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THE MORALLY OBNOXIOUS COMPARISONS OF EVIL: American Slavery and the Holocaust

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EVIL HAS NO BOUNDS. It seeks to harm not just the body, but to destroy the soul as well. Thus, while animals can be vicious, only human beings can be evil. For although the vicious animal aims to harm, it does not behave with a conception of human beings having moral value. Such behavior is the purview of human beings—and gods if there be any.

Around 1600 (C.E), the people of (the colonies that would eventually become) the United States began importing blacks from the continent of Africa for slave labor; and the Constitution later adopted by the colonies declared blacks 3/5 of a person. Three hundred years later, around 1938, the people of Nazi Germany, under the direction of Adolph Hitler, set as their aim the extermination of the Jewish people, killing around 6 million. American Slavery is the paradigm of black

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suffering for blacks in the United States; and the Holocaust is the paradigm of Jewish suffering for Jews throughout the world. The claims of the first two sentences are purely factual. Of course, the order in which I have mentioned the events to which they refer is not; for I have mentioned them in chronological order. No one can possibly dispute this order of occurrence. Alas, what is a matter of great dispute is precisely whether or not one should mention these events in chronological order. For it is assumed by far too many that the order in which one mentions these events, even if one is mentioning them in chronological order, reflects the judgment that one takes the event mentioned first to be the greater evil of the two and, therefore, that the people involved suffered more.

I have merely mentioned these two events in chronological order. No judgment about which event is the greater evil is intended. However, the fact that I cannot take it for granted that I will be understood in this way, either by blacks or Jews, speaks to the enormous tension between blacks and Jews in the United States over which event is the greater evil, and so who has suffered more—blacks or Jews. As an aside, I should note that the

two groups, blacks and Jews, are generally mentioned in alphabetical order, which in English requires mentioning blacks first. In French, the alphabetical order requires mentioning the two groups in reverse order: one says “les juifs (Jews) et les noirs (blacks)”. At any rate, the obvious question that arises is what turns on the answer to the question “Which was the greater evil, the Holocaust or American Slavery?” What does the “victor” gain?

A separate issue that contributes to the tension between blacks and Jews, and one that I shall not at all address in this essay, pertains to the role that Jews played in the American Slave trade. Some blacks (Martin 1993) have claimed that Jews were the central figures in the trading of black slaves, a claim that utterly astonishes Jews and that cannot be squared with the facts. For instance, we do not find in the writings of Thomas Jefferson, a man of great intellectual powers and who engaged in considerable self-reflection, any indication that Jews were the key figures of the slave trade. He did not deny the reality of slavery, and so there is no reason whatsoever to think that he would have denied the presence of Jews in the slave trade had they been the primary agents

involved. As I said, however, this is a separate issue that I will not address.

In the essay, I shall proceed as follows. First, I shall examine the claim that, between the American Slavery and the Holocaust, one was more evil than the other. Then I shall offer an explanation for why the United States, in particular, has been a very fertile social environment for this debate between blacks and Jews. Finally, I shall explain why the “competition” between blacks and Jews has served to trivialize the evil which both has suffered.

The Comparison

Louis Farrakhan has on occasion claimed that more than 20 million blacks lost their lives as a direct result of slavery. Farrakhan is the leader of the Nation of Islam who has served as something of a lightning rod in American culture.¹ While the

¹ As of this writing, a search of the name “Louis Farrakhan” using the Google search engine will turn up more than 26,000 entries. For a biography of Farrakhan, see the Nation of Islam’s entry:

<http://www.noi.org/information/mlf-bio.html>

For a discussion of Farrakhan’s anti-Semitism see, the article by Joseph J. Levin, Jr. “Farrakhan: A Long

Nation of Islam adopts some Islamic customs, it is not strictly speaking a branch of Islam. Farrakhan is both admired and detested by many, including the very same individuals in some instances. He is admired for his strong and unequivocal message that blacks should help themselves rather than relying upon (to use his language: racist) whites to help them. He is detested for his vitriolic statements about Jews, having referred to Judaism as a gutter religion. On the one hand, Jews admire his black self-help message; on the other, and not surprisingly, they cringe at his characterizations of Jews and Judaism. A most powerful speaker, he invariably incites emotions all across the continuum, ranging from complete adulation to excruciating fear, whenever and wherever he speaks. At one time, Farrakhan seems to have all but characterized the Holocaust

History of Hate" hosted by the website of the Southern Poverty Law Center:

<http://www.splcenter.org/cgi-bin/goframe.pl?refname=/centerinfo/lci-7.html>

For the Nation of Islam's official view regarding the relationship between blacks and Jews, see its publication *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*.

as nothing more than a fiction created by Jews to manipulate white America. In recent times, he seems to have distanced himself from this characterization of the Holocaust, even suggesting that it is inappropriate to deny its occurrence. Whether Farrakhan would revise his figure of the number of blacks lost during slavery is not clear. Nor, in the first place, is it known what his basis for the figure of 20 million might be.

Steven Katz, the noted scholar of Jewish thought, estimates that somewhere between 12-15 million blacks lost their lives as a direct result of slavery, with most lives being lost during what is called the Middle Passage. Although Katz's estimate is lower than Farrakhan's figure, it still turns out according to Katz that at least twice as many more blacks lost their lives as a result of slavery than did Jews as a result of the Holocaust. A difference of 8 million lives, at most, is hardly trivial. So something does turn on whether Farrakhan or Katz is right. What is interesting, for our purposes, is this. Although Katz himself holds that more blacks lost their lives than Jews, he nonetheless holds that the Holocaust was a more evil institution than American Slavery. Clearly, then, he does not think that the magnitude of evil is

entirely settled by the number of lives lost. As a conceptual point, this is quite right. The number of Native Indians who lost their lives in the Americas is estimated upwards of 80 million. Does this automatically put the evils of the Holocaust and American Slavery on a lower plane? And what about the massacres of Stalin? No evil can be measured exclusively in terms of the number of lives lost, although the number of lives lost is, to state a most obvious truth, a very relevant factor.

What Katz holds is that the actual intentions of the agents of an evil institution must be taken into account; and he notes that the intention of Nazi soldiers and the intention of slave traders were quite different, a difference that he incisively characterized as follows: the intention of the Nazis was the death of Jews; whereas the death of blacks was not the intention of slave traders, although their actions resulted in a great many blacks actually dying. To these considerations one need only add the widely accepted assumption that death is the ultimate wrong that one can visit upon anyone; hence, to intend the death of anyone, with full deliberation and willfulness, is to intend the ultimate wrong. This seems to accord with a deep and unshakable intuition. Precisely

what first degree murder requires is not only the death of a person, but the intent to kill that individual. Manslaughter is killing without the intention to kill.

Jews find Katz's line of reasoning as obvious as one can get in talking about substantive issues in a non-trivial ways. And they are typically at a loss as to why blacks do not grasp the obvious. With blacks, on the other hand, Katz's line of seems to have all the feel of a masterful *leger de main*. How could a matter of such importance be settled with an argument of so few premises—and innocuous ones at that—unless something is amiss? Neither blacks nor Jews deny Katz's claim that death is the ultimate wrong. Quite the contrary, both readily appeal to it. So do they disagree over Katz's claim about the respective intentions of Nazis and slave traders? But how can that be? On no one's interpretation was the aim of slave traders to exterminate blacks off the face of the earth. Besides, even if it is true that the slave traders exhibited unparalleled callousness in knowingly engaging in behavior that would result in blacks losing their lives, it is a conceptual truth that it does not thereby follow that the slave traders intended that blacks would lose

their lives.

In *Vessels of Evil*, I argued that aims of the Holocaust and the aims of American Slavery were so different that no comparison could be made between the two. I further argued that American Slavery rendered blacks natively alienated, whereas the Holocaust did not have this effect upon Jews as Jews, though millions had been killed. Some have pointed out to me that this line of argument belittles the loss of Yiddish culture as a result of the Holocaust. That was not my intention. My thought then and now is that there is a concept of being a Jew that is independent of Ashkenazi Jews or Sephardic Jews; and my point was that the deeper concept of being a Jew was not destroyed by the Holocaust. It would be silly to say that nothing pertaining to Jewish culture was lost. However, it is not Jewish culture that defines Judaism. There is one Judaism *per se*, which admits of many cultures. This point holds independently of differences of interpretation, which is another matter entirely.

There is, though, a quite substantial point that I would make differently; and Richard Rubenstein's argument best helps me to make this point. He held that the Holocaust is properly

understood as the institution of American Slavery taken to the ultimate limit. Slavery entails subjugation and death is the ultimate form of subjugation. For Rubenstein, all the evil that might be done to human beings found its most complete expression in the Holocaust. I hold this thesis to be false. Not because I discount, in any way, any of the evil that took place in the Holocaust, but because I hold that the Holocaust does not exhaust the possibilities of evil. There is no need to recount within these pages the atrocities of the Holocaust. All the same, one thing is clear: *Evil is not impoverished*.

Rubenstein's argument misses the lived experience of slavery; and the natal alienation thesis of *Vessels of Evil* was intended as a corrective in this regard. More poignantly, though, Rubenstein's argument misses the incongruous demand of utter loyalty and on-going complete subordination to the will of another. Minimally, loyalty is a human virtue because it is an expression of the desire to act on behalf of another in the realization of her or his goals. Loyalty is to be contrasted with deliberate betrayal and deception. Complete subordination is thus incompatible with loyalty. Slavery is never just

about the subjugation of subordination. It is necessarily about inculcating utter loyalty on the part of the slaves. And it is this truth, this substantial under-characterization of slavery, that Rubenstein misses.

Rubenstein is not the only one guilty of this under-characterization of slavery. The aim to show the cruelty of slavery has inclined many to characterize the treatment of black slaves as animal like. Hence, there is the expression “chattel slavery”. I now believe that the expression “chattel slavery” is very infelicitous. This is because what was wanted was not animals or human beings who would perform the tasks of animals. As the nanny role of American Slavery so forcefully illustrates, what was wanted was human beings who would perform human tasks and who could be relied upon to perform those tasks willingly. No animal could ever have met this expectation. No animal ever gave rise to this expectation, because the expectation is quintessentially an expectation about human behavior.

How we describe things is extremely important, no less so with good than with evil. The Nazis showed a methodicalness about killing a

people that humanity had never before witnessed. Yet, what the Nazis did not demand is loyalty from the very people whom they sought to kill. By contrast, slavery aimed to deliver the good of utter loyalty, on the one hand, combined with the ease of complete subordination, on the other. What is more, just as it would have made no sense for the Nazis to have demanded loyalty of the very people whom they overtly sought to kill, it would have made no sense for those involved in slavery to have had as their aim the death of the very people from whom they wanted utter loyalty and complete subordination. The aims of American Slavery could not have included the ends of the Holocaust; and conversely, the aims of the Holocaust could not have included the ends of American Slavery.

My aim in this discussion has been to address the sense of *leger de main* that various blacks have felt regarding the comparison between the Holocaust and American Slavery without resorting to any untoward claims with regard to either the Holocaust or American Slavery. In particular, I have not magnified the evil of American Slavery nor diminished the evil of the Holocaust.

There remains, though, Katz’s central claim

that death is the ultimate wrong. Can this claim be challenged? Certainly people have thought that they would rather die than endure some wrongs. And just as certain, anyone who claims that death is the ultimate wrong is aware of this.

To state the obvious, death forecloses all options forever. This fact, and this fact alone, puts death in a category all by itself in terms of wrongs that one human being can do to another. Most significantly and respectfully, however, this truth about death does not make all wrongs that one might suffer preferable to wrongful death. Most women, if given the choice between being murdered and being raped by 100 men, would not hesitate to choose death. Most loving parents, if they had to choose between being murdered and the systematic and brutal torture of their child, would not hesitate to choose their own murder. It will be recalled that Sophie's unbearable angst in *Sophie's Choice* is just that she had to choose which one of her two children would die at the hands of the Nazis. No one, parent or not, fails to see that this as a fate worse than death. And we regard the Nazis who forced her to make this choice as particularly cruel and callous. Not because they raped her or not because they

murdered her, but because they forced her to make this choice and thereby condemned her to live a most unbearable memory. Thus, the case of *Sophie's Choice* reveals a most poignant truth, namely that there are some acts of cruelty that the Nazis performed that we regard as worse than the acts of murder that they routinely performed. Yet, none of this changes the truth that death forecloses all options forever.

There are, then, two truths that forever sit uncomfortably together—a maelstrom truth pairing, let us say, because the very fact that evil admits of both truths cannot fail to trouble us. One is that death forecloses all options forever. The other is that it is possible to commit some wrongs that are worse than the act of murder itself. Jews need both claims to be true in order to characterize properly the evil of the Holocaust. It is absurd and myopic to deny that some acts of evil are worse than murder. Blacks need both claims to be true in order to characterize properly the evil of American Slavery. It is absurd and myopic to deny that, in a fundamentally important sense of the word “ultimate”, death is the ultimate wrong that one human being can suffer at the hands of another. Indeed, each group has within the history of its

own experiences the confirmation of this maelstrom truth pairing.

I have not answered the question which institution was moral evil, the Holocaust or American Slavery. Instead, I have aimed to diffuse the rhetorical force of this question while offering an explanation for why on American soil blacks and Jews have been so animated by this question. It has always seemed to me that blacks and Jews have been unwitting pawns in the boxing ring of American culture, as each group sought to make sense of its experiences in terms of an ideology that it had not chosen. The evils of the Holocaust and the evil of American Slavery stand clear, each in their own right. And certainly no rational person could say that as a Jew in one case or as black in the other that he would rather that Jews have been victims of American Slavery than of the Holocaust or, conversely, that he would rather that blacks have been victims of the Holocaust rather than of American Slavery. Any such claim would strike any decent person as a sign of moral derangement, because nothing positive can possibly come of the discussion. So why has this issue been so vehemently debated in the United States. I take up this question in the section that

follows.

Groups and the American Dream

The American dream holds that success—even extraordinary success—is open to everyone, no matter how humble her or his origins may be. In order to succeed, it suffices that one is persistent and diligent in applying oneself. Specifically, the dream does not hold that a social environment of fairness is necessary in order to succeed. The idea here is not that fairness is simply irrelevant. Rather, it is that fairness as such is hardly decisive. Fairness is neither necessary nor sufficient for success. This parallel holds for numerous things in life. For example, candle light is relevant to a romantic atmosphere, though neither necessary nor sufficient for one. Hence, just as candle light is not a defining feature of a romantic atmosphere; an environment of fairness is not a defining feature of success. It is possible to enjoy great success in an unfair environment if one is persistent and diligent enough. Likewise, it is possible to achieve little or no success in a fair environment if one is not sufficiently persistent and diligent. Thus, the idea of the American dream carries with it the exceedingly strong presumption

that a person has no one to blame but herself or himself for failing to be successful. Without denying the reality of unfairness, the idea of the American dream entails that the absence of fairness is rarely the most important part of the explanation for why anyone fails to succeed.

There is something intuitively appealing about the idea of the American dream even if the idea is open to serious criticism. And the idea has its analogue in the saying coined by Thomas Edison that “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration”. Still, there is probably an asymmetry between fairness and unfairness in the following sense. While fairness hardly entails success, an environment of unfairness is more of an obstacle to success than the American dream would seem to acknowledge at least initially. Yet, in the end, even the American dream gives more credit to the person who succeeds against all odds than it does to the person who succeeds because everything was in place for her or him to succeed. So if it turns out that one group of people has suffered more than other groups but managed enormous success in spite of having suffered so, then this is in fact quite significant.

Owing to primarily historical reasons, most

countries do not seem to have an analogue to the American dream. For centuries, royalty was a formal part of the social fabric of European countries, and royalty was not something to which one could aspire or hope to attain by dint of hard work and diligence. Eschewing the idea of royalty from the outset, the professed ideology of the United States has been that the only thing relevant to a person’s success in all domains was hard work and the person’s own talent or lack thereof. Of course, this ideology has been more fantasy than fact. Still, it is a fantasy that has animated, and continues to animate, the lives of many.

This brings us back to blacks and Jews in the United States, and so to American Slavery and the Holocaust. The American dream is open to a crude form of group social Darwinism. On the one hand, the dream is exceedingly individualistic. On the other, the idea behind the dream can make it extremely difficult to resist drawing certain conclusions about people as members of groups. Roughly, we hold that person A is superior to person B in some important way or the other if A accomplishes more than B and the circumstances under which person A does this are not more favorable than person B’s circumstances or, in

particular, A's circumstances are less favorable than B's. Group social Darwinism is just this idea applied to groups. So for any two groups Alpha and Beta, Alpha is superior to Beta if under circumstances equally favorable to both groups or less favorable to Alpha, the members of Alpha randomly chosen have accomplished more than the members of Beta randomly chosen.

The preceding considerations yield the following conclusion: if between American Slavery and the Holocaust, it turns out that the Holocaust is the greater evil, then in view of Jewish accomplishments the conclusion that follows is that Jews are superior to blacks. Lest there be any misunderstanding, the claim here is not that Jews are seeking to have this conclusion established on their behalf. The point, instead, is a quite different one, namely that the idea of the American dream coupled with the success of Jews (which no one denies) and the claim that the Holocaust is the greater evil yields the conclusion that Jews are superior to blacks. I have examined elsewhere (Thomas 1996; 1998) and found wanting the hypothesis that suffering gives the sufferer any moral superiority or any immunity to biases. That is, Jews are capable of racist

stereotypes towards blacks and blacks are capable of anti-Semitic stereotypes towards Jews.

At any rate, blacks would seem to be left with two choices: (a) to deny the accomplishments of Jews or (b) to deny that the Holocaust is the greater evil. A third alternative would be (c) to resort to a kind of vicious anti-Semitism: Jews are in partnership with the devil himself and therein lies the explanation for their success. The Nation of Islam, under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan, has in times past taken this approach, combining it with (b). I shall not comment further upon (c). The very nature of this approach is abominable.

Interestingly, no one opts for (a), though some have argued that blacks have made comparable accomplishments in different domains for which they are not given sufficient recognition. It has been argued, for instance, that without the contribution of blacks, then American culture would not have the richness it has. Most unfortunately, this equalization of contributions does not diffuse the debate. Because if the contributions of blacks and Jews are equal, and yet one group has suffered more than the other, then a claim of superiority will still attach to the group that has

suffered the most. Some would not put contributions to culture on the same plane as literary and scientific contributions. But for the reason just given, we need not enter into that debate here.

As for (b), the move is to argue that American Slavery was so evil that it never gave blacks a chance. This is perhaps captured in the quip attributed to Malcolm X: "We black people did not land on Plymouth Rock; rather, Plymouth Rock landed on us". It is logically possible that between two evils, E_1 and E_2 , the first evil is so great that those upon whom the evil is visited could not be expected to succeed in any way, whereas this is not so with the second evil and those upon whom it is visited. Hence, comparisons between the successes of the second group and those of the first group are entirely out of order. There is nothing anti-Semitic about this purely logical point unless truth itself is anti-Semitic. The issue, of course, is whether this logical point holds any validity with respect to American Slavery vis-à-vis the Holocaust. I have argued in Section I that the point does not, which brings me to the criticism that I should like to raise of both blacks and Jews.

The Moral Sentiments and Evil

American Slavery and the Holocaust are irrecoverable harms. In either case, there is no future actions that can make up for the wrongs that were done. Thus, it is profoundly troubling, in either case, when too strong an emphasis is placed upon compensation or reparations, where the wrongs committed are inappropriately aligned with a monetary value. We distort the very evil that was done when the alignment between money and wrong is made so strong that it would seem as if something morally important has been recovered should sufficient money be awarded. It is significant that for two of the most serious crimes that can be committed on an individual basis, namely rape and murder, there is punishment for the wrongdoer but no pecuniary awards to victim of rape or to the victim's family in the case of murder. And this is as it should be. It would be a sad day, indeed, when either the rapist or the murderer can entertain the idea that he can settle his moral debt by digging deep into his pockets. If one day, jurors should find themselves debating how much rape or murder is worth in terms of pecuniary damages, then something will have gone terribly wrong with society. While it seems

odd to say, the truth of the matter is that in such a society evil itself will have been debased.

What is most important when it comes to egregious moral wrongs is not the pecuniary awards that can be made, but that the moral sentiments of righteous indignation are kept alive over these wrongs so that they are not committed again. The moral community is held together by the moral sentiments—not by the amount of money a person can pay for the wrongs that she has committed. If we lose sight of this, then we thereby shift the moral landscape against ourselves, trivializing the very wrongs that, with good reason, have so animated us. We cannot have a just society if we have one in which its members think that moral indignation is out of order for an egregious moral wrong because, after all, they have paid sufficient pecuniary damages for the wrong committed—say, 3 million euros or dollars for a rape and 12 million for a murder; for then there is nothing to prevent a person from thinking it is permissible so to behave just so long as he can pay the required pecuniary damages. No doubt this very explicit suggestion offends our moral sensibilities. And that is just the point. It should. We want a world, we want a society in

which for the evil that they do persons cannot purchase freedom from moral indignation on the part of others.

The preceding discussion is instructive with respect to the topic of blacks and Jews and their paradigm sufferings, respectively, American Slavery and the Holocaust. One wrong is not any less of a wrong because another wrong has also been committed. Rape is no less rape because a murder has been committed. And it would be untoward for a person, or for the relevant families, to diminish the wrong of rape because a murder has been committed. This would be wrong even if it is true that murder constitutes the greater moral wrong. In particular, the moral sensibilities owed to a victim of rape are inextricably tied to the nature of that wrong, and not to the fact that a wrong of a different nature and greater magnitude has or has not been committed. This is not a way of warming up to the suggestion that, between the Holocaust and American Slavery, one was worse than the other. Quite the contrary, the very point is that even if—and I repeat: *even if*—that judgment could be made it would have no bearing in a general way upon the moral sentiments that we should display with regard to each event.

A person watching the film *Roots* should experience great angst because *those* wrongs took place in that way. Likewise, a person watching the film *Schindler's List* should feel great angst because those *wrongs* took place in that way. Whether or not this or that set of evils can be placed serially on a continuum, our moral responsiveness over an evil does not require that we first settle the evil's location on the continuum, as if one would not know whether to cry or to feel indignation or to console until after the evil had been located on the continuum. Evil is cognitively *sui generis*. Thus, we do need to make a comparative analysis of evil in order to have the appropriate moral sentiments regarding it; and we trivialize evil when we resort to comparative analysis as if only then could a person have the appropriate moral response to the evil in question.

In this regard, two autobiographical essays about each evil are most instructive: Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of An American Slave: Written by Himself* and Elie Wiesel's *Night*. Each in his own words without any reference at all to the other's experiences describes the struggles of his life amidst evil. One is profoundly moved in each instance. No one

thinks to say that she did not understand one until she had read the other. What I infer from this is not the implausible claim that evil is non-comparative, but a quite different claim, namely that in order to grasp the horrendous suffering of an individual it is not necessary to have a comparison class at hand. This is because, as I have just noted in the preceding paragraph, evil is cognitively *sui generis*. Murder does not help us to understand rape, nor rape murder. Likewise, one does not need American Slavery to understand the horror of the Holocaust; and conversely, one does not need the Holocaust to understand the horror of American Slavery. To be sure, a very different and valid point is that studying both will undoubtedly yield greater insight into the nature of evil itself.

The preceding remarks provide further evidence that Rubenstein is mistaken. It would simply never occur to anyone to maintain that they did not understand the Holocaust until they had learnt about American Slavery. Yet, if what we have is a continuum with the Holocaust incorporating all the wrongs of American Slavery, then it ought to follow that either (a) one would have difficulty grasping the character of the

Holocaust in the absence of thorough knowledge about American Slavery or (b) if a person had a thorough knowledge about the Holocaust, then she pretty much understood the character of American Slavery. Either line of thought is preposterous; and the idea trivializes the evil of either institution.

Conclusion

The time has come when the swords of malevolent ideologies between blacks and Jews should be beaten into the ploughshares of good will; for these malevolent ideologies are serving no end but to warp our moral sensibilities. The sufferings of the Holocaust and the sufferings of American Slavery can be and should be recalled—not, however, with the aim of asserting any dominance over the other, but with the hope of nourishing our moral character and shoring up our foibles. These two events have given Jews and blacks an extraordinary opportunity to shed light on the ways of humanity. And if, with all their might, Jews and blacks gave this task the attention that it rightfully deserves, then not only would they be a moral light unto others, but unto one another as well.

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Grenzenlose Vorurteile

Antisemitismus, Nationalismus und ethnische Konflikte

Rassistische oder religiös motivierte Unruhen in Großbritannien, Frankreich, Spanien, Indien, Afrika, Terrorattentate, Krieg in Afghanistan, die blutigen Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern, aber auch rassistisch und antisemitisch motivierte Übergriffe in Deutschland - auch am Beginn des neuen Jahrtausends ist die Welt geprägt von ethnischen und rassistischen Konflikten. Das Jahrbuch widmet sich aus diesem Grund diesem Schwerpunkt.

Zwei einführende Beiträge von **Wulf D. Hund** und **John Solomos** liefern Erklärungen für die Entstehung und Wirkmechanismen des weltweiten Rassismus. In einem weit gespannten Bogen skizziert Wulf D. Hund die philosophische Tradition rassistischer Diskriminierung von der Antike bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. John Solomos untersucht den Rassismus als soziologisches und politisches Phänomen im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts mit inhaltlichem Schwerpunkt auf den Einwanderungsländern mit kolonialer Vergangenheit. **Iris Wigger** befasst sich anschließend mit der Geschichte und Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kernstückes rassistischer Agitation der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre in Deutschland – und nicht nur in Deutschland: der sogenannten „Schwarzen Schmach“. Die Stationierung afrikanischer Truppen im Rheinland und die angeblich von ihnen begangenen Sexualverbrechen und Plünderungen stießen nicht nur im radikalisierten Deutschland der zwanziger Jahre auf massive Empörung, sondern wurden in der ganzen Welt und nicht nur von konservativen oder nationalistischen Politikern als Angriff auf die Dominanz der „weißen Rasse“ begriffen. Nachdenklich macht die Tatsache, dass einer der beiden, schon bald verbotenen Propagandafilme von der Produktionsfirma zweier bekannter jüdischer Filmemacher hergestellt wurde. Diese Filme bedienten sich ähnlicher Argumentationsmuster wie in der massiven antisemitischen Propaganda nationalistischer und völkischer Gruppierungen. Hervorstechend ist der sexistische Kontext der Vorwürfe: das Bild des „lüsternen Juden“ mit ungeheurer sexueller Attraktivität konnte problemlos durch das des Senegalesen ersetzt werden; eine „weiße Frau“, die einem „Neger beigelegen“ hatte, galt als für die „weiße Rasse“ ebenso verdorben wie bei einer Liaison mit einem Juden.

Dass sich die Opfer rassistischer Diskriminierung nicht zwangsläufig zu solidarischem Handeln zusammenfanden, zeigt das nach wie vor schwierige Verhältnis von Juden und Afro-Amerikanern in Amerika. Unter dem Stichwort „Konkurrenz der Opfer“ setzen sich die Beiträge von **Jeffrey Shandler** und **Laurence Mordekhai Thomas** mit Teilaspekten dieser Problematik auseinander. Die gegenseitige Aufrechnung von Opfern des Holocaust und des Sklavenhandels erhält nicht nur immer wieder Brisanz durch die Agitation afro-amerikanischer Fundamentalisten wie der „Nation of Islam“ des Geistlichen Louis Farakhan, die den Sklavenhandel auf jüdische Menschenhändler zurückgeführt wissen wollen, wie **Laurence Mordekhai Thomas** in seinem Essay schreibt. Wie schwierig eine Annäherung beider Gruppierungen war und auch noch immer ist, macht die Diskussion um den Film *Liberators* deutlich, der die umstrittene Rolle „schwarzer Einheiten“ bei der Befreiung der Konzentrationslager Dachau und Buchenwald nachzeichnet.

Auch am Kap war das Verhältnis der jüdischen Bevölkerung zur einheimischen Bevölkerungsmehrheit nicht spannungsfrei. **Milton Shain** beleuchtet die Geschichte der Juden in Südafrika im Spannungsfeld von Apartheid und antisemitischer, „weißer“ Traditionen. Ähnlich wie in den USA und Frankreich wird der „traditionelle Antisemitismus“ hier überlagert durch einen islamistischen Antizionismus, der jedoch die progressive Rolle der liberalen Juden Südafrikas und ihre Verdienste bei der Überwindung der Apartheid nicht negieren kann.

Ein weiterer Schwerpunkt des Jahrbuchs analysiert die Debatte um die Ereignisse in der kleinen polnischen Stadt Jedwabne, dargestellt im Buch des Historikers Jan Tomasz Gross. In dem kleinen Ort waren nach dem Einmarsch der Deutschen in Polen die jüdischen Einwohner von ihren polnischen Nachbarn zusammengetrieben und ein Teil von ihnen in einer Scheune verbrannt worden. Dieser Vorfall rührt an ein Tabu und Trauma zugleich: die Rolle der Polen im Holocaust. **Stefan Garsztecki** untersucht im Kontext der kontrovers geführten Diskussion in Polen die Rolle des polnischen Antisemitismus. **Andreas Hofmann** analysiert das internationale Echo, insbesondere die Beurteilung in den deutschen Medien. Beide akzentuieren die ausschlaggebenden Gründe für das Verhalten der Bevölkerung von Jedwabne anders, nämlich

die umstrittene Kooperation einzelner jüdischer Bewohner mit der sowjetischen Okkupationsmacht – ein Faktum, das bis heute mehr von Ressentiments, Propaganda und Fehlinformationen bestimmt wird als von der (nur in Ansätzen erforschten) Wirklichkeit.

Auch in der Ukraine wurden die Pogrome nach dem Einmarsch der deutschen Armee mit der Rolle der jüdischen Bevölkerung bei der Sowjetisierung gerechtfertigt. Der russische Bär trug gewissermaßen ein jüdisches Gesicht, und hinter dem Zweiten Weltkrieg stand die sattsam bekannte jüdisch-bolschewistische Weltverschwörung, wie eine Analyse der wichtigsten ukrainischen Tageszeitung *L'vivs'ki Visti* (L'viv News) zeigt, die **Henry Abramson** in seinem Beitrag vornimmt. Obwohl dem deutschen Propagandaministerium unterstehend, griffen die Autoren dieser Zeitung auf alte und wirkungsvolle Stereotypen zurück, um die Beteiligung der Ukrainer am Holocaust zu legitimieren und zu verstärken. Dass diese antisemitische Propaganda und ihre Ingredienzien nicht mit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs verschwanden, zeigt die andauernde antisemitische Tradition in der heutigen Ukraine, wenngleich sie nicht mehr die Virulenz und Verbreitung besitzt wie vor sechzig Jahren.

Das Thema Kollaboration ist jedoch hier genauso umstritten wie in Westeuropa. So wie die Ereignisse in Jedwabne in Polen oder Lemberg in der Ukraine fast ein nationales Trauma bedeuten, so ist die Rolle Frankreichs bei der Verfolgung und Vernichtung der Juden erst in den letzten Jahrzehnten intensiv untersucht worden, wie der Beitrag von **Jean Marc Dreyfus** vermittelt. Dominierten im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Franzosen je nach politischer Verortung die Resistance und das Regime von Vichy, so steht die Zeit zwischen 1940 und 1945 nun für einen französischen Antisemitismus und die Kollaboration mit den deutschen Besatzern. Doch das Einwanderungsland Frankreich sieht sich in den letzten Jahren zunehmend mit einer anderen Spielart des Antisemitismus konfrontiert: dem Antizionismus der Einwanderer aus dem Maghreb, der in den Monaten nach dem 11. September zu ersten Unruhen führte.

Wie der wachsenden Fremdenfeindlichkeit und rechtsextremen Gewalt in Deutschland schließlich zu begegnen ist und welche pädagogischen Konzepte sich in der Realität in Ost- und Westdeutschland als tragfähig erwiesen haben und welche nicht, skizzieren **Annegret Ehmann** und **Micha Brumlik**. Abschließend stellt **Rafael von Uslar** einige ausgewählte Exponate der internationalen Kunstausstellung „Blondies and Brownies – Blondinchen und Bräunchen – weiß, weiß bin auch ich“ vor, die die Alltäglichkeit eines bewussten oder unbewussten Rassismus eindringlich vermittelt. Die Ausstellung mit Beiträgen von Künstlern aus Australien, den USA und Neuseeland, die 2001 in Kooperation mit dem Kunstforum Praterinsel (München) stattfand, thematisiert die Gewalt, die aus rassistischen Vorurteilen hervorgehen kann, und macht diese zu einem provokativen Gegenstand der Kunst. Das Cover des Jahrbuchs greift ein Motiv dieser Ausstellung auf. Der Autor des Jahrbuchbeitrags, Rafael von Uslar, ist auch Kurator der Ausstellung zum Auschwitz-Prozess, die das Fritz Bauer Institut anlässlich des 40. Jahrestags des Prozessbeginns vorbereitet.

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