg's study was accepted as an important contribution to the history of the Nazi regime, Arendt's report was condemned as ruthless and unfair, making the Jews guilty of their own destruction although most of her arguments were in line with Hilberg.

It must be emphasized that Arendt never drew an explicit and direct parallel between the Jewish Councils and Eichmann. However, she does not fully explain their relationship with each other but simply reports that which was reportable on the basis of the Jerusalem trial. In other words, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the connection between the role of Jewish Councils and Eichmann remains implicit. As to the book's reception, this proved to be fateful because most people were not willing or able to read between the lines the implicit part of Arendt's argument. In this section, I will argue that both the co-operative strategy of the Jewish Councils and Eichmann's blind zeal to push through the Final Solution at any price are expressions – in Arendtian terms – of the same basic unwillingness or incapacity to assume responsibility in a politically extreme and unprecedented situation. However, the (lacking) responsibility of the Jewish Councils and that of Eichmann cannot be completely paralleled with each other because of their different political position in relation to Nazi rule.

What is at stake in Eichmann's case is the political responsibility of a faithful member of the Nazi regime whereas in the case of the Jewish Councils what is at stake is the personal responsibility of political outcasts, the pariahs. In other words, even though Arendt in both cases proclaims the inescapability of responsibility, she makes a sharp distinction between the political responsibility of a member of the regime<sup>10</sup> and the personal responsibility of the pariah. Moreover, even though Arendt emphasizes that her discussion of the Jewish Councils concerns only those councils founded on the basis of Nazi ordinance from 1939 on, her criticism of Jewish politics in particular and her discussion of the importance of responsibility in general cannot be restricted to concern only those councils and those years. It was her basic conviction that in the modern world nobody can escape personal responsibility for one's own acts and deeds whatever the political circumstances may be.



### 5.3.2. *The Jewish Councils*

When discussing the role of the Jewish Councils in the Final Solution Arendt argued that the "role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story. It had been known about before, but it has now been exposed for the first time in all its pathetic and sordid detail by Raul Hilberg" (EJ, 117-118).

Hilberg was, indeed, very outspoken in his judgement of the role of the Jewish Councils. Having pointed out that in the course of centuries the Jewish communities had lost their capacity for open resistance, preferring a policy of alleviation and compliance which was based on ancient knowledge that their policy would result in least damage and least injury, he concludes that "[t]he Jewish community, unable to switch to resistance, increased its co-operation with the tempo of the German measures, thus hastening its own destruction" (Hilberg 1961, 17).

In the Jerusalem trial, a huge number of witnesses testified by recounting their own stories and experiences under Nazi rule. Eichmann, of course, gave his own testimony as to how the deportations were organized. However, these testimonies did not actually reveal anything new about the organization of the destruction of the Jews. On the contrary, together with Hilberg's book they only confirmed all that had been said thousands of times ever since the collapse of the Third Reich. Thus, the ambiguous role of the Jewish leadership in the organization of the deportations was a widely known fact the validity of which as such almost nobody questioned.

Hannah Arendt raises the question of Jewish leadership in a chapter which deals with the so-called Wannsee Conference where the Undersecretaries of State of the Third Reich gathered in January 1942 to coordinate efforts for the implementation of the Final Solution. The question of Jewish leadership emerges here almost inevitably because one of the decisive elements in the Nazi strategy of the genocide of the Jews was to get the victims to carry out their own destruction.

Paradoxically enough, the Jewish Councils were not founded simply as a result of a Nazi command but were built upon councils

which were originally founded by the Jews themselves for self-defensive purposes. More precisely, in 1933 local Jewish organizations were called together to form a national organization called the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*, the purpose of which was to enter into open debate and dignified controversy with the Nazis on the subject of anti-Semitism and the Jewish future in Germany (Hilberg 1961, 122).

In 1939 the *Reichsvertretung* was taken over by the Security Police and "it was converted into something that its founders had not imagined in their wildest dreams" (Hilberg 1961, 122). Firstly, its name was changed to *Reichsvereinigung* and all Jews in Germany were ordained its subjects. Secondly, in addition to traditional tasks of upkeeping Jewish schools and providing financial support to poor Jews the Interior Ministry was empowered to assign additional tasks to the *Reichsvereinigung*. Thus an autonomous Jewish organization, the purpose of which was to defend the Jews in a dignified manner, turned into its own opposite: "This provision turned the Jewish administrative machine into a tool for the destruction of the Jews. The network of Jewish communal organizations had thus become, without change of personnel, an integral part of the machinery of destruction" (Hilberg 1961, 122-123).

Hilberg also emphasizes that the *Reichsvereinigung* were not puppets picked out by the Germans to control the more unruly elements of the Jewish population: "The Germans had not created the *Reichsvereinigung*: they had taken it over. The Germans had not deposed or installed any Jewish leaders. Rabbi Leo Baeck [the chief rabbi of Berlin and the chair of the first *Reichsvertretung* and then *Reichsvereinigung*], Direktor Stahl, Dr. Hirsch, and all the others were the Jewish leaders. The Germans controlled the Jewish leadership, and that leadership, in turn, controlled the Jewish community. This system was foolproof. Truly, the Jewish communal organizations had become a self-destructive machine" (Hilberg 1961, 124-125).

To control unruly elements and to help in carrying out orders a special Jewish police force was established. The members of the Jewish Councils were respected Jewish leaders whereas for the Jewish police force criminals and members of the Jewish mob of the

ghettos were also recruited. Until the implementation of the Final Solution the task of these two organs was to take care of the administration of the ghettos<sup>11</sup> on the basis of Nazi orders. When the execution of the Final Solution started their task was to take care of all practical matters related to deportations according to the directions of Eichmann and his men. Thus, Jewish officials compiled the lists of persons and their property, distributed the Yellow Star badges, secured money from the deportees to defray the expenses of their deportation and extermination, kept track of vacated apartments, supplied police to help seize Jews and put them on trains, and finally handed over the assets of the Jewish community in good order for final confiscation (Hilberg 1961, 291; cf. EJ, 118).

Arendt points out that the prosecution was far from willing to deal with the question of co-operation but rather tried its best to dodge the whole issue. The question the prosecution preferred was "Why did you not rebel?". In Arendt's view, this question served as a smoke screen for the question that was not asked – that concerning co-operation. As a result, only part of the whole truth was told: the Jews did not rebel because "...the Jewish people as a whole had not been organized,...they had possessed no territory, no government, and no army...in the hour of their greatest need, they had no government-in-exile to represent them among the Allies,...no caches of weapons, no youth with military training" (EJ, 125). In other words, it was recognized at the trial that since European Jews lacked a political community of their own, they also lacked the political ability to organize resistance in a situation of oppression. However, the question "why did you not rebel" onesidedly directed attention to what the Jews did and could not do, making them look like innocent victims of the Nazis, whereas the question of what they actually did was omitted as carefully as possible.

In Arendt's view, the part of the truth which remained untold at the trial was that wherever Jews lived Jewish community organizations and Jewish party and welfare organizations did exist on both the local and the international level. Most of these organizations were religious in nature with a deeply respected leadership: "Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, co-operated in one way or an-

other, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people" (EJ, 125). In other words, the Jewish Councils transformed into functional parts of the destruction machinery on the basis of Nazi ordinance were by no means the only Jewish organizations that ever existed. On the contrary, the Jews have always had different kinds of organizations. The crucial point here is the behaviour of the Jewish leadership.

Hilberg makes the very same argument, emphasizing that "[in] a destruction process the perpetrators do not play the only role; the process is shaped by the victims, too" (Hilberg 1961, 662). More precisely, the Jewish leadership's attempt to organize politically the Jewish communities failed and turned into a travesty of itself.

One of the paradoxes of the Eichmann trial was that an exhaustive examination of Eichmann's role in the destruction of the Jews would have required openly dealing with the Jewish part of the implementation of the destruction: only in this way could the acts and deeds of the accused and his victims have been related to each other.<sup>12</sup> This is precisely what the Jerusalem trial, in Arendt's view, failed to do because the prosecution did not want to bring before the eyes of the world "the totality of the moral collapse the Nazis caused in respectable European society - not only in Germany but in almost all countries, not only among the persecutors but also among the victims" (EJ, 125-126). In other words, while the prosecution aimed at revealing all Eichmann's crimes as meticulously as possible it simultaneously tried to protect the victims by omitting the question of co-operation as far as possible.

It is important to notice that the moral collapse of the Jews did not begin, in Arendt's view, with the implementation of the Final Solution but rather developed step by step as the Jews gradually accepted the standards of the Final Solution. The adoption of Nazi standards astutely penetrated the Jewish mind in two forms. Firstly, it is a well known fact that almost every German Gentile had his "exception Jews" to be treated better than Jews in general. In addition, Nazi propaganda produced a hierarchical system of categories

of privileged Jews which German Jewry accepted without protest. This system classified German Jews as against Polish Jews, families whose ancestors were German-born as against recently naturalized citizens, war veterans and decorated Jews as against ordinary Jews, etc. This was, in Arendt's view, the beginning of the moral collapse of respectable Jewish society since everyone who demanded to have an exception made in her case implicitly recognized the rule (EJ, 131-132).

Secondly, following an ancient survival strategy, the Jews tried to anticipate and alleviate the Nazi measures believing that by good behaviour and obedience they could demonstrate themselves to be good citizens worthy of surviving. They believed every Nazi ordinance to be the last one. Hilberg lists under the heading of alleviation petitions, protection payments, ransom arrangements, anticipatory compliance, relief, rescue, salvage, and reconstitution (Hilberg 1961, 14). He points out that one of the most sagacious alleviation reactions in the Jewish arsenal is anticipatory compliance: "In this type of alleviation attempt, the victim foresees the danger and combats it by doing the very thing demanded of him. But he does so *before* he is confronted by ultimatums. He is, therefore, giving in on his own terms" (Hilberg 1961, 15). Unfortunately, this time the Jews did not see far enough ahead and the alleviation strategy resulted in disaster.

Arendt believed that an alternative to co-operation could have been found. Until 1938 the most important one was escape. The Jewish communities proved to be sadly lacking in solidarity in this respect. No mass flight from the Third Reich was ever organized but, as a rule, only those people escaped who understood the gravity of the situation early enough and could afford to leave. Besides, many Jews had economic or other interests to look after which made them unwilling to leave. In addition, many Jews were inclined to see a resemblance between the pogroms and Nazi operations; they stayed at home to wait for them to end as they had done for hundreds of years (cf. Hilberg 1961, 16).

After the implementation of the Final Solution virtually the only alternative would have been that of doing nothing, that is to say abstention from co-operation, or passive resistance. Abstention from

co-operation would have made Nazi operations more difficult to carry out. Relying again on Hilberg, Arendt points out that Nazi operations were completely successful only in places where they encountered co-operation.<sup>13</sup>

Under favourable circumstances there was, in addition, the alternative of going into hiding with the help of the Gentiles. This was the case in Denmark which Arendt calls *sui generis*, and which she considers proof of the enormous power potential inherent in non-violent action and resistance to an opponent possessing vastly superior means of violence (EJ, 171).<sup>14</sup>

Arendt reports that the Danes abstained from any kind of collaboration with the Nazis in the "solution of the Jewish question" from the very beginning. They refused to introduce the Yellow Badge telling the Germans that if they were compelled to give this ordinance the King would be the first to use the badge and the citizens would follow his example. After German Jewish refugees in Denmark had been declared stateless by the German government, the Danes explained to the German officials that the Nazis could not lay precise claim to them precisely because they were now stateless refugees and no longer German citizens. As the day of deportation approached – and this time it was supposed to be carried out by S.S. units in Denmark without any local co-operation whatsoever – Danish government officials hurried to inform the heads of the Jewish community: "They, in marked contrast to Jewish leaders in other countries, had then communicated the news openly in the synagogues on the occasion of the New Year services. The Jews had just time enough to leave their apartments and go into hiding, which was very easy in Denmark, because, in the words of judgment [of the Jerusalem court] 'all sections of the Danish people, from the King down to simple citizens,' stood ready to receive them." (EJ, 173-174)

The helpfulness of the Danes was not restricted to a willingness to hide the Jews. When it was decided that it was reasonable to ship the Jews to Sweden, wealthy Danish citizens paid the cost of transportation for people without means "...and that was perhaps the most astounding feat of all, since this was a time when Jews were paying for their own deportation...Even in places where Jews met with genuine

sympathy and a sincere willingness to help, they had to pay for it, and the chances poor people had of escaping were nil.” (EJ, 174)

Discussion of the case of the Danish Jews shows that Arendt was aware of the fact that not all Jewish leaders co-operated, after all. It also shows that she knew that hiding successfully required the help of Gentiles as did underground resistance also. However, she is quite explicit that in her view Denmark was an exception to the rule on both the Gentile and Jewish sides. In other words, Gentiles’ help could not be expected everywhere and the co-operation of Jewish leaders was a strikingly widespread phenomenon. Many of her critics came to the conclusion that she heavily exaggerates the uniqueness of the case of Denmark and omits its exceptionally favourable geographic and political circumstances (see e.g. Syrkin 1963, 352). Although there are good reasons for this kind of critique it misses an important point in Arendt’s reasoning. In her view Denmark was one of the few examples of organized collective action of the Jews: the mass escape of Danish Jews was possible not only because of the small size of the country with nearby Sweden ready to receive Jewish refugees but also because both the Jews and Gentiles in Denmark acted in concert in an organized manner in order to rescue the Jews.

Arendt’s judgement of the role of the Jewish Councils is undeniably harsh, but not necessarily totally disproportionate, even though it may, at first sight, seem so. It may be argued, as in fact has several times been done, that she spoke with hindsight and without personal experience of the situation. Although she does not argue that the Jews should have foreseen from the start where everything was leading there seems to be a contradiction between what she wrote in the book and what she later explained to Gershom Scholem<sup>15</sup> in a letter. In this letter she states that her considerations deal only with the co-operation of Jewish functionaries during the Final Solution, not before its implementation: ”until 1939 and even until 1941, whatever Jewish functionaries did or did not do is understandable and even excusable. Only later does it become highly problematic” (Arendt to Scholem 1963, 248).

As far as I can see, Arendt tries to suggest that from 1939 or 1941 on Jewish functionaries should have understood that co-op-

eration was not an alternative to non-co-operation: both ways led to the gas chamber. In other words, until the execution of the Final Solution it was understandable that some Jewish leaders might have calculated that co-operation could be used as a strategy to rescue as many Jews as possible or at least to win time. However, when the mass deportations started, it should have become clear that the limit of co-operation had been reached: no explanation could be morally valid to justify action which was nothing more than deciding the marching order into the gas chamber.

Moreover, Arendt emphasizes that considering the role of the Jewish Councils is not the same as asking whether the Jews could and should have defended themselves. In Arendt's opinion one of the paradoxes of the Jerusalem trial was that the former question was avoided whereas the latter was asked of every concentration camp survivor witness. She dropped the question of defence from her report because she considered testifying to a fatal ignorance of the conditions of the time was silly and cruel. She also criticized the well-known historico-sociological construct of the ghetto mentality presented by Bruno Bettelheim as a false explanation since behaviour denoted by this term was not confined to the Jewish people and therefore cannot be explained by specifically Jewish factors (cf. EJ, 283).

### 5.3.3. *The Banality of Evil*

Gerschom Scholem was one of those who was not happy with Arendt's thesis of the banality of evil. However, unlike many other profoundly ignorant commentators, Scholem was familiar with Arendt's earlier work. Thus he regretfully notices that she no longer speaks about radical evil as she did in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Scholem to Arendt 1963, 245).

In her reply Arendt admits this: "It is indeed my opinion now that evil is never 'radical', that it is only extreme, and that it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is 'thought-defying', as I said, because



thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its 'banality'. Only the good has depth and can be radical." (Arendt to Scholem 1963, 251)

There is thus a remarkable change compared with Arendt's characterization of evil in the final chapter of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. There she describes radical absolute evil as something which can no longer be understood and explained by the evil motives of self-interest, greed, covetousness, resentment, lust for power, and cowardice (OT, 459). In other words, the hallmark of radical evil, in addition to its radicality and profundity, is its incomprehensibility in any traditional human terms. It transgresses the normal understanding of the possible and impossible, proving that everything can be destroyed. It emerged in connection with a system in which all men have become equally superfluous, both totalitarian murderers and their victims alike. This is, in the final analysis, what renders radical evil so dangerous: totalitarian murderers do not care if they themselves are alive or dead (OT, 459). In other words, they do not even care about themselves in the traditional human sense: they do not consider what consequences their acts may cause to themselves.

However, Arendt had not changed her mind in all respects. She still believed that totalitarian governments have discovered crimes which men can neither punish nor forgive (OT, 459). This was one of the problems with the Eichmann trial: even though Arendt firmly believed that Eichmann must hang, she did not imagine that the punishment would reconcile the crime.

In Jerusalem Arendt could not see in Eichmann any traces of radical evil, of monstrous wickedness of his heart and brain. In this man there seemed to be nothing particularly incomprehensible, nothing that would speak on behalf of transgressing the boundaries of the possible and impossible and normal self-interest. There was no trace of inhuman cruelty, sadism, or an insane hatred of Jews, no Faustian traces of having sold his soul to the devil. Yet still, it was self-evident that his crime could not be reconciled.

This observation led Arendt to consider Eichmann's actual deeds and ask what made of them criminal acts. She immediately identified in Eichmann a life-long effort to overcome the totalitarian su-

perfluosness of human existence. This effort manifested itself in Eichmann's always law-abiding conduct. In other words, Eichmann always tried to be a good, law-abiding citizen, fulfilling his duties and obeying orders and believing that in this way he could make himself at least somehow important (EJ, 135). If there was anything repulsive in Eichmann's conduct, it was his predilection for boasting and bragging which was of course, connected to his desperate effort to make himself important but which is, however, quite a common human vice.

Arendt concluded that the trouble with Eichmann was that he was terribly and terrifyingly normal (EJ, 276). Under the surface of his extraordinary diligence in looking out for personal advancement, he had no motives at all. She saw no intentional, considerate radical evil in Eichmann, but banality which sprang from the fact that he never realized what he was doing (EJ, 287). Thus, he was an exemplary totalitarian variant of the good *paterfamilias* discussed above.

It is important to notice that the banality of evil does not make it somehow less harmful or criminal. On the contrary, at the core of the banality of evil there is something which makes it particularly dangerous. That Eichmann never realized what he was doing was caused by the fact that he never stopped to think what he was doing. In other words, the hallmark of the banality of evil is thoughtlessness, which is not the same thing as stupidity.

This is again very important in Arendt's reasoning. It is quite common to connect radical evil with exceptional intelligence. Correspondingly, it would be tempting to connect banal evil with stupidity, to see in it a form of evil characteristic of those who are intellectually incapable of committing anything great or heroic. However, this is not the case.

The problem, and the horror, with thoughtlessness lies in the fact that it leads to personal irresponsibility. A man like Eichmann who concentrates all his energy and intellectual capacity on obeying laws and executing orders never stops to think as to where his acts and deeds are leading. More precisely, he never stops to consider what he is actually supporting – a policy of mass murder – as it does not occur to his mind that "in politics obedience and support are the same" (EJ, 279).

Arendt's thesis of the banality of evil was badly misunderstood. This is, in fact, no surprise because she did not really explain very carefully what she meant by it. Only later did she understand what was so difficult to accept in her thesis. It was because "...it went counter to our tradition of thought - literary, theological, or philosophic - about the phenomenon of evil. Evil, we have learned, is something demonic; its incarnation is Satan, a 'lightning fall from heaven' (Luke 10:18), or Lucifer, the fallen angel...whose sin is pride..., namely, that *superbia* of which only the best are capable: they don't want to serve God but to be like Him." (LOM, 3)

In other words, in Western thought, evil has been seen as something greater than normal human beings are ever capable of. This is why it has been linked to great and heroic men whose heroism has been viewed as being of an evil nature. In addition, evil has been understood as radical, springing from one's innermost soul. It has not even been uncommon to see evil as more radical than good, which more often than not has been seen as somehow fragile and weak.

In contrast to this traditional concept of evil in Jerusalem Arendt was "struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer that made it impossible to trace the uncontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives" (LOM, 4). In the place of radical evil, there was, in Eichmann, the above mentioned thoughtlessness which encouraged Arendt to rethink the entire nature of evil by asking if "[i]t was this absence of thinking - which is so ordinary an experience in our everyday life, where we have hardly the time, let alone the inclination, to *stop* and think - that awakened my interest. Is evil-doing (the sins of omission, as well as the sins of commission) possible in default of not just "base motives" (as the law calls them) but of any motives whatever..." (LOM, 4).

This idea, that evil-doing is possible in default of any motives whatever, was never really understood by Arendt's critics. In political terms this misunderstanding is most regrettable because in Arendt's thesis of the banality of evil characterized by thoughtlessness is inscribed a fundamental notion of the nature of politics which brings the themes of the Jewish Councils and the banality of evil together. This is the notion of the inescapability of responsibility.

In other words, when Arendt says that in politics obedience and support are the same she means that in politics responsibility for one's acts and deeds cannot be avoided.

#### 5.3.4. *Blind Spots of the Controversy*

The question remains as to why Arendt's account was so badly misread and misunderstood. If it had only been an academic question of a difference in interpretation such a furious attack would not necessarily have arisen and the discussion might have been much more temperate. However, one of the difficulties in the reception of the book lies in the interpretive framework chosen by Arendt. She did not accept the motives for arranging the trial. For her, "the purpose of trial is to render justice, and nothing else". In her view, the overall setting of the trial was mistaken and Eichmann was sentenced on the wrong basis. As a Nazi official who acted as part of the entire Nazi machinery, his crime was not only against the Jews but against the whole of humanity. This is why he should have been condemned in an international court as *hostis generis humani*, and not as *hostis Judaeorum*. His crime was not in expressing in a perverse fashion his personal anti-Semitism, but was the organization and execution of the industrial production of corpses.

However, in practice the Jerusalem trial was not only about justice. As Daniel Bell pointed out in the debate it was also "about agony, cowardice, betrayal, shame, and, above all perhaps, vengeance" (Bell 1963, 417). Although Bell was one of the very few debaters who openly admitted that vengeance played a part in the trial, he was only saying aloud what almost everybody was thinking. For Arendt, the motive of vengeance was absurd because Eichmann's crime was too enormous to be paid back. In other words, forgiveness was impossible. Besides, to choose one man as an object of revenge was to choose a scapegoat who would suffer on behalf of many other criminals. In addition, the Nazis' crimes were not only against the Jews but against the whole of humanity and for this reason the Jews should not enjoy any particular privilege where revenge was concerned.

Another thing which proved to be very difficult to either understand or accept was Arendt's style and rhetorical strategy. In addition to a carefully kept distance which in itself was more often than not read as a sign of insensitivity if not heartlessness, she used a lot of irony and sarcasm, assuming that the basic facts of the history of the Nazi period were generally known. However, her ironic and sarcastic remarks were often read as signs of naked cruelty. A case in point in terms of refusal to accept Arendt's irony is Marie Syrkin's comment on her account of Eichmann's "Zionism". Syrkin refers, among other things, to Arendt's remark that after reading Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* he immediately and forever converted to Zionism and asks, "if this be irony, at whom is it directed?" (Syrkin 1963, 346). Without knowing the context in which Arendt made her statement and which Syrkin leaves without mention, it does not seem, of course, to be an ironic sentence but a pure lie. But let us have a look at the context in which she said it:

"Eichmann's account during the police examination of how he was introduced into the new department – distorted, of course, but not wholly devoid of truth – oddly recalls this fool's paradise. The first thing that happened was that his new boss, a certain von Mildenstein, who shortly thereafter got himself transferred to Albert Speer's *Organisation Todt*, where he was in charge of highway construction (he was what Eichmann pretended to be, an engineer by profession), required him to read Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*, the famous Zionist classic, which converted Eichmann promptly and forever to Zionism. This seems to have been the first serious book he ever read and it made a lasting impression on him...He even read one more book, Adolf Böhm's *History of Zionism* (during the trial he kept confusing it with Herzl's *Judenstaat*) and this was perhaps a considerable achievement for a man who, by his own account, had always been utterly reluctant to read anything except newspapers, and who, to the distress of his father, had never availed himself of the books in the family library." (EJ, 40-41)

Read in the context, it should be immediately clear that there is

irony in every single sentence here. However, to grasp the entire framework of Arendt's irony, one needs to know the previous passage also. There, Arendt comments on Zionist policy when confronted with the execution of the Nuremberg Laws. She points out that it was not uncommon for both Zionists and Assimilationists to see in these laws a chance for a great Jewish revival as they offered a framework "to establish a level on which a bearable relationship between the German and the Jewish people became possible" (EJ, 40). This is what Arendt calls a fool's paradise: the Jews sincerely believed that a mutual understanding of the conditions of Jewish existence in the Third Reich could be achieved by negotiating with the Nazis and by obeying their commands.

The Zionists who, in Arendt's words, "still quarreled among themselves in ideological terms about the desirability of Jewish emigration, as though this depended upon their own decisions" (EJ, 40) could not, of course, foresee the future. Similarly, however, the later-day spectator cannot avoid knowing to what everything led. It is precisely from this hindsight knowledge that irony emerges. Looking back on it all from the 1960s and seeing, on the one hand, the Zionists quarreling among themselves about emigration and on the other, Eichmann reading *Der Judenstaat* realizing that a consensus might be achieved with the Zionists on the need to deport the Jews somewhere from Germany, awakens an odd parallel between the aspirations of the Jews and Eichmann. In other words, it should be clear enough that for Arendt, Eichmann's and the Zionists' policies ironically met each other in a shared conviction that a place for the Jews should be found outside of Germany.

What made Syrkin and so many other critics of Arendt (see e.g. Ezorsky 1963; Abel 1963; Robinson 1965) reject her irony is, I believe, that they confuse irony and humor with each other, forgetting that the former does not necessarily have anything to do with the latter. Syrkin put it as follows: "What then caused the "break-down" [of comprehension]? One reason lies in the author's macabre humor, so tasteless in context" (Syrkin 1963, 346). In other words, what the critics did not understand is that irony is not always meant to make one laugh and even when it does the laughter caused by it is never harmless and relaxing but rather springs from

a profound embarrassment in the face of an odd and undesirable paradox: in the face of irony one much prefers to laugh because otherwise one would burst into tears. The force of irony stems from its faculty to sharply and uncompromisingly reveal significant characteristics of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Moreover, irony questions black-and-white viewpoints and reveals unavoidable ambiguities of human conduct.

In sum, by using irony Arendt's purpose was not to mock and disgrace the Jews but to reveal possible weaknesses in their policy and great paradoxes of their conduct under Nazi rule in general and with Eichmann in particular. Unlike Syrkin believed, it was not Arendt's intention to humanize Eichmann and dehumanize the victims (cf. Syrkin 1963, 348) but to judge both Eichmann and the Jews on the basis of what they did. In other words, in Arendt's view, it was not possible to tell the whole truth about Eichmann without taking into account those things that his victims did. On the contrary, Arendt was more convinced than ever that the Jews ought not to be viewed as innocent victims of evil forces but rather as personally responsible pariahs whose policy should be open to critical evaluation as the policy of any other group of people.

As to the Jewish Councils, in Syrkin's view the indignation aroused by Arendt stems from her accusation of total Jewish collaboration: "leaders, parties, organizations, and associations on the 'local and international level' constitute a people". In addition, Arendt manages to transform every positive attempt to save Jews from the Nazis into something suspect. Thus, Syrkin concludes, the would-be rescuer and the destroyer are presented as parallel enemies (Syrkin 1963, 350-351). Here, Syrkin is unclear about who actually constitutes the Jewish people for Arendt. On the one hand she argues that Arendt identifies the Jewish leadership with the Jewish people, and on the other she states that Arendt leaves ordinary Jews between the Scylla of Jewish would-be rescuers and and the Charybdis of Nazi destroyers. Arendt made, indeed, a strict distinction between the Jewish leadership and ordinary Jews and directed her criticism at the former whereas she never blamed the latter for anything. However, she did not argue that the Jewish leaders and the Nazis were comparable enemies for ordinary Jews. What she

says, instead, is that the Jewish leadership cannot withdraw from responsibility for the whole community. In other words, whereas every single individual is responsible for her own acts and deeds, leaders additionally are responsible for their community.

One of the reviewers of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Walter Laqueur looked back at the debate in 1979, posing anew the question of whether Arendt was misunderstood and why. His contribution was provoked by the appearance of a collection of Arendt's early articles published the previous year (see Feldman 1978) which he saw as a sign that the controversy was still, in fact, in progress<sup>16</sup>. In his attempt to answer the question as to what was missed in the controversy he is on the right track in suggesting that Arendt's early and almost entirely neglected journalistic work in the USA provides essential clues to the genesis of the book (Laqueur 1979, 73). In addition to the book edited by Feldman, this is, indeed, one of the rare occasions somebody tries to search for an answer in Arendt's own earlier work and background. Most of the later attempts to evaluate the controversy move in the opposite direction, trying to relate the Eichmann book to Arendt's later treatises on political theory (see e.g. the otherwise sharp contribution of Dossa 1989, 125-139).

According to Laqueur, what emerges from Arendt's articles principally written for New York's German-language weekly *Aufbau* during the war is that "Arendt always had doubts about Zionism and that gradually she came to believe that Herzl had been a crackpot; that Zionism was a chauvinistic, fanatical and hysterical phenomenon, and that it had never been a popular movement. At the same time she insisted on the establishment of a Jewish army to fight Nazism 'for the glory and the honour of the Jewish people'" (Laqueur 1979, 73).

This is an overstatement but at the same time there is more in it than Laqueur imagines. Had he recognized Bernard Lazare's impact on Arendt's thinking, he probably would have chosen his words differently. He writes, however, as if he knew nothing about the fact that Arendt's doubts about Zionism and her highly critical attitude towards the Herzl-style Palestine-centred Zionism of strong and authoritarian leadership and court diplomacy were owed prin-



cially to Lazare's criticism of early political Zionism with which Arendt acquainted herself already in the 1930s in Paris. Moreover, he writes as if he knew nothing about the concept of Jewish pariahdom which Arendt adopted from Lazare and which strongly influenced her understanding of the role of Zionist movement in Jewish history. This is strange given that Feldman strongly emphasizes Lazare's impact on Arendt's understanding of Jewish pariahdom (see Feldman 1978, 31-33).

Unlike Laqueur (1979, 73) argues, Arendt was not against the Jewish state as such but she was against the idea that all Jews should move to this state. Moreover, she thought that during the two thousand years of Diaspora the Jews had become a European people and a solution to their misery should be sought in political terms on European soil. In other words, she believed that Zionist policy should not be based on an eschatological idea of collective escape from Europe but that those Jews who wanted to stay should be granted the possibility to share European soil with the Gentiles. In addition, she was against all ideas of pushing the Arabs into the sea from Palestine but hoped that the Jewish state would rather be founded as a Jewish-Arab state on a federative basis. In other words, she was against founding the Jewish state on a national basis because it would lead to the exclusion of the members of other nationalities from the Jewish polity or at least to the restriction of their right to political existence.

From Lazare also came her insistence on the establishment of a Jewish army as she adopted from him the conviction that it was every pariah's duty to resist oppression and fight back: when the European Jews were attacked as Jews they should have fought back as Jews, simultaneously demanding right to political freedom as Jews.

I would like to argue that one of the reasons *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was so badly misread was that Arendt's concept of responsibility was never really understood. More precisely, the attacks on Arendt never really hit the point because virtually nobody understood her underlying conceptual commitments. Arendt was partly responsible for the misunderstandings because she did not care to explain her concept of responsibility particularly carefully. However, this omission explains only part of the attack. In my view,

many of the debaters did not even want to understand or accept her conceptual commitments. Far too many people wanted to remain faithful to the traditional Jewish way of conceiving the Jews as innocent victims of evil forces in history and to reject the Arendtian imperative according to which nobody can, in fact, escape personal responsibility for one's own acts and deeds.

On the other hand, I would like to argue that part of the debate on *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was caused by the fact that Arendt managed to shake the very basis of American Jewish intellectuals' social and political commitments. More precisely, between the lines of the critique of the Jewish Councils and Eichmann's banal evil was written a critique of American conformism which most American Jewish intellectuals had internalized by heart. In American mass society there was little chance of a dissenter appearing.

In the final analysis, what Arendt said about Jewish co-operation under Nazi rule and Eichmann's conduct was not so shameless as such. Far more shameless was Arendt's allusion that the irresponsible co-responsibility of the Jewish leaders and Eichmann was not a unique phenomenon belonging solely to a totalitarian regime but also lurked behind the conformism of American mass society.

#### **5.4. The Inescapability of Responsibility**

To claim that an outcast, a pariah, is responsible for her own acts and deeds is not a simple matter. Despite all the naked malevolences and clearcut misunderstandings in the Eichmann controversy the risk of unintentionally making the pariah guilty of her own destruction lurks behind all the efforts to rethink the question of responsibility in new terms. However, I am perfectly convinced that it was not Arendt's intention to make the Jews guilty of anything. What she was after was to bring some clarity to confused relations of responsibility.

To say that in politics obedience and support are the same does not mean that political and personal responsibility are one and the same thing. Further, to say that the inescapability of responsibility brings the role of the Jewish Councils and Eichmann's deeds to-

gether is not to say that they should or could be evaluated by the same criteria and judged in the same way. However, as I have been repeating, there is a link between them, this being that both of them must be confronted with the theme of responsibility.

Although Arendt did not explain her concept of responsibility in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* particularly thoroughly she did it later partly as a response to the debate and partly as a contribution to other contemporary discussions. In the following, I will take into account two contributions which I consider of decisive importance in understanding Arendt's concept of responsibility. The first is a direct response to the debate published in 1964 in *The Listener* under the title *Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship* (PRD) and the second is a piece Arendt read in reaction to a paper by Joel Feinberg at a symposium of the American Philosophical Association in 1968 under the title *Collective Responsibility* (CR).

In these pieces Arendt makes a sharp distinction between political and personal responsibility. Political responsibility is that which "every government assumes for the deeds and misdeeds of its predecessors, and every nation for the deeds and misdeeds of the past" (PRD, 185). It is a form of collective responsibility which has to fulfil two conditions. Firstly, one has to be held responsible for something one has not done, and secondly, the reason for one's responsibility must be one's membership of a group which no voluntary personal act can dissolve:

"This kind of responsibility in my opinion is always political, whether it appears in the older form, when a whole community takes it upon itself to be responsible for whatever one of its members has done, or whether a community is being held responsible for what has been done in its name." (CR, 45)

Consequently, one can escape political responsibility only by leaving the community. However, for Arendt this is a more or less theoretical alternative as in her view no man can live without belonging to some form of community: in practice it would simply mean exchanging one community for another and hence one responsibility for another (CR, 45).

Thus, collective, political responsibility is something which an individual assumes in relation to a political community or group to which she belongs concerning both past and future deeds carried out in it. It does not necessarily require active participation in everything done in the community but quiet support is sufficient to make one involved and committed even though in Arendtian terms non-participation in the political affairs of the world is always open to a reproach of irresponsibility, of shirking one's duties toward the world one shares with others and the community one belongs to (cf. CR, 48).

All this presupposes, however, that one is a recognized member of a political community. Arendt points out that the situation of political outcasts is different: refugees, stateless people and other outcasts cannot be held politically responsible for anything (CR, 45). In other words, outcasts cannot be responsible for any political community and its deeds because they do not belong to any. However, they cannot be relieved from responsibility for their own deeds although these deeds do not, strictly speaking, concern any political world but the outcasts' own conduct.

Due to its collective nature political responsibility has often been understood to postulate the possibility of collective guilt. For Arendt this means a total confusion of concepts. In her view what renders political responsibility collective is the fact that it concerns the common world, the political community shared by its members. When a group of people assumes responsibility for the matters concerning the shared world, anyone's personal responsibility is of minor importance because everyone is similarly committed to deeds undertaken for the sake of the community.

Guilt, as well as its counterpart, innocence, are moral and/or legal matters. In moral or legal matters there is no such thing as collective guilt. This is because "in the center of moral considerations of human conduct stands the self" (CR, 47). Similarly, in the center of legal considerations is a person and her deeds. In other words, only a person, on the basis of her deeds, can be found guilty or innocent of something. Thus, guilt is always personal and concerns not the acts and deeds of a community but those of a person. Consequently, no one can be guilty of another person's deeds but

only of her own. As to crime, a person can only be found guilty of something which she has personally committed, and not of other persons' crimes, whereas a member of a political community can be considered responsible for the deeds of the entire community.

A number of Arendt's critics argued that her interpretation of the Eichmann trial succeeded – by rendering the Jews guilty of their own destruction – in wiping away the difference between criminals and victims. However, a careful reading of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* reveals that Arendt nowhere declares the Jews to be guilty of anything. She argues, instead, that even under such extreme circumstances as totalitarian rule there is no such thing as an innocent victim because there is no escape from personal responsibility for one's own acts and deeds.

It is one of the hallmarks of a totalitarian policy that it attempts to make everybody equally guilty by making everybody support the system by co-operating in one way or another. However, this is only one of the tricks that totalitarian policy plays as there is no such thing as collective guilt or collective innocence (cf. PRD, 185). In other words, totalitarian rule attempts to wipe away the difference between leaders and those who are led. In fact, collective guilt is the same as collective innocence: the aim of totalitarian rule is precisely to make everybody look equally innocent.

In Arendt's view, when people's acts and deeds under totalitarian rule are evaluated and judged, the principles of political and personal responsibility should be carefully kept apart from each other. For Arendt, political responsibility is something which principal political agents, such as governments, unavoidably assume not only for their own acts and decisions but also for the deeds and misdeeds of the past (Arendt PRD, 185).

Under "normal" circumstances this is a self-evident principle of government which is not to be questioned by anybody. Political responsibility is strictly speaking not personal as far as a government's deeds are not personal deeds. In other words, under normal circumstances, a government's orders are understood to be superior orders that must be followed and carried out unquestioningly (PRD, 185, 187). Thus, the principle of political responsibility is based on an assumption that under normal circumstances the gov-

ernment does not commit criminal acts and even under extraordinary circumstances it resorts to criminal means only in order to maintain its power.

In Arendt's view, the problem with this principle lies in the fact that under totalitarian rule it is no longer valid. This is because a totalitarian government does not follow any conventional distinction between non-criminal and criminal deeds. On the contrary, "in the case of the Hitler regime there was hardly an act of state which according to normal standards was not criminal" (PRD, 187). In other words, the entire system of legality was turned upside down in such a way that a law-abiding officer "acted in conditions where every moral act was illegal and every legal act was a crime" (PRD, 187): to act according to previously learned moral principles meant committing a crime as it inevitably meant acting against Nazi laws and orders.

Here, what is at stake for Arendt in the whole issue is the moral confusion of the post-war period. More precisely, the Nazi period is usually evaluated and judged by old moral principles of the nineteenth century which simply are no longer adequate. Correspondingly, these old moral principles were also generally applied during the Nazi period without recognizing that one was dealing with an unprecedented situation to which previous principles of evaluation should not have been applied.

As an example of these old unfit moral principles Arendt quotes the argument of lesser evil: "If you are confronted with two evils, the argument runs, it is your duty to opt for the lesser one, whereas it is irresponsible to refuse to choose altogether. Its weakness has always been that those who choose the lesser evil forget quickly that they chose evil. Since the evil of the Third Reich finally was so monstrous that by no stretch of imagination could it be called a 'lesser evil', one might have assumed that this time the argument would have collapsed once and for all: which surprisingly is not the case." (PRD, 186)

This is where the essential astuteness of the Nazi empire lies: in Arendt's view it is precisely the argument of lesser evil that is one of the mechanisms built into the machinery of terror and crimes. In other words, the acceptance of lesser evils is consciously used in

conditioning both the governmental officials and the population at large to the acceptance of evil as such. For Arendt, the extermination of the Jews is a case in point:

”[T]he extermination of Jews was preceded by a gradual sequence of anti-Jewish measures, each of which was accepted because refusal to co-operate would make things worse – until a stage was reached where nothing worse could possibly happen” (PRD, 186).

In other words, the limits of the possible and impossible in discrimination against the Jews were exceeded gradually, step by step, and this made the Jews unable to realize and understand when the whole thing went over the decisive limit.

Arendt concludes that under totalitarian rule normal moral standards of lawfulness and allegiance are no longer applicable if one does not want to participate in crimes – or this is at least what the post-war trials demanded from the defendants. This is precisely where the problem of responsibility, according to Arendt, enters the scene as under totalitarian rule assuming political responsibility in traditional terms inevitably means participating in crimes.

Thus we are back to the question of whether there were any real alternatives to co-operation. As to the Jews, Arendt is explicit that adoption of the principle of lesser evil was a serious mistake. For Arendt it spoke for the inability of the Jews to abandon old categories and formulas of thought that were no longer adequate in an unprecedented situation. In other words, in a situation in which all routes led to the concentration camps the principle of lesser evil was not valid: the limit before which such differences of degree made sense had been exceeded.

However, in the case of the Jews who were pariahs in any case, what was at stake was not political responsibility but rather personal responsibility. Instead of lesser evil they should have considered the question of to what extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves after having committed certain deeds (cf. CR, 49). In other words, for the pariah under totalitarian rule the choice is not between total political responsibility and personal an-

nihilation but rather between personal responsibility and participation in annihilation. Under no circumstances could the pariah have been found guilty of her own destruction but neither does pariahdom relieve her of personal responsibility for her own deeds and choices.

In her early writings on Jewish pariahdom Arendt had identified an earlier version of moral collapse in the charity system of traditional Jewish communities because it was based on the alleviation of misery, lacking any sincere effort to do away with the striking poverty of the Jewish masses not to mention any attempt to destroy the hierarchical power structures of the communities and fight for political freedom as Jews. In these writings she leaned heavily on Bernard Lazare's criticism of traditional Jewish leadership. Arendt's criticism of the Jewish leadership and the exception system cannot but recall Bernard Lazare's furious attacks on the hierarchical and unequal organization of the Jewish communities of his times. Analogously with Lazare, Arendt never criticized ordinary Jews but exclusively attacked Jewish leaders who from times immemorial had failed to organize Jewish communities in political terms.

It is my argument that what illuminated Arendt's considerations of Jewish leadership during the execution of the Final Solution was the concept of modern conscious pariahdom which she adopted from Bernard Lazare. Even though Lazare's political context is far from comparable with that of Nazi-Germany, Arendt considers the criteria of modern pariahdom to be valid in the latter, too. However, this is not to say that she directly applied Lazarean ideas to the context of Jewish Holocaust but rather let them illuminate her evaluation as a general framework of interpretation and judgement. This is why her view of why and how the destruction of European Jewry was possible differed significantly from most other interpretations.

The core of this framework is constituted by the notion of the inescapable personal responsibility of the pariah. In the modern world, where Jewish pariahdom is no longer simply a social phenomenon of becoming excluded from Gentile society, it cannot be responded to in traditional terms by withdrawing to the irresponsible irreality of traditional pariah communities. The fate of European Jewry showed the tragic consequences of a policy which was based on the belief that by acquiescing to the orders of the prevail-



ing powers a consensus between German and Jewish people could be found: it showed that the alternative of social pariahdom no longer existed. This also applied to the traditional alternative of social pariahdom, that of complete assimilation:

”Today the bottom has dropped out of the old ideology. The pariah Jew and the *parvenu* Jew are in the same boat, rowing desperately in the same angry sea. Both are branded with same mark: both alike are outlaws. Today the truth has come home: there is no protection in heaven or earth against bare murder, and a man can be driven at any moment from the streets and broad places once open to all. At long last, it has become clear that the ”senseless freedom” of the individual merely paves the way for the senseless suffering of his entire people.” (JP, 90)

However, the notion of partial responsibility of the pariah does not mean that the pariah were responsible for the acts and deeds of a Gentile polity (or a totalitarian regime) as nobody is responsible for a community to which she does not belong. Neither does it mean that all pariahs were responsible in the same manner. Basically, the pariah is responsible for her own acts and deeds. However, in the Lazarean-Arendtian framework the responsibility of the pariah includes evaluation of the deeds of her fellow pariahs. This is the reason why Arendt raised the question of the role of the Jewish Councils in the Final Solution: they were a part of the Jewish leadership. As such, they cannot be relieved from responsibility for their acts and deeds concerning Jewish communities.

Moreover, in Lazarean-Arendtian terms the political fight of the modern conscious pariah is two-fold. In addition to fighting against the Gentile enemy it includes fighting against corrupted elements among one’s own brethren. This is what the Jewish Councils, in Arendt’s view, did not understand. Whatever their motives for co-operation might have been, they abstained from organizing the Jews in resistance.

In sum, in Arendt’s critique of the role of the Jewish Councils is reflected a Lazarean critique of Jewish assimilation and the traditional Jewish policy of charity. The Jewish Councils draw, in a queer

way, from the ancient tradition of Jewish charity, negotiation and appeal which attempted to resolve the problems of Jewish existence in an apolitical manner, remaining faithful to the traditional hierarchical structures of Jewish communities. In other words, in the policy of the Jewish Councils, a tradition of negotiating privileges was reflected. The Jewish leaders were unable to assume a new attitude and conception of Jewish politics under the extreme circumstances of Nazi rule.

Thus, Arendt conceives the Jewish Councils as an extreme expression of traditional Jewish politics in an extreme situation. She criticizes them from the position of a conscious pariah whose strategy is that of a double-fight against the parvenus of her own community and Gentile enemies. In this framework, the Jewish Councils are, of course, travesties of parvenu strategy under extreme circumstances. As such, they are proof that the survival strategies of traditional social pariahdom are no longer valid: in a new extreme situation the pariah and the parvenu are in the same boat.

A Lazarean-Arendtian alternative to this traditional Jewish strategy would have been that of the double-fight. On the one hand it would have included political organization of the Jews in order to invent a counter strategy to co-operation. This would have required, however, the abandonment of the hierarchical thinking adopted in Jewish communities. On the other hand, it would have included organizing to fight against an oppressive and destructive enemy and the formation of a Jewish army which would have fought together with the Gentiles against Nazi supremacy.

Finally, it is my argument that if the thesis of the partial responsibility of the pariah is detached from its reference to European Jewish pariahs and relocated in the postwar American context, it is no longer the duty to resist oppression but the duty to resist conformism which is at stake.

In the final analysis, modern shapeless mass society and totalitarian rule are just two variants of an entirely antipolitical form of human organization in which the opportunity of leading a dignified humane existence threatens to disappear. They are forms of manifestation of systems where the criteria of political and moral judgement alike threaten to disappear as the family man and the criminal become virtu-

ally indistinguishable from each other. The great danger of this system in its mass society variant lies in the fact that almost no one is able to notice what is going on because a desperate desire to conform has become the principal motive of all human endeavour.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>These references can be found in her writings on Jewish pariahdom and Zionism which she produced during the 1940s. I have discussed most of them in the present work. See Arendt 1942; JP; ZR; Arendt 1946a; 1946b; JHR; Arendt 1948b; 1948c.

<sup>2</sup>In Arendtian terminology "thoughtlessness" refers to the inability to think critically, the inability to politically evaluate and judge. In other words, it does not mean that a thoughtless person does not think at all. Neither does it refer to simple heedlessness, neglect, or forgetfulness. Arendt stubbornly continued to use this term although Mary McCarthy warned her that it no longer meant what she wanted it to mean in English (see McCarthy to Arendt, June 9, 1971, Arendt 1995b, 296).

<sup>3</sup>Arendt points out that if the family man under totalitarian rule becomes conscious that in fact he is not only a functionary but also a murderer, his way out will not be that of rebellion, but suicide (OGUR, 130). In chapter three I criticized Benhabib's argument according to which total pariahdom means insanity or suicide. Related to Arendt's critique of the modern family man one might argue that Benhabib confuses pariahdom with mass society existence and makes the pariah choose an alternative which is more characteristic to the family man.

<sup>4</sup>Arendt was by no means the only one who theorized mass society after the Second World War. On the contrary, it was widely discussed and thematized particularly among Jewish intellectuals of European origin. For an overview of these discussions see e.g. Bell 1960.

<sup>5</sup>The idea of transferring entire populations from one place to another was not, of course, invented either by the Zionists nor even the Nazis. Its appearance is connected to the emergence of nationalism and its doctrine of nations as organic units which should be organized in their "correct" and original places on earth. Thus in the nineteenth century it was discovered in America that the "negroes" actually belonged to Africa and a mass restoration of them was considered (cf. Condit and Lucaites 1993). The Soviet regime was also enthusiastic about restituting nations

- in the correct order and simultaneously getting rid of unnecessary nations. Ever since the emergence of nationalism the hopeless dispersion of nations has posed a problem in Europe.
- <sup>6</sup>One may doubt if Arendt ever was a Zionist. However, during the 30s she might have been called such but not after 1948.
- <sup>7</sup>I say this quite aware of the fact that there are also those who consider her either a journalist, or a historian, or a philosopher. As far as I can see the difficulty in determining Arendt's field stems from her intellectual independence in relation to any tradition. In her own mind her field was political theory after she left German philosophy behind (cf. Arendt 1965).
- <sup>8</sup>In the Arendtian set of concepts "doing nothing" does not refer to indifference but rather to non-cooperation based on a conscious decision not to support the powers-that-be.
- <sup>9</sup>Jacob Robinson was one of those who recognize Arendt's debt to Hilberg. Together with many others (see e.g. Abel 1963; Syrkin 1963) he criticizes him for relying too much on German source material and ignoring Jewish sources (see Robinson 1965, 150). Unfortunately, the Jewish sources to which Robinson referred were written in Hebrew or Yiddish, remaining inaccessible to Western readership. Hilberg reports that he preferred German sources because he was interested in how the machinery for the annihilation of the Jews was organized by the Nazis. In other words, he did not intend to write a piece of Jewish history (see Hilberg 1961, v).
- <sup>10</sup>It should be noticed that in the case of the Nazi regime one cannot speak of polity or political community in the Arendtian sense. However, even under totalitarian circumstances the positions of faithful and accepted subjects of the regime and its outcasts are not entirely comparable with each other.
- <sup>11</sup>Ghetto formation belonged to the second part of the Heydrich programme. It took place in the transition period from the forced emigration programme to the "final solution" policy from 1939 to 1941 approximately. It provided for the concentration of the Jews in closed ghettos, and it was intended to be no more than a makeshift device in preparation for the ultimate mass emigration of the victims (cf. Hilberg 1961, 144-145).
- <sup>12</sup>Hilberg tirelessly repeats the need to take the role of the Jews into account in the analysis of the Nazi destruction machinery (see Hilberg 1961, 17-18, 310-315, 662).
- <sup>13</sup>See chapter eight, especially the section in which he deals with deportations in different countries and areas (Hilberg 1961, 308-554).
- <sup>14</sup>Hilberg does not celebrate the case of Denmark as strongly as Arendt but

the facts presented are approximately the same (see Hilberg 1961, 357-362).

<sup>15</sup>Gershom Scholem was a well known Jewish historian. In 1948, Arendt positively reviewed his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books 1946. See JHR.

<sup>16</sup>He read Feldman's edition as a very pro-Arendtian contribution.

## 6. For the Sake of Freedom and Dignity

### 6.1. Mechanisms of Exclusion

In the present study, I have dealt with the textual history of Hannah Arendt's conception of pariahdom. Firstly, I have clarified from where she actually took the term pariah and how she used it. Secondly, I have showed that the notion of partial responsibility of the pariah which Arendt adopted from Bernard Lazare was to constitute one of the guiding principles of her later theorizations of politics and political judgement. In order to show this, I have related her early writings on Jewish pariahdom to her postwar considerations on personal and political responsibility in extreme situations.

In chapter two I discussed Max Weber's concept of the Jews as a pariah people which is shaped by his methodological notion of ideal-type. For Weber, the Jews come closest to the ideal-type of pariah people characterized by a lack of autonomous political organization, social disprivilege, far-reaching distinctiveness in economic functioning, and self-segregation. In addition, traditional Judaism was characterized by an eschatological world view based on a messianic idea of God-guided redemption in the Promised Land which kept the Jews together in exile. However, politically speaking the strength of the messianic idea corresponds to the weakness of Jewish history: engaged in the messianic idea, the Jewish people in exile was not able to descend to a concrete historical level. Thus, for Weber, pariah existence refers to an existence outside history

and political reality shaped by an entirely unworldly eschatological character. Messianic hope empties earthly life of independent value and significance. In this framework mundane human endeavours remain provisory and secondary in importance.

I argued that Arendt adopted from Weber an overall understanding of the Jews as a pariah people and the method of ideal-type which she applied in her own discussions of Jews as pariahs. Arendt also drew from Weber's notion of Jewish segregation as self-produced and self-perpetuated. However, for Arendt, this self-segregation constitutes only one side of Jewish pariahdom. Another, equally important side of it is external oppression. In other words, Arendt viewed Jewish pariahdom both as externally imposed upon Jewry and self-perpetuated at the same time.

Arendt preferred to use the notion of ideal-type in its model-type variant: she attempted to evaluatively judge the acts and deeds of both individual pariahs and the Jews as a pariah people, confronting their decisions and choices with the historical context in which they lived. In other words, she attempted to focus on considering what was possible in a given situation and how well either an individual pariah or the Jews as a group succeeded in exploiting the opportunities available in this situation.

In the Arendtian framework, what posed an insurmountable obstacle to political organization of the Jews was the inability and unwillingness of the Jewish leadership to secularize and politicize the ancient messianic hope in the secularizing world of the nineteenth century. In other words, they were neither capable nor willing to encounter the Jewish question in political terms but continued to approach political questions in traditional apolitical terms characterized by a hierarchical system of charity, negotiating alleviations, and appealing to all enemies alike. This "apolitical policy" stemmed from a view that basically all Gentiles are anti-Semites and that there are no significant differences between them. Even the Zionists identified the Gentiles with anti-Semitism and adopted a secularized version of the ancient doctrine of the Promised Land in their programme, transforming it into the notion of a Jewish state.

In chapter three I discussed Arendt's first case-study of Jewish pariahdom, which was her book on Rahel Levin. Firstly, I deline-

ated the overall context of Rahel's attempt to assimilate, that of the rise of the Jewish salon. It offered a relatively unbiased space for gathering together where the participants' estates and social backgrounds counted far less than earlier. What counted, instead, was personal performance. However, from the viewpoint of Jewish politics, the salon remained a quasi-space of appearance because the Jewish question was hardly touched. In other words, for Jewish politics, the salon failed to become a public space of debate and initiative.

I also warned of celebrating the pariah principally as a figure who breaks social conventions and flouts social norms, goes against established traditions and plays with social expectations. In other words, I warned of viewing the core of pariahdom in terms of "lifestyle politics". With these warnings I did not want to question the fact that in the social realm the pariah inevitably appears as a non-conformist if she does not choose the route of assimilation and become a parvenu. I rather wanted to stress that although conscious pariahdom requires strength and determination to "do otherwise", individual choices and decisions concerning life-styles and ways of life are not enough for the conscious pariah, who is principally concerned with a desire to achieve the opportunity for political existence in the common world. In other words, although pariahdom is not only about the boundaries of political existence, it is always shaped by mechanisms of exclusion.

Further, I discussed Rahel's case, identifying the most significant steps on her route from schlemihldom to the double position of pariah and parvenu. Despite her life-long aspiration to assimilate, Rahel failed to become a parvenu but remained a pariah. Or rather, Rahel remained in an ambiguous position between the parvenu and the pariah having left the traditional ghetto-existence of the Schlemihl but never really neither arriving in Gentile high society nor starting open rebellion against it. Rahel was to learn that escaping pariahdom was not a simple question of a personal decision to leave it behind. However, although Rahel became conscious of the inescapability of pariahdom, the option of the publicly fighting conscious pariah was not yet available. In Rahel's case, the hidden, internal pariahdom provided her with an asylum and loop-hole from which to critically consider the Gentile world.



Another pariah and another political context was needed to develop the notion of rebellious pariahdom into an openly political double strategy against both parvenu assimilation and Gentile exclusion. This pariah was Bernard Lazare whom I discussed in chapter four.

For Arendt, it was precisely Bernard Lazare who was to become the model figure of conscious pariahdom *par excellence*. This is because it was Bernard Lazare who declared that pariahs can no longer withdraw into the traditional pariah community and break away from their own partial responsibility for their political fate. The hallmark of his conscious pariahdom is the notion that it is every human being's duty to resist oppression. In this insight is inscribed a view according to which no human being is solely an object of the deeds of others but everyone is responsible for her own acts and deeds.

Hannah Arendt never forgot the lesson of conscious pariahdom she learned from Lazare. She adopted from him the distinction between the conscious pariah and the parvenu which was to remain the basic conceptual distinction in her approaches to Jewish pariahdom. In line with Lazare she thought that instead of climbing up the social ladder of Gentile society or remaining trapped in the traditional Jewish community, the emancipated Jew must awake to an awareness of her position and become a rebel against it.

Thus, at the heart of Arendt's conception of pariahdom is the notion of partial responsibility of the pariah which was to constitute one of the cornerstones of Arendt's later theorizations of politics and concrete political analysis. Although oppressed and excluded, pariahs cannot wash their hands of what happens to them since their own choices and decisions contribute to their political fate and future, making them committed to the human world. In Arendt's understanding, in the course of two thousand years of Diaspora the Jews had become a European people and a solution to their exclusion should have been sought within the European framework. The destruction of European Jewry only reinforced Arendt's conviction that the Jewish question was not only a problem of the Jews but concerned the entire European culture and its inability to deal with problems produced by itself.

One of the later contexts in which she applied the principle of the inescapability of personal responsibility was the Eichmann-trial with which I dealt in chapter five. I argued that Arendt's book on the trial was badly misread. Unlike most of her critics suggested, Arendt's purpose was not to make the Jews guilty of their own destruction but rather to raise the question of the inescapability of the partial responsibility of the pariah. I read Arendt's book as a strong argument for a Lazarean-type political judgement in the framework of which human beings are not divided into monstrous evil-doers and innocent victims. On the other hand, I emphasized that in Arendt's view, Nazi criminals and Jewish pariahs have different positions in the constellation of the Nazi regime: the pariah cannot be responsible for the entire regime because she is not an accepted member of it but she is responsible for her own acts and deeds as far as they contribute to her political future and to her opportunities to maintain her human dignity.

In addition, I pointed out that in line with Lazare, Arendt never blamed ordinary Jews for anything but directed her critique against the Jewish leadership. She argued that instead of organizing the Jewish people into common resistance against the Nazis, the Jewish leadership, most importantly the Jewish Councils, preferred to co-operate with the Nazis, believing that with a traditional policy of concessions and sacrificing a few they would be able to save many. In other words, the Jewish leadership was incapable of understanding that they were confronting a unprecedented phenomenon to which traditional modes of Jewish policy were not applicable: they were not able to see that this time, there was no end to the pogroms, or rather the Final Solution was not simply another manifestation of pogroms, and this is why a traditional policy of concessions would not work successfully.

If Arendt's report of the Eichmann trial is read against its Lazarean background, two important points emerge. Firstly, Arendt appears as a self-authorized judge who assumes the right to pronounce her own verdict on the Jerusalem trial. However, this did not stem from impudence or arrogance but rather from her firm Lazarean conviction that it is the duty and right of every human being to judge politically. In other words, pariah politics in Lazarean

terms do not only require rebellion against oppressors but also political judgement of friends and foes alike.

Secondly, it is usually assumed that one needs to be acquainted with Arendt's other works in order to understand what she really wanted to say in the Eichmann book. This is, of course, true. However, also the reverse is true. That is to say that if the Lazarean origins of her conception of political judgement are recognized the Eichmann book may illuminate her other texts. This concerns particularly her criticism of conformism and normalcy. More precisely, it becomes easier to understand what is politically dangerous in conformism. The answer to this question lies in Eichmann's thoughtlessness. In other words, it is the incapacity to think critically and judge politically that makes conformism politically dangerous.<sup>1</sup>

## 6.2. The Threat of Conformism

I pointed out that the Eichmann trial was not the only context in which Arendt raised the question of personal and political responsibility. In a number of her postwar writings she raises the question of (ir)responsibility in connection with modern mass society suggesting that there is a point in common between mass society and totalitarianism. This is the lack of common world between human beings.

More precisely, the notion of the inescapability of personal responsibility provided Arendt with a loop-hole from which to critically consider post-war America and the entire Western world. From her loop-hole she saw the good *paterfamilias* who had become the great criminal of the century. Instead of cultivating civic virtues and political judgement the *paterfamilias* was anxious to withdraw from personal and political responsibility altogether. In other words, in the Western world, the twentieth century had witnessed the transformation of the family man from a responsible member of society interested in public affairs into a bourgeois concerned only with his private existence.

Arendt's distinction between the responsible and politically minded *citoyen* and the irresponsible, privately minded *bourgeois*

is dramatic and it is legitimate to argue that she overdramatizes it in the case of the United States, particularly in *On Revolution* (see OR). However, in this case, as in many others, her treatments of certain political phenomena are not meant to be descriptions of what "really happened". They are rather critical reflections and evaluations of politically significant phenomena. By drawing dramatic juxtapositions she attempts to emphasize her own point without necessarily suggesting that a period ever existed when the politically "better" part of the distinctions made by her flourished undisturbed.<sup>2</sup> I would rather suggest that also in this case she draws from Weber's method of ideal-type in its model-type variant, evaluatively judging the acts and decisions of the agents of politics and identifying also those possibilities which remained unused or in the shadow. As a matter of fact, OR is a case in point as she argues that even the Founding Fathers did not really understand to what an excellent constitution they gave birth.

What connects the family man to the pariah is the fact that both of them live in an extreme situation. More precisely, in the Arendtian framework, both modern mass society and totalitarian rule are unforeseen phenomena of the twentieth century in which the nineteenth century's principles of political judgement and conduct are no longer valid. What makes them extreme situations is the fact that "normal" principles of political action and evaluation are no longer valid but any limits of the possible and impossible in human action and behaviour may be transgressed. Both of them are characterized by a shrinking away of the public space of politics between human beings. Under totalitarian rule this shrinking away is carried out by a dictatorial leadership whereas in mass society it is based on a voluntary and deliberate withdrawal of people from public affairs. In the postwar American context Arendt was worried about the possibility that mass society might develop into totalitarianism without notice. In other words, Arendt considered the possibility that conformism might spread from the social to the political realm of public affairs. This, then, might create space for re-emergence of totalitarianism.

The withering away of the public space of politics inevitably raises the question of against what the pariah should actually direct her double-fight. If there is no such thing as a commonly shared

polity of the majority, against what ought the pariah to fight? In the framework of a totalitarian regime the answer to this question seems easy: one should, of course, fight against the existing totalitarian rule in order to be able to found a new political order based on democratic principles.

The case of mass society is more complicated. In principle, its inmates still have the political rights. The common world between people has not been taken away by force by some dictatorial powers, but has withered away as no one is interested in sharing a common world with other people. Everyone is only interested in her own private matters.

As I have already pointed out, Sheila Benhabib's answer to this question is civil society. In her opinion, Arendt, as an antistatist thinker, leaves room for the concerted action of individuals in the associational sphere of civil society. In Benhabibian terms, pariah politics is transformed into nonconformism where the pariah flouts social norms and questions existing standards of the accepted and non-accepted. Thus, anyone could take a pariah position by the simple move of declaring oneself a non-conformist who does not accept existing social norms.

At first sight, this idea seems to be in harmony with what Arendt wrote about conformism in the context of postwar America and her own position in it. Indeed, Arendt saw so little space for dignified humane existence in the postwar situation that she was inclined to think that one was able to have a worthwhile existence only on the margins of society:

*"Bin mehr denn je der Meinung, daß man eine menschenwürdige Existenz nur am Rande der Gesellschaft sich heute ermöglichen kann, wobei man dann eben mit mehr oder weniger Humor riskiert, von ihr entweder gesteinigt oder zum Hungertode verurteilt zu werden."* (Arendt to Jaspers, January 29, 1946, Arendt 1985, 65)

However, at the same time she was enthusiastic about American democracy and people's determination to involve themselves in public affairs. On the basis of the discussion above one might conclude

that her views on pariahdom, totalitarianism and conformism are in inevitable contradiction with each other. However, I would like to argue that she was not, after all, that incoherent in her views on pariahdom and conformism as one might think at first sight. I will clarify my argument by means of the following quotation:

”Der Grundwiderspruch des Landes ist politische Freiheit bei gesellschaftlicher Knechtschaft. Das letztere ist vorläufig nicht absolut herrschend, wie ich schon sagte. Aber es ist gefährlich, weil die Gesellschaft sich ”rassenmäßig” organisiert und orientiert. Und zwar gesellschaftlich gesehen ohne jede Ausnahme, von der Bourgeoisie bis herunter zur Arbeiterschaft. Das hängt natürlich mit dem Einwanderungsland zusammen, wird aber auf eine unheilvolle Weise verschärft durch die Negerfrage; d.h. Amerika hat wirklich ein ”Rassen”problem und nicht nur eine Ideologie. Sie wissen natürlich, daß der gesellschaftliche Antisemitismus hier vollkommen selbstverständlich ist, die Abneigung gegen Juden gleichsam ein consensus omnium; dem steht eine nahezu ebenso starke Absonderung der Juden gegenüber, die dadurch natürlich auch geschützt sind. Eine junge im Lande geborene jüdische Freundin von mir hat, glaube ich, in unserm Hause zum ersten Mal nichtjüdische Amerikaner gesellschaftlich getroffen. Dies nun besagt nicht, daß man sich nicht politisch für die Juden einsetzen würde; nur gesellschaftlich wünscht man auf beiden Seiten ”unter sich” zu sein.” (Arendt to Jaspers, January 29, 1946, Arendt 1985, 67)

Thus, there is a contradiction between political and social principles in American society. On the political level, equality, freedom and democracy are celebrated as self-evident principles of politics. On the level of civil society, discrimination and corresponding self-segregation are considered self-evidences.

The danger of this system lies in the fact that there is no guarantee that social discrimination will not, one day, get out of hand. In other words, there is no guarantee that the purely social phenomenon of racial and other social discrimination will not penetrate the political realm. As far as I can see, Arendt actually hints that this kind of pen-

etration is already taking place but the question is how far it will go.

This is where social conformism enters the scene. In American society which is shaped by a desperate desire to conform, there is no guarantee that this desire will stay where it belongs, in the social realm. One day it may break into the political realm too, destroying one of the most important political principles which is the right to express one's difference, or one's political identity in public acts and deeds. The political realm does not bear any breaking of this principle.

### **6.3. The Two Sides of the Same Coin**

Despite the growing attention paid to Arendt's early writings it is still widely assumed that her impact on political theory principally concerns the theorization of the political in the public realm. In this framework the public space of politics is constituted every time people gather together to begin something new. The hallmarks of political action in the public realm are equality and freedom. The political actor of the public realm acts equally among her peers: differences in private identities do not matter, all that matters is performance on the spot: political identity is born and expressed in these public deeds. Freedom is the same as taking the initiative. In other words, political freedom is the same as realization of the capacity to begin something new which concerns the common world.

The thematization of pariahdom in Arendt's thought does not undo this assumption. It rather shows that her impact on political theory is not restricted to the theorization of political action in the public realm under "normal" circumstances; her early ideas on Jewish pariahdom might be an equally important source of inspiration for theorization of the political. Whereas Arendt's later theorizations of politics concern conditions of politics in "normal" circumstances where actors have access to the public space of politics, her theorizations of pariahdom deal with the conditions of politics in extreme situations.

Thus, Arendt's conception of pariahdom is not in conflict with what she later says (e.g. in HC) about political action in the public

realm. On the contrary, the pariah as an outcast without access to any political community might be viewed as a counterpart to the citizen-actor of the political realm. In other words, the citizen-actor and the pariah might be viewed as reverse sides of the same coin (c.f. Parvikko 1993 and 1996). Indeed, I would suggest that it is difficult to fully grasp Arendt's concept of political action without being acquainted with her concept of pariahdom. This is because without knowing her notion of pariahdom and its role in her political theory it easily begins to seem as if political initiative is something reserved for fully authorized citizen-actors, ignoring the existence of those who do not have access to the public sphere of politics.

The thematization of pariahdom shows that this is by no means the case. It shows that Arendt was fully aware of the fact that historically speaking citizenship and political freedom have been the privilege of a handful of men on very elitist terms. In other words, the thematization of pariahdom introduces onto the scene of action and initiative those who have been excluded from exercising political power for a variety of reasons. However, Arendt's analysis of Jewish pariahdom shows that what is at stake is not a simple, black and white situation of oppressors and victims. In other words, the pariah is not an innocent victim of evil forces around her.

This argument also offers a clue to the negative reception of the Eichmann book among American Jewish intellectuals. They were far from well acquainted with Arendt's perspective of political theorization characterized by dimensions of action and responsibility. They had rather got used to moral judgements. In other words, they were not able to distinguish between moral and political judgement but were rather inclined to view Arendt's contribution in terms of moral judgement. This led to a thesis according to which Arendt makes the Jews guilty of their own destruction.

## **6.4. Commitment to Freedom and Dignity**

In conclusion, it is my argument that at the heart of Arendt's conception of pariahdom there is the notion of the inescapable partial responsibility of the pariah which she used as one of the guiding



principles of political judgement in different contexts.

In the case of the political fate of European Jewry Arendt's considerations gradually developed into an analysis of the political strategies of the European Jewish leadership. The traditional *apolitical* ghetto existence of the nineteenth century which worked relatively well under the circumstances of social pariahdom was transformed into *antipolitical*<sup>3</sup> conformism of the twentieth century.

More precisely, as far as the traditional Jewish survival strategy of charity may be considered purely unpolitical, in the circumstances of traditional ghetto existence it was accompanied by an overall apolitical, i.e. extra-worldly orientation characterized by an eschatological world view and keeping up traditional Judaism. This apolitical orientation provided the Jews with no political ability and strength in the changing political circumstances of the twentieth century. On the contrary, what once had been a successful survival strategy in relation to the Gentiles was transformed into antipolitical co-operation with the enemy. The Jewish leadership was unprepared and unable to see that it was impossible to deal with the Nazis within the traditional limits of the possible and impossible. The Jewish Councils became a manifestation of the antipolitical way of dealing with the enemy *par excellence* in Jewish political history.

Secondly, I would like to argue that Arendt's conception of responsibility has nothing to do with everyday understanding of political responsibility as a burdensome duty of the powers that be. In other words, it does not correspond to *Realpolitik*, in the framework of which responsibility is assumed only for those decisions and choices which appear "realistic" and possible to carry out. It is characteristic of this attitude of *Realpolitik* that those who do not adapt to it are accused of being irresponsible. In contrast, Arendtian responsibility stems from the acceptance of the unpredictability and contingency of political action. To assume responsibility means to accept commitment to acts and deeds not all the results of which can be foreseen. In a wider frame, the inescapability of responsibility refers to an existential condition of human beings in the common world of men and women.

It is important to recognize that although the political responsibility of the citizen and personal responsibility of the pariah are not

completely identical, personal responsibility also has political significance. More precisely, the responsibility of the pariah has a double character. On the one hand it refers to the inescapable fact that personal choices and decisions contribute to the political fate of the pariah. On the other hand, what is at stake in the responsibility of the pariah is no more and no less than maintaining one's personal dignity. The aspect of dignity renders the responsibility of the pariah dramatic since maintaining one's self-dignity in extreme situations is not a simple matter. It may be that if certain limits are transgressed a dignified human existence is no longer possible. This would be the case of the concentration camp which might be understood as a perfect travesty of human community and interaction.<sup>4</sup>

Hannah Arendt was principally concerned with pariah politics in the situation which preceded the concentration camps. Even though at a certain point after 1941 the limit of life and death was transgressed as all routes led to the camps, the choice of how and by whom the deportations were organized was still available.

In the final analysis, the message of the conscious pariah is simple but demanding: even in unprecedented and extreme situations one should not humble oneself before the enemy but maintain one's pride and dignity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Recognition of the Lazarean dimension of the origins of Arendt's conception of political judgement might also illuminate rereadings of her later studies on this theme, most importantly *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (1982). I decided to leave consideration of Kant's impact on Arendt's thinking out of this study as it would deserve thorough discussion requiring a lot of space. However, it is obvious that if one aims to proceed along the route indicated in this study the next step to take is to relate Lazare's impact on Arendt to that of Kant.

<sup>2</sup>In fact, a remarkable proportion of Arendt's apparent incoherences, to which I referred in the first chapter of this study, stem from her conscious methodological and rhetorical strategy of dramatizing and exaggerating in order to clarify and emphasize her own point.

- <sup>3</sup>Arendt does not systematically operate with the opposition of apolitical - antipolitical. This systematization of her argument is my own.
- <sup>4</sup>One of the most impressive descriptions of how human dignity is lost in a concentration camp is Primo Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* which is based on his own experience of Auschwitz and which should form a part of the basic reading of everyone who attempts to understand the mechanisms of the destruction of European Jewry.

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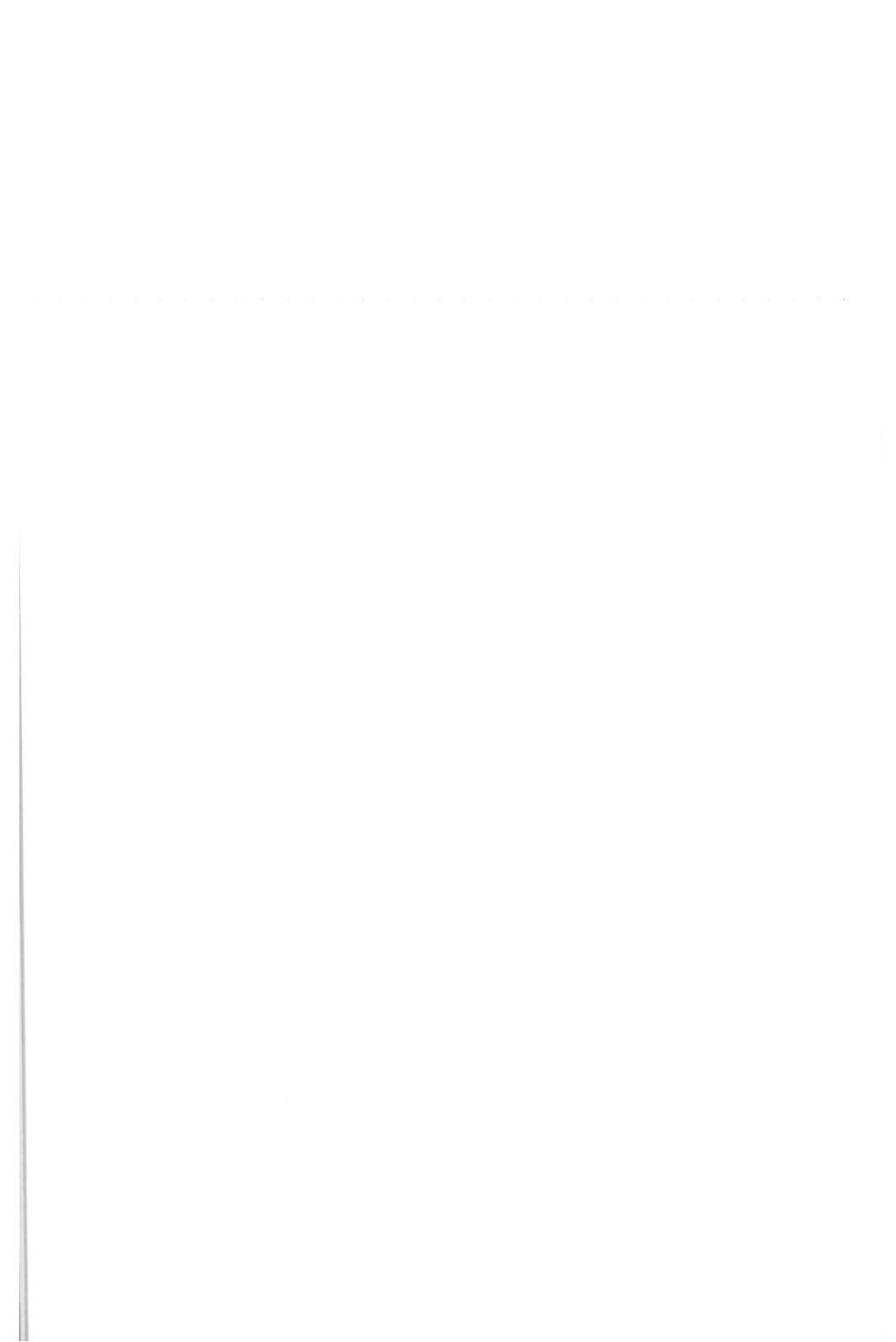
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Tuija Parvikko adds significantly to the (often controversial) understanding of Hannah Arendt and deals at the same time with the question of political and personal responsibility, different forms and situations of the socially and politically excluded pariah, anti-Semitism, the destruction of European Jewry, the supposed innocence of victims, genocide, xenophobia, and other questions of the utmost historical as well as current political significance. Tuija Parvikko's book is an exciting journey through a lot of important issues in historical and contemporary politics and the notion of the political.

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Tuija Parvikko is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland

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