

The Revolutionary Potential of Mythology:

Examining the Rise of Nationalism in Judaism and Hinduism in the 20th Century
And the Egalitarian, Revolutionary Communities and Thinkers Who Challenge Statism,
Nationalism, and Capitalism Within these Traditions

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Introduction

Today, a sense of anxiety pervades the topic of new forms of religious thought. The internet and global news outlets, through which much of humanity now turns to to learn about their increasingly connected world, are riddled with the sensationalism of ‘religious extremism.’ So often we are informed about the new threats to our societies that arise in the forms of ultra-orthodox terrorist cells or extreme Rightwing¹ nationalist groups utilizing the allure of salvation and physical violence as coercive tools to further extend their grasps at power. The War on Terror has solidified these groups as the new faceless threats to our postcolonial democracies. But what of the new emerging religious trends that coincide more with the far-Left end of the political spectrum? Why do we not hear about these spiritual practices that at once seek to both undermine the status quo and create a more equitable system in its place? The Left itself is partially to blame for this. In the wake of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution the ideologies of anarchism, socialism, and communism were produced that would come to define the Left extreme of the Western political spectrum. For this examination, I will focus predominantly on the variants of anarchist thought, being the only one of these three ideologies that rejects any and all hierarchical authority in all of its various forms. However, anarchism, socialism, and communism all seek to finally fulfill the promise espoused by liberal

¹ For the sake of clarifying terminology: Throughout this paper I will be discussing various political movements and organizations who are categorized as or self-identify with the labels “Leftwing,” “far-Right,” “Left,” “Right,” etc. While the two opposing sides are generally considered mutually exclusive, in practice this is not always the case as there are examples where a far-Left movement could be anti-authoritarian but ethnically exclusive, or a Rightwing organization could be pro-globalization but anti-statist. This political dichotomy is not clear-cut but for the ease of the reader and the author of this essay the terms “Left” and “Right” will be categorized by their most common elements in world politics today: Left = socialist, communist, anarchist, or other anti-capitalist and democratic ideologies. Right = economically neoliberal (or generally capitalist and pro-globalization), authoritarian, and in favor of community homogeneity.

democracy of instilling the people with true sovereign power. Because of the historical context in which Enlightenment era philosophy arose (at a time in which the power of the state and the church were almost equal and vast, if not coterminous with each other) many of the early adherents to these libertarian ideologies held an ambivalent, if not contentious, attitude toward religion, spirituality, and mythology in general. In his most famous statement on the subject Karl Marx claims: "The wretchedness of religion is at once an expression of and a protest against real wretchedness. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."² Quoted in full, this view of religion does seem to give credence to religion being a very real and legitimate expression of the suffering of the lower classes, while at the same time recognizing the numbing effects it can exert on society in its various institutionalized forms. However, many of his political successors³ tended to gloss over the ambivalence in Marx's words and outright condemned libertarian political movements that were religious in nature, and religion as a whole, as irrational, reactionary, and a hindrance towards progress. Many times, "...anarchists [also] forget the role that religion often plays in serving the oppressed classes in their desire to subvert illegitimate power."⁴ While powerful religious institutions are frequently seen tied to the state, and should be critiqued, an outright rejection of religiosity in its entirety can only

² Marx, Karl. *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"*. Pg. 131.

³ "Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise [sic] charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man."

Lenin, V.I. "Socialism and Religion." V.I. Lenin: Collected Works. Vol. 10. Pg. 83.

⁴ Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." *Dalit Theology and Christian Anarchism*. Pg. 154.

further isolate the religious working class and the indigenous peoples that the Left purports to represent.

This is not to say that all political thinkers on the Left beat the drum of mandatory atheism and dismiss religion outright. Many understand that “to reject political protest on the grounds of its religiosity is no less bourgeois than to foster a religion of power and oppression,”⁵ and have put in tremendous work in uncovering the libertarian strains that have existed among heretical and marginalized religious groups throughout the ages. Arguably, many of these radical sects actually laid the groundwork for these Leftwing philosophies to spring forth during the Enlightenment⁶ and their heretical doctrines, espousing equality and a disdain for ecclesiastical authority, have inspired a constant reexamination of the religious narratives of their respective traditions. Paul Chambers notes in his article “Anarchism, Anti-clericalism and Religions” that it is important to “...distinguish between religions of power and religions of revolt.”⁷ While all of the great world religions have a main, institutionalized body, or at the very least a ruling priestly class that works in conjunction with the various states, it is my argument that all of them also contain their own sects and traditions of “religions of revolt” that seek to challenge and subvert its larger, priestly, hierarchical, state-sanctioned form.

In order to narrow the focus of this particular project I have chosen to focus on the Hindu and Jewish traditions, being the oldest and foundational religious movements in the East and West respectively. As stated above, I believe this kind of examination is possible, and

⁵ Heben, Keith “Building a Dalit World in the Shell of the Old: Conversations Between Dalit Indigenous Practice and Western Anarchist Thought,” *Religious Anarchism: New Perspectives*. 2011. Pg.164.

⁶ Nieburh, Reinhold. "Marx and Engels on Religion." *Faith and Politics: A Commentary on Religious, Social and Political Thought in a Technological Age*. Pg. 48.

⁷ Chambers, Paul. "Anarchism, Anti-clericalism and Religions." *Anarchist Studies* 14.1 (2006). Pg. 39.

indeed necessary, for all religious traditions, but for the scope of this current paper I will limit it to these two specific examples. Each of these faiths is currently in the throes of having to reexamine itself in terms of national authority and the increasing political roles they are being forced into in our globalized world. Since Indian independence from the British in 1947 the recognition and abusive treatment of their Dalit communities, the rise of *Hindutva* nationalism, and the tension between minority religious groups within the Indian state all show how inextricably linked religion and politics have become for the lawmakers and the citizens of this country. Judaism as well is having to grapple with the realities of nationalism as a result of Zionism and the establishment of the state of Israel, a decision that still splits many Jewish communities to this day. For the first time in 2000 years there exists a Jewish-majority nation, although this hegemony has been imposed through the use of state sanctioned violence, the suppression of political criticism, and the displacement of the religious Other, i.e. the Arab Palestinians. In its quest to liberate the Jewish people from exile the Zionist state has created a newly dispossessed diaspora. But these religious-nationalist regimes are not without their critics, even if they actively attempt to silence them. More people than ever are now challenging the authority of the violent forces that desperately seek to maintain their grasps on political power and those who claim to be closest to God.

The hardline separation of church and state that seemed so necessary to political thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries began to show cracks in its foundation only a short while later in the 20th century. Increasingly, matters of religious preference came to weigh upon the decisions of the politicians in these Enlightened democracies and colonial states. Only look to the legislative bodies of India, Israel, or the United States to see laws being argued with

religious reasoning and sometimes even scriptural support. While the state is now the sole distributor of civic law, its authority and system of jurisprudence continue to be derived from the same theological concepts and structures (although now secularized) which allowed an Inquisitor to speak and judge on behalf of God only a few centuries before.⁸ But if in the 21st century religion still holds weight in the political realm, what about the political in the realm of the religious? Can earthly liberation effect the shape of the cosmos?

In his essay "Anarchist Action," Nicolas Walter identifies several kinds of political tactics that are traditionally associated with the far Left, two of which he sees as truly productive forms of action. The first, and by far the most common, is the practice of direct action or political agitation.⁹ Through this practice radical Leftists seek to circumvent the established channels of communication and production within the state in order to try and move directly to their particular goal. These types of actions may include "invading military bases... taking over universities, squatting in homes... occupying factories,"¹⁰ chaining themselves to construction equipment or to trees in a forest slated for lumber use. Whether these actions take place in schools, homes, workplaces, or ecological environments, the goal is to use masses of bodies in order to halt production or force communication outside of the normal bureaucratic channels that generally slow and control political dissent. The other most productive form of revolutionary action, and the one most pertinent to the topic at hand, is the creation self-sufficient, egalitarian communities outside of, or within but separate from, society at large.

⁸ Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. U of Chicago, 2006. Pg. 36.

⁹ Walter, Nicolas. "Anarchist Action." *The Anarchist Reader*. Pg. 168.

¹⁰ Ibid. pg. 169.

“This has at times been a widespread phenomenon, among religious enthusiasts during the [European] Middle Ages... and among many kinds of people more recently.”¹¹

While not constituting political ideologies in and of themselves, many of the utopian marginalized religious sects from the past mentioned above, or various ancient indigenous practices that continue to this day, were founded upon unrest and oppression within this earthly life. Now, in the present, with temporal and spatial limitations being superseded by technology, the individual religious lives of all peoples are ripe for revolutionary renewal. By reexamining the narratives of their religious traditions people today are again questioning the traditional theological explanations of these texts and inscribing their own moral accounts upon these characters and events, many of which are reversals of their priestly sanctioned meanings. In the following pages, I will not only address the current issues facing the integration of religions within the modern state and the various forms of extreme nationalism that have result from this admixture, but also how these spiritually self-governed and politically utopian movements are seeking to create their own forms of egalitarian society along the margins of state. These communities, whether purposefully or simply as a result of their of their differing natures and constructions, are able to place themselves outside of and subvert the authority of the global capitalist economic structure and the confines of the state on whose edges they are formed.

¹¹ Walter, Nicolas. "Anarchist Action." 1969. *The Anarchist Reader*. Sussex, England: Harvester, 1977. Pg. 169-170.

Hinduism

The question of Hinduism is a complicated one, not only of dynamics, but also just terminology. "Hindu" is an old term with various historical and theological etymologies, the most widely accepted deriving it from the Sanskrit word "Sindhu," or river, specifying the Indus river that was once the seat of the ancient Indus Valley civilization, and later the Indo-Aryan peoples who first practiced the Vedic religion. While the word Sindhu is Sanskrit, the derivations of it that led to the creation of the terms "Hindu" and "India" were first used by outsiders (Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Chinese, etc.) and was strictly geographical in meaning. In Old Persian, the initial "s" of Sindhu is replaced with an "h" so that the Persians called the river and its surrounding geography "Hindush," from which the word Hindu comes. Upon adoption by the Greeks the initial "h" was dropped, creating "Indos," from which we get the name India.¹² In more recent history the term "Hindu" has come to designate a particular cultural, national, and religious identity. The first recorded examples of the word "Hindu" being used as a term of self-identification were found in vernacular poetic texts of North India dating back to sometime around the fall of the Delhi Sultanate and the rise of the Mughal Empire in the 16th century. At the same time, Muslim texts from these areas referred to all of their native subjects with the catch-all term "al-Hind,"¹³ which did not distinguish between Buddhists, Jains, or practitioners of the various Vedic sects. According to David Lorenzen it was "...a process of mutual self-identification with a contrasting Muslim Other" that gave rise to this Hindu identity,

¹² Trautman, Thomas R. *India: Brief History of a Civilization*. Pg. 9/10

¹³ *Ibid.* pg. 10.

for “without the Muslim (or some other non-Hindu), Hindus can only be Vaishnavas, Saivas, Smartas or the like.”¹⁴

The term “Hinduism” is even harder to pinpoint in its historical and strictly religious usage. Many Hindu reformers and nationalist of the 19th and 20th centuries argue that Hinduism is an ancient, cohesive, although (at their historical points) watered-down tradition dating back to the beginnings of the Vedic tradition. Others argue that this concept of a unified, singular religion, although one comprising of “many paths,” only came about after the solidification of British colonial rule and the introduction of European and Judeo-Christian concepts of hegemony and monotheism. In Gauri Viswanathan’s essay “Colonialism and the Construction of Hinduism,” he argues that while there most likely was some concept of “Hinduism” that was formed in response to the contact with other non-Hindu religious traditions, it had to have been markedly different than what came to be defined as Hinduism under colonial rule. While “Hinduism” is a “...combination of oral and written texts, ...[the] textualized Hinduism was soon [in the colonial period] privileged as the religion on which subsequent attention was focused. Though Sanskrit Hinduism was far from representative of the worship of diverse peoples, it was made to define a whole range of heterogeneous practices that were then lumped together to constitute a single religious tradition termed ‘Hinduism’”.¹⁵ “...Hinduism of the earlier period [was] different... because spiritual leadership was centered in the charismatic authority of individual figures (*gurus*) rather than in all-India, institutional bodies.”¹⁶ Whether the religious

¹⁴ Lorenzen, David N. *Who Invented Hinduism? Essays on Religion in History*. Pg. 27.

¹⁵ Viswanathan, Gauri. “Colonialism and the Construction of Hinduism.” *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*. Pg. 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 29.

identification was first spread rapidly in the 19th and 20th centuries by colonial administrators or by Hindu nationalists seeking to define themselves as strictly distinct from the European elites is of minor consequence to this essay. What is important is to understand that “this new Hinduism borrows features from European modernity and rational religion; most importantly, it relies on the concept of the nation-state in order to claim a national, all-India character.”¹⁷ Even today many scholars are reluctant “...to call Hinduism a religion because it incorporates many disparate practices [but this only] suggests that the Judeo-Christian system remains the main reference point for defining religions.”¹⁸ In the 19th century apologetic Hindu reform movements the insistence by Indian philosophers such as Ram Mohan Roy¹⁹, Dayananda Saraswati²⁰, and others, that Hinduism is a monotheistic faith shows the prevalence of such a rubric. While there is some literature to support the idea that Hindu identity and “Hinduism” (in a looser sense) existed as far back as medieval times, these means of self-identification were not inherent in and of themselves but required a cultural Other in order to be dialectically defined. Especially the religious definition of a single “Hinduism” had certainly not amalgamated to the same homogenous extent that it did in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The final term we must attempt to grasp for this conversation is the social/occupational/religious categories of “caste,” and in particular the non-caste category of “Dalit.” The word “caste” is actually of Portuguese origin, meaning “race, lineage, or breed.” The Portuguese colonizers were the first to apply this term to the complex system of hereditary

¹⁷ Viswanathan, Gauri. “Colonialism and the Construction of Hinduism.” Pg. 30.

¹⁸ Ibid. pg. 28.

¹⁹ Hay, Stephen. *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Vol. 2. Pg. 16-17.

²⁰ Ibid. pg. 59.

Indian social groups. In India, this vast social system of categorization is defined by the two Sanskrit words *varna*, literally meaning “color,” and *jati*, meaning “birth.” Varna encompasses the four wide-reaching social “classes” (in descending order: the *Brahmins*, or priestly caste, the *Kshatriyas*, or kingly/warrior/administrative caste, the *Vaishyas*, or merchant/artisan/farmer caste, and the *Shudras*, the laboring servant caste) that are enumerated in detail in the *Bhagavad Gita*, *The Laws of Manu*, and other *Dharmashastra* (“Hindu law”) texts.²¹ Many modern theories have been postulated in trying to summarize the power structure and means of authority by which the caste system maintains its existence and defines the members of Indian society. Some theories place the Kshatriya and the king (*Raj*) at the center of the caste system,²² while others have imagined it as more of a pyramid structure dominated by the Brahmin caste at the top.²³ Some argue that social statuses of the castes are determined by a kind of purity/pollution spectrum that places the Brahmins as the most spiritually and physically pure,²⁴ while it has also been proposed that “...the landholding castes, with privileged access to food supply, used their economic and political power to set the terms for the [economic] exchange”²⁵ of resources and that this power dynamic is the defining factor which characterizes social status within the caste system.

Jatis, on the other hand, are the much more nuanced and specialized groupings within and between the different varnas. The theological theory of jati distinctions found in the Dharmashastras proposes that they “...are generated by intermarriages among the four

²¹ Trautman, Thomas R. *India: Brief History of Civilization*. Pg. 100.

²² Banerjee-Dube, Ishita. “Introduction.” *Caste in History*. Pg. xxii-xxiii.

²³ Ibid. pg. xxi-xxii.

²⁴ Ibid. pg. xviii.

²⁵ Ibid. pg. xviii.

varnas... creating new castes through the mixture of the varnas, and the further intermixture of the mixed castes.”²⁶ However this is unlikely as there are thousands of varying jatis across India “...many of them having come from tribal societies outside the Vedic religion, others being craft specialties, and still others being regional names of groups that have been turned into castes.”²⁷ While jatis are thought to belong to one specific varna or another this is not always the case. Generally, most Indians tend to identify more with their hereditary jati than their overarching varna, and thus the jati system is a more accurate depiction of how caste operates in everyday life than the varna system as described in the Dharmashastras.²⁸

Undoubtedly this system has adapted throughout history and contains regional nuances all across the Indian subcontinent, but since the modern era “caste is undoubtedly an all-India phenomenon in the sense that everywhere there are hereditary, endogamous groups which form a hierarchy”²⁹ and that “...in democratic India caste has remained vital in the formation of identities and political alliances.”³⁰ Caste is also not strictly a Hindu phenomenon, but exists in the communities of many different religious traditions across India. As “...caste-based differences are still to be found among Indian Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, and Jews”³¹ it is arguably the most all-India institution that effects nearly every group of the subcontinent. While all of these definitions of structure rely on identifying the highest group of social power within the caste system, the conversation on caste in the politics of modern India has shifted to revolve around “the provision of ‘reservations’ for particular [lower] castes included in the

²⁶ Trautman, Thomas R. *India: Brief History of Civilization*. Pg. 100.

²⁷ Ibid. Pg. 100/01.

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 101.

²⁹ M.N. Srinivas quoted in: Banerjee-Dube, Ishita. “Introduction.” *Caste in History*. pg. xvii.

³⁰ Ibid. pg. xxvii.

³¹ Cohen, Stephen Philip. *India: Emerging Power*. Pg. 21.

constitution of India..."³² This has refocused the discussion onto the political and economic positions of the lowest castes and the outcaste (*avarna*) groups in attempts by both the Left and Right to harness the voting power of vast sections of the Indian population which until recently had been historically devoid of political power.

The identifying term of these outcaste groups most commonly recognizable to Westerners would be the label "Untouchable." However, many peoples falling into this category have been imposed with this identity from the outside and a swath of other terms have sprung up since the late 19th and early 20th centuries by which the *avarna* people ("without caste") choose to identify themselves, such as "Dalit," "Harijan," or "Scheduled Caste." Despite these varying means of self-identification all of these groups are considered impure, "Untouchable," outcaste (*avarna*), and seen as the Other by large portions of the Indian population. It is these groups at the lowest end of, or even underneath, the caste system who collectively represent the "Dalit movement" that has begun this process of the "politicization of caste"³³ that has taken greater and greater precedence in the field of Indian politics over the past half century.

The most popularly accepted etymology of the label "Dalit" place its roots in the Sanskrit word meaning 'crushed, oppressed, broken.' It also has been theorized to come from the Marathi word for 'of the soil and earth.'³⁴ However, the real power of the Dalit identity does not come from a linguistic scholarly understanding that defines the term in such a way as to reflect the material and social conditions of the downtrodden, but how the peoples who self-

³² Banerjee-Dube, Ishita. "Introduction." *Caste in History*. pg. xxvii

³³ Kothari, Rajni. "Rise of the Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste." *Caste in History*. Pg. 212.

³⁴ Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." *Dalit Theology and Christian Anarchism*. Pg. 110.

identify with this term use it to contextualize and understand their own conditions within the social structures of the caste system. Unlike earlier conversations about caste representation in contemporary India, the “‘Dalit movement’ was not content with efforts to negotiate caste oppression through upward mobility... or a move away from the system... What it wanted was ‘to fight against the system and seek its very eradication.’”³⁵ These new political movements that centered themselves around the most oppressed peoples within Indian society have introduced ‘new’ “...elements that constitute current caste identities... [which] derive from categories of stratification that are premised on a different set of principles than those of ritual hierarchy. As such, the perception of caste as a religious institution with ritual attributes has given way to conceptualizations of caste in terms of aggressive identities and contesting hierarchies.”³⁶

In the following portion of the paper I will examine the solidification of the Hindu identity in regards to Hindu and Indian nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the treatment of the Other after the formation of the modern, Hindu majority state of India. In contrast, I will also examine the communal structure and religious traditions of different Dalit communities that seek to organize themselves outside of and in juxtaposition with the modern capitalist Indian state. Through this relationship, I hope to examine the two extremes of the contemporary Indian religious and social structures in order to better understand the intersection of political and religious life in contemporary India: the nationalist, Brahmanical, statist and the communitarian, marginalized, antiauthoritarian.

³⁵ Banerjee-Dube, Ishita. “Introduction.” *Caste in History*. Pg. xxx.

³⁶ *Ibid.* pg. xxxii.

Nationalism, Brahmins, and the BJP

From the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the 12th century, which marked the first major Muslim expansion into the subcontinent and rapidly increased the spread of Islam throughout the region, till Indian independence and partition in 1947 the Indian subcontinent has been fractured and ruled by various Muslim, European, and regionally Indian empires. Any idea of an Indian national identity or a unified religious system known as “Hinduism” (as it is understood by practitioners today) was not introduced into the mindset of the peoples of the India subcontinent until their contact with Western political philosophy and Christian missionary groups during the time of British colonialism. Arguably, before this point any kind of collective identity would most likely derive from loyalty to a particular ruler, devotion to a particular god, or from a sense of regional or linguistic proximity. Only once the British, or arguably the Hindu apologists and reformists responding to the British, tried to amalgamate all of these varying linguistic, ethnic, and religious groups into a single national and religious body did the modern identities of the Indian and the Hindu form. Through the attempt of this mass identification and categorization, exacerbated by the introduction of a British census in 1872, many of the social and occupational castes, which before had remained at least somewhat fluid, became rigid and no longer allowed for the change or movement between different social statuses.³⁷ Thus, one’s caste became a marker that could not be changed in the course of a single lifetime and those groups designated outside of the caste system, first labeled the “Depressed Castes” and later the Untouchables, proliferated and multiplied.

³⁷ Ghurye, G.S. “Caste and British Rule.” *Caste in History*. pg. 43.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries a multitude of Hindu reformist and reactionary movements sprang up, some urging their Indian brethren to adopt Western ideals of rationalism and secularization, or to redefine Hinduism along the tenants of monotheism, while others sought to reject Western influence entirely calling for a recharacterization of themselves and the Indian subcontinent as strictly Hindu. Both sides saw their contemporary versions of Hinduism as “corrupt,” “watered down,”³⁸ or “degraded”³⁹ and sought to reestablish the “authenticity” of their faith by prioritizing the textual,⁴⁰ Brahmanical traditions over the more diverse oral and regional traditions that varied across India. The more reactionary groups, characterized by organizations such as the Arya Samaj and some of the followers of Vivekananda, such as Sri Aurobindo⁴¹, preached the supremacy of Hinduism over other traditions⁴², upheld the Brahmanical caste as the highest social authority in Indian society, and sought to cultivate the idea of a nationalistic Indian identity⁴³ that could unify the peoples of the subcontinent against British colonial rule.

This attempt at religious and nationalist unification culminated in the concept of *Hindutva* (“Hinduness”), first defined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923. *Hindutva* sought to redefine Hindus as a people from a common national (*rashtra*), racial (*jati*), and cultural (*sankriti*) lineage. Note how religious practice does not strictly factor into the nationalist bent of this identity.⁴⁴ A couple years later in 1925, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar would utilize this new

³⁸ Hay, Stephen. *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Vol. 2. Pg. 20-21.

³⁹ Veeramani, K., comp. *Religion and Society: Selections from Periyar’s Speeches and Writings*. Pg. 35.

⁴⁰ Hay, Stephen. *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Vol. 2. pg. 52-53

⁴¹ Ibid. pg. 153-54.

⁴² Ibid. pg. 75.

⁴³ Ibid. pg. 149

⁴⁴ Sharma, Arvind. "On Hindu, Hindustān, Hinduism and Hindutva." *Numen* 49.1 (2002) pg. 22.

concept of Indian ethno-nationalism in his formation of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), a nationalist, militant, volunteer umbrella organization that would later give rise to the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and other right-wing religious and political organizations.⁴⁵

As of 2016 the BJP is India's largest political party in terms of governmental representation and the world's largest political party in terms of membership.^{46,47} Their platform is characterized by conservative, traditionalist, Hindu-centric social reforms, a propensity for the further development of nuclear arms, generally antagonistic relationships with the neighboring partition states, and globalizing, privatizing neoliberal economic policies (as of the late 1990s. Before this their main economic model was one of isolationism and protectionism.)⁴⁸ They have been criticized for neglecting the needs of the poor in favor of corporatism, and their supremacist attitude towards Hinduism makes them a staunch ally of the Brahmin caste and their centuries old monopoly on religious authority and socially elite status. However, the BJP knows it cannot maintain its current majority hold on political power if it continues to disenfranchise women, Dalits, and peoples of other religious faiths. They learned this the hard way during an unexpected upset in the general elections of 2004.⁴⁹ Over the past couple of decades the BJP has sought to extend a hand to some of these marginalized groups by softening a few hardline issues, but more famously by trying to redefine and reinterpret the cultural climates in more traditionally Left communities. The most infamous recent example of this was their attempt to rebrand the Kerala national festival, Onam.

⁴⁵ Jaffrelot, Christopher, ed. *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Pg. 16-17.

⁴⁶ "In Numbers: The Rise of BJP and Decline of Congress." *The Times of India*. TimesInternet, 19 May 2016. Web.

⁴⁷ "BJP Becomes Largest Political Party in the World." *The Times of India*. TimesInternet. 30 Mar. 2015. Web.

⁴⁸ Hansen, Thomas Blom. "The Ethics of Hindutva and the Spirit of Capitalism." *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*. Pg. 304-308, 311.

⁴⁹ Ramesh, Randeep. "Shock Defeat for India's Hindu Nationalists." *The Guardian*. 14 May 2004. Web.

Mahabali and Vamana and the Fight for Onam

The 10-day long yearly festival of Onam celebrates the return of the *asura* (demon) king Mahabali to his former kingdom *Mavelinadu*, popularly imagined as the modern state of Kerala. The story of his benevolent rule, fall, and return follows as thus: In ancient times Mahabali ruled over his kingdom as a just, benevolent, fair, and kind leader. His subjects were happy, everyone enjoyed equal status within society, infant mortality was unheard of, and crops yielded exuberant amounts of food. There was no want, disease, thievery, or corruption in Mahabali's primordial socialist kingdom.⁵⁰ Indra, king of the *devas* (gods), became jealous of Mahabali's popularity among the people and asked Vishnu to depose him.⁵¹ Vishnu incarnated himself on earth in the form of Vamana, a dwarf Brahmin. Vamana, appealing to Mahabali's famous generosity, entreated 3 paces of land from him to call his own. Once Mahabali granted his request Vamana promptly 'grew as big as the sky' and traversed the distance of the entire earth and all of the heavens within 2 paces. Having nothing left to conquer with the third step Mahabali humbly offered him his head to step on and with his final step Vamana pushed Mahabali down into *patala* (the netherworld.) However, having been such a good sport at losing his throne Vamana granted Mahabali the boon of being able to return once a year and

⁵⁰ Kalidasan, Vinod Kottayil. "A King Lost and Found: Revisiting the Popular and the Tribal Myths of Mahabali from Kerala." *Studies in South Asian Film & Media*. pg. 104.

⁵¹ This sort of moral reversal of the demonic being portrayed as heroic and just while the divine is portrayed as jealous and cruel is typical of many folk myths popular among the subaltern communities of India who see the Brahmanical gods as executors and sustainers of the social order that keeps them disenfranchised and impoverished. Seeking to subvert the deva-centric world order these asuras are reimagined as seeking to dismantle to hierarchical structures of the caste society and disseminate economic and political power to all of the subjects within their kingdoms. Several other examples will be discussed later on.

visit the subjects of his former kingdom. This annual return from exile takes place on the final day of the Onam festival in Kerala.⁵²

Onam is a harvest and cultural festival that is practiced by Keralites of all faiths, and thus inherently secular. It also disrupts, or at least temporarily suspends, the business economy by many employers giving their workers paid vacation during the festival, closing schools and most government offices, the setting up of the “famed ‘Maveli Stores’ (government owned, fair-price grocery store chain)”, the releasing of work bonuses and arrears, and the lowering of taxes on household goods.⁵³ Recently the private sector has sought to curtail this a bit by vamping up of the consumeristic nature of the festival through the sale of flowers (used to make the iconic Mahabali ‘welcome matts’) and other goods utilized in great number during the holiday. The governmental encouragement of these practices, along with them coining Onam as the Kerala ‘national festival’ could be seen as a way to bring this celebration of socialistic tendencies into a more sanctioned and controlled celebration within the consumerist and capitalistic fold.

This national celebration and exaltation of an much-loved *asura* king illustrates the anti-Brahmanical attitudes and the sagas of colonialism that are recorded in the myth of Mahabali and proliferate throughout Keralite culture.⁵⁴ “The contexts of the entry of feudal Brahminism, western colonialism and the monopolies of postcolonial socio-economic forces have all shaped both the myth and the contemporary practices around Onam.”⁵⁵ It should come as no surprise then that the governmental politics of Kerala have popularly been controlled by Left-leaning

⁵² Kalidasan, Vinod Kottayil. "A King Lost and Found". pg. 104-105.

⁵³ Ibid. pg. 105.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pg. 107.

⁵⁵ Ibid. pg. 110.

coalition fronts, alternating between the Communist led LDF and the Indian National Congress led UDF since the 1970s. Even before this Keralite politicians had invoked the idea of *Mavelinadu* in order to affect the cultural imagination of the voters and exemplify the sort of socialistic, egalitarian society for which many on the Left strived. In the 1950s E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the first Chief Minister of Kerala and the first non-Indian National Congress chief minister in the Indian republic, declared “his government’s hope to create: ‘a new Kerala in which equality and freedom reign, in which poverty and unemployment will be unknown, will begin to emerge ... *Mavelinadu*, which exists only in our imagination, will become a reality in the twentieth century.’”⁵⁶ It was not until just last year that the BJP won their first ever seat in the Kerala assembly.⁵⁷

Only a few months after this historic win the BJP national president, Amit Shah, came under fire by both journalists and people on social media for “...wish[ing] all [Keralites] a ‘Happy Vamana Jayanthi’, carefully omitting any references to Mahabali”⁵⁸ on the eve of Onam. After the initial outcry he quickly tried to rectify this by making an Onam specific salutation, but the damage was done. Many people throughout Kerala and beyond saw this is an obvious attempt to ‘Brahminize’ a cultural holiday whose narrative ‘villain’ was a Brahmanical Hindu deity. By recasting the focus of Onam as the day of Vamana’s birth (Vamana Jayanthi) the BJP and the RSS sought to distance the festivities from their secular, socialistic roots and re-center it in a

⁵⁶ Kalidasan, Vinod Kottayil. "A King Lost and Found." pg. 106.

⁵⁷ "BJP's O Rajagopal Wins from Nemom, Gives BJP Its First Seat in Kerala Assembly." *Hindustan Times*. HT Media, 20 May 2016. Web.

⁵⁸ Kalidasan, Vinod Kottayil. "BJP's Vamana Jayanti Will Push Mahabali's Onam into the Netherworld." *The Wire*. Foundation for Independent Journalism, 15 Sept. 2016. Web.

more Brahmanical, Vaishnavite, Hindu-centric conception, in order “...to create a Hindu vote bank in Kerala and destabilise [sic] Kerala’s deep cultural coherence, unity and diversity.”⁵⁹

Whether Amit Shah’s Onam bungle was a conscious attempt to impose a more Hindutva focused narrative over and at the expense of the Keralite national narrative or simply (as the BJP officially claim) a mistake made out of error or ignorance is a matter of speculation. If the former is the case than the fears and frustration expressed in the outcry responding to his comments would be justified in their accusations of claiming that the BJP’s Hindu-centric ideology attempts to erase any culturally Other or non-Brahmanical narratives in an attempt to solidify their message and voter base among the Hindu majority. If the latter is the case, and Shah’s comment was made out of ignorance, than it shows what little regard Shah and the BJP have towards indigenous and lower-caste cultures that proliferate narratives which run counter to their own. The liberal and socialistic narratives that have governed life in Kerala since its conception have always run counter to the more nationalistic, homogenizing narratives of the BJP and other rightwing parties more popular in the north. However, the BJP’s recent success in finally garnering a minimal foothold in the regions political system may be evidence that their attempts to rewrite these narratives are beginning to gain traction among the Hindu communities there. Any person, whether Dalit or middle-class socialist, who would wish to see the return of Mahabali’s idyllic and egalitarian society should be wary of such gross “errors” made by political elites and continue to celebrate and proliferate the stories and ideas that seek to question the social and economic disparities within their societies.

⁵⁹ Kalidasan, Vinod Kottayil. "BJP’s Vamana Jayanti Will Push Mahabali’s Onam into the Netherworld." *The Wire*.

Dalit History, Worship, Conversion, and Subversion

Rather than continuing to look from the top of the power structures of national and governmental strategy to reinterpret and refocus community and cultural religious life as a means of garnering votes and increasing holds of institutional power, I will now focus on the perspective at the other extreme, of the ways individual communities and marginalized cultures are able to create or maintain systems of worship and conceptions history that exist outside of, and in many cases subvert, the grander institutional narratives that claim a monopoly on scriptural and academic knowledge. The main subjects of this examination will be the communities of the subaltern, the self-identified Dalits with their historical-political movements, and the tribal practitioners of the *Teyyam* folk worship. Both of these groups overlap significantly and utilize many of the same ancient interpretations of Hindu myths that will be examined below which run counter to the predominate Brahmanical traditions. This idea of an alternative mythology is nothing new to Hinduism, and is actually a tradition dating back well over a thousand years.⁶⁰ These reinterpretations of myth, from the perspective of the lower castes/classes, typically revolve around the villains of Hinduism's mythological stories, or minor, low-caste, abused characters, who are then reclassified as heroes and gods whose tales circulate orally throughout the lower castes/classes.

⁶⁰ In his essay on Vali, the oldest textual reference Freeman notes to the alternative sagas of Vali exists in the 9th century Sanskrit drama of Shaktibhadran which mentions the episode of Ravana being defeated, humiliated and ensnared by Vali's tail.

Freeman, Rich. "Thereupon Hangs a Tail: The Deification of Vali in the Teyyam Worship of Malabar." *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition*. pg. 241.

Ravana and the Dalit Conception of History

Throughout the last century south Indian and Dalit communities have sought to reimagine the pre-history of the subcontinent through a political and militaristic lens in order to explain the socio-economic positions that the lower castes/classes hold today within society. Based on the anthropological data of the Aryan Invasion Theory or the Indo-Aryan Migration Theory many Dalit thinkers, or thinkers writing on behalf of these low *varna* or *avarana* groups, have sought to reinterpret the military conquests in India's epic poem the *Ramayana* as a source that mythologically describes a real, historical north Indian, Aryan, Brahmanical invasion of the indigenous Dravidian and Tamil peoples of south India. This conception of an ancient Aryan past was arguably first proposed in Jotirao Phule's *Slavery* in 1875, whose work was greatly influenced by European missionaries, Orientalists, and Sanskritists, such as John Wilson and Max Müller.⁶¹ This inversion of the mytho-historical narratives was continually utilized by political thinkers and writers fighting on behalf of the Dalits and the lower castes such as E.V. Ramasamy with his Self-Respect Movement in the mid-20th century,⁶² up to writers of the 21st century, such as Kancha Ilaiah.⁶³ But, as we shall see below in the section on Vali worship, these reinterpretations of Brahmanical imperialism were not new, as folk traditions of certain popular Hindu myths, dating back hundreds of years, mirrored these same sentiments that painted the ruling Brahmanical castes as usurpers who came from the outside.

⁶¹ O'Hanlon, Rosalind. "Phule and the Inversion of Brahman Myths." *Caste in History*. pg. 179-80.

⁶² Richman, Paula. "E.V. Ramasami's Reading of the Ramayana." *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Pg. 178.

⁶³ Ilaiah, Kancha. "Hindu Gods and Us; Our Goddesses and the Hindus." *Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*. pg. 87-88.

A contemporary of Ambedkar and Gandhi, E.V. Ramasamy was a social activist, politician, and the founder of the Self Respect Movement in the first half of the 20th century. Like Gandhi, he was from a wealthy forward-caste (*Baliya*) family, but was strongly against the monopolized authority of the Brahmins in India and fought for the rights of women and Dalits. Ramasamy's political views on the caste system ultimately aligned him more with Ambedkar, as they both saw the necessity of destroying the caste system in its entirety. In the 1950s "...the Self-Respect movement asserted that Rāvaṇa and the rākṣasas [the villains] of the Rāmāyaṇa tradition were representations of the great South Indian people and that Rāma and his subjects were representations of the barbaric North Indian high-caste invaders who destroyed Dravidian civilization."⁶⁴ Undoubtedly this Dravidian/Tamil reinterpretation goes back in time farther still, Periyar having been just the latest "...in a long line of Tamil writers who bitterly criticized Brahmanical tradition."⁶⁵

Periyar's solution to the problems of the exploitation of the Dalits, and other marginalized groups, by the politically powerful minority of the upper castes was a complete rejection of the Hindu faith and a secularization of the Indian state along the principles of rationalism. He viewed the caste system as an inherent and inseparable aspect of Hinduism and that in fact "Hinduism" as we think of it does not truly exist, but is only a creation of the Brahmin castes and the British elites used to subjugate the majority of peoples along cultural and religious lines.⁶⁶ Through this vehement deconstruction and desertion of the India social structure and the Hindu faith Periyar attempted to redefine the Dalit-Dravidian identity as

⁶⁴ Pillai, Sohini. "Vamp or Victim: Representations of Śūrpaṇakhā in Contemporary India." pg. 8.

⁶⁵ Richman, Paula. "E.V. Ramasami's Reading of the Ramayana." Pg. 189.

⁶⁶ Veeramani, K., comp. *Religion and Society: Selections from Periyar's Speeches and Writings*. pg. 43

strictly separate and incompatible with the Brahmanical Hinduism of the north. This creation of a 'Hindu Other' would aid in the solidification of varying caste (Dalit) and ethnic (Dravidian/Tamil/etc.) identities that sought to reject and run counter to the cultural narratives of the Aryan-Brahmin elites.

Being wary of any kind of religious authority Periyar often stated that "...if some people claim that a religion is all-powerful and that its principles are god-given and therefore they cannot be changed at all, then that religion should be got rid of once and for all."⁶⁷ Ultimately however, this philosophy of extreme secularization, while coming from a want of justice and liberation to the historically oppressed, is dangerous in its attempt to delegitimize a vast number of peoples' spiritual and culture practices. For many people of the subaltern communities their religious identities can be considered political, but their religious practices and worldviews are not,⁶⁸ and as such do not strive for a replacement of spirituality with secular rationalism, but hope to restructure and redefine the institutions of their own faiths, or completely create new ones of their own. It is precisely this kind of complete dismissal of religious thought that I am attempting to expose as a fatal mistake made by the political far-Left time and again. Rather than encourage the masses to reinterpret their mythologies in loving and revolutionary ways many of these political thinkers have attempted to impose their own worldview upon those they attempt to represent, betraying their own commitment to self-determination and identity.

⁶⁷ Veeramani, K., comp. *Religion and Society: Selections from Periyar's Speeches and Writings*. pg. 16

⁶⁸ Discussed in detail below in the section "Religious Conversion as a Political Act."

In the cotemporary political and autobiographic writings of Kanch Ilaiah, a political scientist, a professor at Osmania University, Hyderabad, and a Dalit, he also reimagines Ravana as a low-caste or non-Aryan Dravidian king, and that Rama's march south to Ravana's kingdom in Lanka was strictly a militaristic campaign of the Brahmanical Aryans against the Dalitbahujan Dravidians.⁶⁹ Ilaiah furthers this 'imperialist Brahmin' narrative by extending the argument beyond just the ethnic lines of Aryan versus Dravidian/Tamil and arguing in such a way that places caste as the central antagonistic element between the two opposing sides in claiming that "...the kingdoms of Tataka, Shambuka, [two very interesting characters whose examination the length of this paper will prohibit] Vali, and Ravana were all Dalitbahujan kingdoms."⁷⁰ This line of examination also seeks to bring into question and redefine the historical and religious "...relationship between the Hindu divinities and the Dalitbahujan [that] has been one of oppressor and oppressed, the manipulator and the manipulated."⁷¹ In contrast to the BJP's all-Indian narrative of a unified Hinduism Ilaiah claims that "...the Dalitbahujans never became part of Hinduism... [whose] very Gods are openly against them."⁷² If this is true than the intrinsic Otherness of the Dalits and indigenous tribal groups of India put them in the unique position of witnessing the oppressive and exploitative forces within Hinduism "...which can only be experienced and understood by the Dalitbahujans..."⁷³ Ilaiah's caste based analysis of these religious-historical narratives illustrate the recent refocusing of political conversations of caste towards the perspective of the lowest castes, as described in the introduction to this section,

⁶⁹ Ilaiah, Kancha. "Hindu Gods and Us; Our Goddesses and the Hindus." pg. 89.

⁷⁰ Ibid. pg. 88.

⁷¹ Ibid. pg. 72.

⁷² Ibid. pg. 72.

⁷³ Ibid. pg. 72.

that "...has enabled lower castes to deploy the combination of the social-ritual inequality symbolized by caste and the provisions of universal franchise democracy to 'deconstruct' and 'reinvent' caste history" and "...construct the Brahman as the Aryan 'other.'"⁷⁴

While this reimagining of historical and mythological narrative is an important and useful means of defining and legitimizing the Dalit identity in a way that brings the authority of the Brahmins and the state into question, "Dalit history is primarily a political tool and as such has failed to go far beyond the polemical anti-Brahminic Aryan Invasion Theory."⁷⁵ But it is precisely this politicization of the mythological that continues to be particularly useful to traditionally repressed groups in every faith who are now seeking to redefine themselves in positive ways that encourage active participation in the political realm which has become so inextricably linked to the religious. This line of thinking does not seek to dismiss history, but only to flip it on its head and challenge us to closely examine our deeply held, preconceived historical prejudices that always have leaned in favor of the victorious and domineering minority. Dalit history seeks to subvert this narrative created by and used in service of this elite.

Communitarian Worship, Vali's Murder, and His Teyyam Return

Vali, or Bali as his name is pronounced in the vernacular of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, is an extremely dynamic mythological character with a vast tradition surrounding him, particularly in the southern most parts of India. But first I will recount the story of Vali's life in the Ramayana as well as one of regional origin stories from the folk tradition of Malabar as background: In this

⁷⁴ Banerjee-Dube, Ishita. "Introduction." pg. xxxi.

⁷⁵ Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." pg. 125.

version of the origin of Vali and Sugriva these two brothers were originally born in human form (although half-*deva*) to a powerful man utilizing gender swapping magic in order to appear as a woman and mate with Indra and Surya of the Vedic pantheon. From this encounter their mother/father becomes impregnated and gives birth to these semi-divine Kshatriya brothers. However, sometime during adolescence these two princely boys are transformed into apes through a curse issued by their Brahmanical stepfather. Having lost their human forms Vali and Sugriva are barred from the world of noble men and banished to live out their lives in the forest.⁷⁶ Vali creates the happy and healthy kingdom of Kishkinda for himself and the monkey people (this bestialization is assumed by some to be a demeaning, symbolic representations of the low-caste or *avarna* tribal peoples⁷⁷), but this act of sovereignty and prosperity is labeled as a crime by Rama and is used as justification for him slaying Vali outside the code of *dharma*.⁷⁸ As Vali goes to face his brother Sugriva in a one-on-one duel Rama, hiding behind a tree, shoots Vali in the back with an arrow, killing him. This kind of interference is strictly against the codes of dharmic combat. Rama condemns Vali to death for "...his being out of place in the social order, his violating the hierarchy."⁷⁹

Rich Freeman, in his article about the worship of Vali in the *teyyam* tradition of Malabar, highlights countless apocryphal sagas that tell of the exploits and heroic deeds of Vali before his fatefully cruel meeting with Rama. "Many of his teyyam myths and episodes come not out of Valmiki's Ramayana at all, but out of regional and folk sources..."⁸⁰ The teyyam

⁷⁶ Freeman, Rich. "Thereupon Hangs a Tail: The Deification of Vali in the Teyyam Worship of Malabar." Pg. 201-202.

⁷⁷ Ibid. pg. 207.

⁷⁸ Ibid. pg. 210.

⁷⁹ Ibid. pg. 209-210.

⁸⁰ Ibid. pg. 187.

rituals “...consist of annual festival rites of possession, during which a community’s enshrined deities are ritually transferred into...” the body of a trained worshiper in order for the deity to interact with and bless their followers on the earthly plane.⁸¹ “The priests dedicated to Bali [shrines] are mostly drawn from the Ashari (Carpenter) caste... [while] the Vannans, traditional Washermen of the lower castes... have exclusive rights to perform the teyyattam [possession] of Bali for the... community.”⁸² Through these communities’ rites of worship they deify an otherwise human/animal mythological character whose benevolence and sad fate more closely mirror their own desires and experiences than “...the high-caste Rama[, whose victimization of Bali] represents the hostility of caste antagonism in this society.”⁸³ “...Teyyam worshipers conceive of divinities as powers immanent in their own communities...”⁸⁴ and this participation of the Divine through possession “...affirms god’s active involvement in the community and the community’s desire to express its relationship with god. This affirmation contradicts the Vedic tradition that the Dalits are beneath god’s interest and have no license to interact with the Divine.”⁸⁵

The oldest textual references to Bali’s alternative sagas occur in the Sanskrit dramas of a court poet of Kerala that date back to the 9th century. This Sanskrit version presupposes an even older, oral Dravidian myth that was not incorporated into Sanskrit literature until this

⁸¹ Freeman, Rich. “Thereupon Hangs a Tail: The Deification of Vali in the Teyyam Worship of Malabar.” pg. 189.

⁸² Ibid. pg. 190.

⁸³ Ibid. pg. 208.

⁸⁴ Ibid. pg. 188.

⁸⁵ This quoted observation is in regards to specific practices of oracular Goddess possession, as studied by Sathianathan Clarke, among Dalit communities that are distinct from Bali’s own teyyam worship, but overlap significantly in regards to ritual teyyam practices.

Hebden, Keith. “Building a Dalit World in the Shell of the Old: Conversations Between Dalit Indigenous Practice and Western Anarchist Thought.” *Religious Anarchism: New Perspectives*. Pg. 156.

time.⁸⁶ By the 14th century these theatrical and literary traditions had created a slew of “...antinomian characters like Bali, and even demons, like Ravana... [who] are promoted to full-fledged “heroes” (*nayakar*)...” in these works.⁸⁷ Many of these antinomian themes and the parodic attitude with which Brahmin and their Sanskrit material were portrayed in this literature is shared in common with the later teyyam traditions that continue to this day.⁸⁸ All of this illustrates a deep and ancient tradition among the mythologies of the Dalits and lower-castes that actively sought to invert the morality of the Sanskrit tradition as a means to challenge the authority of the Brahmins and express their own political, religious, social, and economic desires and personal experiences. It is important to understand the significance of deifying a specifically human figure whose “...mortality both establishes his link with humanity and enables him to transcend the human condition by coming back from the dead through possession.”⁸⁹ In Dalit theology “deities do not function as means to subdue a section of society; they are not designed to exploit a section within the community; they function to create a common cultural ethic, one that re-energizes the masses so that they can engage in productive activity.”⁹⁰ Through the teyyam possession not only is the possessed brought into union with the Divine, but all those who witness and are blessed during the ceremony are elevated beyond the social and religious confines of the caste system and allowed to interact directly with the Divine, which traditionally is a mystical privilege they have been barred from participating in due to their low statuses. This teyyam tradition that has immortalized Vali as a

⁸⁶ Freeman, Rich. “Thereupon Hangs a Tail: The Deification of Vali in the Teyyam Worship of Malabar.” Pg. 214.

⁸⁷ Ibid. pg. 218.

⁸⁸ Ibid. pg. 217.

⁸⁹ Ibid. pg. 194.

⁹⁰ Ilaiyah, Kancha. “Hindu Gods and Us; Our Goddesses and the Hindus.” Pg. 91.

constantly reincarnated god (through the act of possession), and that also deifies other Dalit and Shudra saints, highlights how the mythic is rooted in the human interests and social desires of the worshippers who practice it.⁹¹

Although the tribal and Dalit communities across India are considered so low-status that they are viewed as outside the scope of society and are barred from participating in orthodox Hindu rituals these oppressed communities have responded by creating their own pantheon of minor gods, mistreated heroes, and redeemed villains from the Hindu religious corpus, or inventing deities of their own. As seen above, many of these alternative traditions date back hundreds of years, while new ones are also being created in the present. The belief in and practice of these narrative traditions does not require one to self-identify as a Hindu however. There is also a Dalit tradition of conversion from Hinduism as an act of political protest, and while the acceptance of a different religion may introduce new rituals and deities into their communities, rarely does this mean a complete break from their older traditions.

Religious Conversion as a Political Act

Large scale religious conversions as an act of political protest is a fairly unique phenomenon to India. In 1956 B.R. Ambedkar publicly converted to Buddhism along with hundreds of thousands of his Dalit followers. For Ambedkar "...the abolition of caste required the conscious rejection of Hinduism."⁹² Since then there have been various "waves" of mass conversion among the low castes and *avarna* groups, which has caused great anxiety to the

⁹¹ Ilaiyah, Kancha. "Hindu Gods and Us; Our Goddesses and the Hindus." Pg. 209.

⁹² Hebden, Keith. "Building a Dalit World in the Shell of the Old." Pg. 162.

Hindutva organizations across India, such as the RSS and the BJP, whose philosophies and support rely on majority Hindu populations. Initially these mass conversions tended towards Buddhism and Islam and later towards Sikhism and Christianity.⁹³ These mass conversions, usually done by entire communities at once, are “...demonstrably... corporate, public, and political act[s] of protest.”⁹⁴

Arguably, Dalit religion is “...a complex, liberal, and fluid...” system that allows loyalty to one god, or many gods, and this loyalty of various personal deities to shift over one’s lifetime.⁹⁵ This practice of unsolidifiable religious allegiance makes the Dalit’s religion nearly impossible “...to be contained by the more controlled theology of the village and its Brahminic text-based hegemony,”⁹⁶ or the theologies to which they convert. “Conversion therefore does not necessarily mean a change of religion, worldview, or even allegiance, and can be often based on aesthetics and the perceived efficacy of a deity at a given time.”⁹⁷ Many Christian missionaries have been perturbed to find that upon returning to a Dalit community only a few years after their conversion they find the image of Christ alongside the various other traditional Dalit divinities in the same place of worship. “...Dalits give the impression of passive acceptance of religious homogenization while subverting and reclaiming their own myths and structures... [In this way] satire and subversion of the text of oppression is incorporated into the religion of the Dalits.”

⁹³ Clarke, Sathianathan. *Dalits and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India*. Pg. 125.

⁹⁴ Hebden, Keith. “Building a Dalit World in the Shell of the Old.” Pg. 162.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pg. 159.

⁹⁶ Ibid. pg. 159-160.

⁹⁷ Ibid. pg. 160.

Thus, conversion for Dalits “...is a deviant act of defiance against the hegemony of... Hinduism” or whichever faith they are converting “away” from.⁹⁸ As a result of the work of missionaries and these mass conversions Hindutva groups have instituted a new ritual practice of ‘re-conversion’ (*shuddhi*), claiming that these groups are still Hindu and have simply strayed away from Hinduism and offered re-converts a higher place within the caste system.⁹⁹ This strictly religious view of these conversion movements fail to grasp the political and social demands that these groups are articulating through these acts and shows the reliance these nationalist groups have on numbers and statistics when garnering support and furthering their hegemonic worldviews.

Ultimately “statistics on Dalit conversion are unreliable because the government offers preferable welfare and rights to Dalits who register as ‘Hindu’ on the grounds that Dalit is a Hindu term and therefore non-Hindu Dalits are no longer Dalits at all.”¹⁰⁰ As stated above, this is simply not true as Dalit groups and the prejudice against them exists within Indian Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism as well. Even after a community has converted from Hinduism they may still register as Hindus for government censuses in order to take advantage of these reservations, and also maintain aspects of Hindu religious practices for their own personal and aesthetic benefit in the context of their new faiths. In this way “Dalits are subverting Hinduism through conversion to other religions while subverting other religions by holding onto Hindu symbols and claims to Hindu identity.”¹⁰¹ This adaptable and amorphic attitude which resists

⁹⁸ Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." pg. 134.

⁹⁹ Mohanty, Dushmantha Kumar. "Dayanand and the Shuddhi Movement." *Indian Political Tradition: From Manu to Ambedkar*. Pg. 116

¹⁰⁰ Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." pg. 133.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* pg. 125.

conformity to strictly delineated faiths shows the great potentiality for personal identity and political action inherent in the Dalit religious mindset.

Conclusion

All this being said the Dalit model of community and religious worldview is not a perfect model. While most Dalit communities are victims of oppression from caste discrimination and socio-economic factors this does not mean that they themselves do not participate in these same oppressive behaviors towards each other. For example: “patriarchy is rife even among rural Dalit communities... and so the process of dehumanization of the most marginalized goes on even within a marginal community.”¹⁰² In regards to this problem of patriarchy “the consort-free femaleness of God... [could] act to some extent as an antidote to the otherwise patriarchal tendency of Dalit life.”¹⁰³ And certainly casteism, homophobia, racism, and other prejudiced forms of thought are perpetuated within these communities as well. However, it is precisely the fluid nature of Dalit theology and the decentralized models of their communities that rely on mutual aid which offer some of the best ways for them to challenge these sectarian ways of thinking, not only within their own communities, but within the Indian state at large.

While the style of Dalit societies and religious rituals lends itself to more horizontally structured, decentralized mindsets that characterize Leftist political thought the success of the Left in rallying the Dalit communities to their causes is far from guaranteed, especially if new

¹⁰² Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." pg. 127.

¹⁰³ Ibid. pg. 129-30.

life cannot be breathed into the tired, old secular Marxism of the various Indian Communist parties. One such ex-Maoist Dalit, Chandrabhan Prasad, after becoming disillusioned with the CPI-ML has now become the spokesperson for a new movement seeking to empower Dalits through entrepreneurial capitalism. Prasad argues "...that India's economic liberalization is about to do the unthinkable: destroy the caste system."¹⁰⁴ He is an opponent of the government's welfare programs, urges Dalits to leave the countryside to seek new opportunities in the cities, and calls for them to abandon their native languages in favor of English, arguing that caste is inherent in the linguistics patterns and customs of Indian languages. Prasad believes so much in the emancipatory power of learning English for Dalit communities that he has gone so far as to create a Dalit Goddess of English, seemingly modeled after the Statue of Liberty.¹⁰⁵ However, Somini Sengupta of The New York Times questions his assertion that the recent trend of Dalits working outside their caste occupations and a few examples of Dalits obtaining positions of academic, economic, and political power can be linked causally to the liberalization of the Indian economy. More troubling in my opinion is that Prasad's demands would require Dalits to abandon everything that is culturally unique about themselves in order to become homogenized players in the capitalist economy. Abandoning one's native language and traditional communities may offer a chance for economic mobility, but requires a complete abandonment of their personal identities for ones that are more "socially acceptable." It is for this reason why I believe the Left's promise of self-determination and social equality that strictly decries this kind of personal and cultural homogenization is the

¹⁰⁴ Sengupta, Somini. "Crusader Sees Wealth as Cure for Caste Bias." *The New York Times*. 29 Aug. 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Babul, D. Shyam. "D Is for Dalits and E Is for the English Goddess." *The Times of India*. TimesInternet, 9 May 2010.

more humane, albeit utopian, means for providing a means towards the attainment of liberty, freedom, and happiness, not just for the Dalits, but the downtrodden peoples of the world. If the Left is to form meaningful alliances with the Dalits, and the Dalits are to successfully challenge the institutional and social structures which have kept them destitute for so long, then a new form of specifically Indian revolutionary and egalitarian politics is needed, as many of the socialist, communist, and anarchist Enlightenment philosophies do not take into consideration issues that are particular to India and thus fall short of their goal of representation. "Many Dalits have already experienced Marxist politics, particularly in the southern states... [but] caste bias holds Marxism back from creating significant social change for the very poorest. In other words, because Marxism does not take caste into consideration, it cannot address the revolutionary needs of the outcastes."¹⁰⁶ In Keith Hebden's works he tries to examine Dalit forms of religious and social structures through the lens of anarchist philosophy, finding much in common with the decentralized, horizontal nature of governance within their communities, their distrust of priestly and administrative hierarchical authority, and the great importance placed upon the necessity of "...playful spontaneity [and] leaderless mutuality..."¹⁰⁷ He makes sure to stress that he is not calling Dalits "anarchists," but wishes to uncover the anarchic principles within the folk religions of the lower classes. By doing so he has illustrated the naturalness some of these revolutionary and egalitarian qualities may be to all of us when we are able to live outside the jurisdiction of the state. Certainly, anarchism does not have all of the political answers for the Dalits, but the Dalits have much to teach people on the

¹⁰⁶ Hebden, Keith. "Resistance from the Margins." pg. 117.

¹⁰⁷ Hebden, Keith. "Building a Dalit World in the Shell of the Old." Pg. 148.

Left about how to practically organize these alternative communities for which they strive.

Maybe if these political philosophies were able to take on some of the adaptability and elasticity that is inherent in Dalit religious life, they would be able to be constructively utilized more easily by the vast plurality of the human race that their desire is to empower and liberate.

Judaism

This following section will focus on the rise of a nationalist Jewish identity and the opposing subversive trends within Judaism that run counter to far-Right influences within the Zionism movement and the project of nation-building in general. I will first examine the social and economic conditions of the Jewish diaspora during the 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing particularly on Central Europe and the Pale of Settlement (the far-Western region of the Tsarist Russian Empire in which Jews were allowed to settle), from which Zionism steadfastly emerged along with its political and religious opponents. After examining the conditions from which Zionism arose, along with its first two major initial conceptions as political and cultural Zionism, I will look at the concrete forms that it took on the ground during the British Mandate of Palestine and Israel's independence, focusing primarily on the "colonial" nationalist parties, of which Benjamin Netanyahu, the current longstanding prime minister of Israel, is a member. Next, I will look at the two main sides of the "anti-Zionist" movement, one being the religious-centered arguments against a national Israel from the perspective of the ultra-Orthodox Hasidic communities, and the other being from the point of view of the Left-wing, secular, academic Jewish community, represented by the thinkers Gustav Landauer, Hannah Arendt, and Judith Butler. Their approach is a humanitarian one, arguing against a nationalist conception of the Israeli state, particularly in response to its treatment of the native Palestinian populations. Finally, I will conclude this examination with a look at the recent birth of 21st century Jewish anarchist movements, both in Europe and Israel, who are influenced by the socialistic thinkers mentioned above and are unique in their critiques of the Israeli state and exposing trends of anti-Semitism still imbedded in the Western Left.

In examining the rise and present formation of nationalism in the present State of Israel it is important to understand the term “Zionism” in both its cultural and political forms, along with the various conditions of Jewish life and identity in Europe during the 19th century that gave rise to this movement, in particular the growth of a new biologically/racially based antisemitism that began to spread across Europe at this same time. It is also important to consider the secular and religious Messianism that was utilized both by opponents and supporters of Zionism during the construction of a Jewish state in Palestine. While many contemporary arguments against Zionism avoid the language of Messianism (excluding the Hasidic perspective) it is still an integral aspect of the Revisionist and far-Right claims to the necessity of an exclusionary Jewish state.

With the rise of European Enlightenment, and the homogenizing conception of the nation-state and its *Volk*, many of the Jewish communities across Western and Central Europe experienced a significant cultural shift towards a more secular conception of Jewishness.¹⁰⁸ By the second half of the 18th century Jews in Western and Central Europe were granted emancipatory rights for the first time, allowing them to enter institutions of secular education, offering opportunities to learn the local languages, and opening up access to professions they had previously been barred from. These reforms were first instituted by Joseph II of the

¹⁰⁸ As an aside, it may be worth noting that Gershom Scholem has proposed that due to the messianic promise of Sabbatai Zevi, and later his apostasy, in the late 17th century there arose a dialectic between his antinomian followers and the larger Jewish community that was profoundly shocked by subversion of the Torah. The nihilism that arose from this dialectic helped pave the way for the reform movement of the 19th century. Scholem also detects in the messianic Sabbatian promise to return to the holy land the first reawakening of this yearning for national liberation in Palestine that would later, in a “healthier” secular form, influence the conceptions of Zionism.

Scholem, Gershom Gerhard. "Redemption Through Sin." *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*. Pg. 84-85.

Hapsburg Empire in 1781-82 and equal rights were promised to Jews by the French Revolution. Tsar Alexander II would institute his own emancipatory policies in the Russian Empire, but not until the 1860s.¹⁰⁹ The goal of these projects was “...to bring progress and what was termed ‘productivization’ to the Jewish masses, modernizing them and turning them into useful citizens who were part of their local economy and culture.”¹¹⁰ As an attempt to bring the Jews into the fold of the greater state, these absolutist kingdoms and nationalist movements undermined the older corporate model of European society that had allowed the Jewish communities to obtain a certain level of autonomy separate from but within the European kingdoms.¹¹¹ The French Revolution offered equal status to Jews “...on the condition that they relinquish their collective identity... As Clermont-Tonnerre declared in the French National Assembly: to the Jews as individuals – everything; as a nation – nothing.”¹¹²

Eventually, assimilation was embraced by many Jews in the Western and Central European countries who redefined themselves along national lines as German, French, English, etc. citizens who happened to be practitioners of the Jewish faith. In this “...era of increasing secularization, the Jews’ self-definition began to lean heavily on religion,” which created a distinction between Jewish religion and nationality for the first time, instilling the movement towards assimilation with messianic and redemptive attributes.¹¹³ The hope was that their millennia of exile would finally end with their acceptance as equals in the new Enlightened European societies.

¹⁰⁹ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* pg. 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* pg. 5.

¹¹² *Ibid.* pg. 7.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* pg 7-8.

However, in the Russian Empire, the “productivization” of the Jews took a different route as “the Tsarist regime and Russian masses did not view favorably the idea of Jews integrating among them.”¹¹⁴ While Alexander II instituted many of the same policies that granted Jews more rights and access to forms of higher education, most Jews did not take advantage of these new opportunities and some even looked suspiciously upon those who did. While the Jews in the West, more prone to assimilation, embraced the regional cultures where they lived and thus came into contact with the blooming Romanticist and nationalist movements in these countries, the Jews who left the *kahal* (community) in the Pale of Settlement and Baltic regions brought these new cultural principles back with them into the Jewish settlements that resisted assimilation. Thus, a Jewish cultural renaissance began to sprout that inspired many in the community to study the classical sources of Jewish culture in the original languages and apply these rediscovered influences to projects of secular art, philosophy, and literature. This “Jewish Enlightenment... laid the cultural foundations for Jewish nationalist ideas to flourish.”¹¹⁵

This newfound appreciation and reembracing of Jewish art and literature began to create the first stirrings of a proud Jewish nationalism. The invention of the steam engine, the creation of global philanthropic Jewish organizations, and the proliferation of Jewish newspapers across the world allowed for a mobility and an interconnectedness of information among the Jewish diaspora that had never been experienced before.¹¹⁶ Now they possessed, or potentially could obtain, all of the cultural tools necessary for the production of a Jewish

¹¹⁴ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 10

national identity and the technological means for mass emigration and the construction of colonial settlements. However, such a project seemed superfluous for most Jews at the time who were enjoying their new emancipatory rights in Europe.

It was not until the final quarter of the 19th century that the Jews would realize how fragile this emancipatory security was. Almost simultaneously their new faith in the Russian Empire¹¹⁷ and European powers was shattered, by the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in the former and the rise of anti-Semitism in the latter. The Tsar's assassination led to an outburst of violent pogroms against Jews when it was discovered that several of the conspirators to the plot had been Jewish. The damage of these riots was mostly to property, but the government, the Church, and the revolutionaries only sat by and watched the violence (if not actively participated in it.) In Western and Central Europe, the "old hatred of the Jews" had given way to anti-Semitism. Previously, mistrust of Jews could be abated by their absorption into the cultural milieu of the nation. This had been part of the goal of assimilation. However, anti-Semitism was in part precisely a reaction to this cultural assimilation. "...Antisemitism targeted the Jew who looked like anyone else, who spoke the local language, whose appearance and behavior was the middle class, who took part in and even created national culture."¹¹⁸ Previously religion could be changed, but this new hatred of Jews was marked by racism, determinism, and other unchangeable characteristics that utilized the language of scientific Darwinism. This narrative cast the Jews as the unseen parasites of European civilization who instigated all the ills of capitalist society.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Pg. 11.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Pg. 13.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* Pg. 13.

This betrayal was a great blow to the liberal and intellectual Jews of Europe. They had offered to relinquish any sense of a Jewish community in order to become equal citizens, only to find themselves again lumped under the infamous designation “Jews.” “Constitutional equality [had] not [brought] about social integration.”¹²⁰ It was in response to this crisis that Theodor Herzl began to lay the framework for his model of political Zionism that would earn him the title of “...the father of the Zionist movement.”¹²¹ To the shock of many of his contemporaries, he claimed that Jewish assimilation into the European cultures had been an utter failure¹²²¹²³ and should be abandoned because the very nature of “the nations in whose midst Jews live are all covertly or openly anti-Semitic.”¹²⁴ Herzl understood that modern anti-Semitism accused the Jews of embodying paradoxical characteristics from which they could not escape: “[they] were hated as both capitalist and revolutionary; wealthy and poor; educated and ignorant; and as people who appropriated the local culture yet remained distinctive.”¹²⁵

In 1894 Herzl published his seminal work, *Der Judenstaat*, after failing to obtain any serious support for his nation building project from wealthy Jewish philanthropists. “Modern political Zionism begins with the publication of *Der Judenstaat*”¹²⁶ and it sought to utilize the institutional antisemitism of the European states in order to further its goal of forming a newly appointed political homeland for the Jewish people (not specifically Palestine at this time.). Herzl’s new plan relied on the European Gentiles maintaining their balance between their

¹²⁰ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 14-15.

¹²¹ Ibid. pg. 16.

¹²² Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 86.

¹²³ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 17.

¹²⁴ From *Der Judenstaat*, quoted in Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 91.

¹²⁵ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 16.

¹²⁶ Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 84.

antisemitism and their newly Enlightened goals of progress and liberty. If the Jews could never find their place among European societies, then these societies would surely help the Zionists in their goal of abandoning Europe and creating their own Jewish state elsewhere. Having already been granted equal rights by many of these societies Herzl believed the “great powers” would not want to betray “the spirit of their age”¹²⁷ by rescinding these rights and thus would help the Jews ‘expel themselves’ humanely. This hope would prove horrifically naïve a few decades after his death with the instituting of the Holocaust.¹²⁸

“Political” vs. “Cultural” Zionism Pre-1948

Since Theodor Herzl’s founding of the First Zionist Congress in 1897, the term “Zionism” along with the defined goals of the ideology has been reinterpreted dramatically, and sometimes paradoxically by different Jewish intellectuals, philosophers, and political thinkers. The two main variations usually discussed for this early period of Zionist thought are “political” and “cultural-spiritual” Zionism. Later the proliferations of Zionism would extend beyond this initial dichotomy.

Political Zionism is most associated with Herzl’s initial conception of the movement and is based on the political and material goals¹²⁹ that were responses to the state of Jewish life as he saw it in the late 19th century. Political Zionism is concerned first and foremost, perhaps exclusively, with a political solution to the Jewish “problem,” namely in settling a Jewish state in Palestine. This conception remained the driving force behind the majority of the Zionist

¹²⁷ Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 84.

¹²⁸ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 18.

¹²⁹ Ratzabi, Shalom. *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom 1925-1933*. Pg. 109.

organizations and masses migrations to Palestine for decades into the 20th century. “Herzl’s ideology... assumes a desolate country void of inhabitants [Palestine] but fertile for absorbing many millions.”¹³⁰ Criticizing this willful ignorance of the Arab Palestinian population Hans Kohn wrote: “...we conducted ourselves for twelve years as if the Arabs did not exist and we were happy if no one mentioned their existence.”¹³¹ This kind of narrow view focused strictly on the singular goal of emancipating the downtrodden Jews from Europe and Russia and illustrates the urgency that was inherent in Herzl’s scheme.¹³²

In response to Herzl’s strictly political and secular conception of Zionism many thinkers attempted to refocus the strategy of Zionism along cultural and spiritual lines. One of the earliest critics of political Zionism was Ahad Ha’am whose writings staunchly opposed a nationalist settling of Palestine as early as 1888 and whose mistrust of Herzl’s methods caused him to break with the Zionist Congress after their first meeting in Basel in 1897.¹³³ Ha’am’s cultural Zionism was focused more towards a revitalization of Jewish ethos and cultural. For him political solutions were secondary. Ha’am sought to instill the Zionist movement with a religiously messianic quality, believing “...’ the salvation of Israel will come through prophets, not diplomats.” This messianic and moralistic refocusing would be furthered by subsequent writers critical of political Zionism, flourishing after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I and the British seizure of Palestine in the post-war period. Such writers as S.H. Bergmann, Max Brod, Martin Buber, and Gershom Scholem, sought “...to see political action...

¹³⁰ Quoted from a letter to Martin Buber by Hans Kohn on 26 August 1926. Ratzabi, Shalom. *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom 1925-1933*. pg. 138.

¹³¹ Quoted from Hans Kohn. Ibid. pg. 139.

¹³² Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 17.

¹³³ Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 107.

defined by eternal goals..."¹³⁴ such as justice, community, "holiness," etc. These "eternal values" were seen as the essential aspects of Judaism and as such should also be the motivating forces behind any nationalist Zionist movement. While these thinkers were nationalists they rejected "... concepts like 'state sovereignty', and 'nation-state' ..." ¹³⁵ that relied on colonial subjugation and would only weaken and delegitimize any actualized Jewish state.

The Nationalist "Liberalism" of the Likud Party: Jabotinsky to Netanyahu

Jabotinsky's Revisionism and the Call for Colonization

During World War I the Zionist Organization had maintained a strictly neutral stance in regards to the conflict since many of their members resided in both Allied and Central countries "...and any identification with one side might harm Zionists on the other."¹³⁶ One of several major Zionist figures who actively disregarded this stance of neutrality was the Russian-Zionist journalist Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, who encouraged his fellow Russian Jews who had emigrated to England to join the British Army in special units known as the Jewish Legion in order to "...rouse British interest in Zionism and perhaps encourage a certain commitment to it."¹³⁷

While the Balfour Declaration seemed to many Jews as a promise of this future commitment the upsurge of Arab nationalism in the subsequent decades prevented the British from any serious advancement towards the creation of a Jewish majority state. While the 1920s

¹³⁴ Quote of S.H. Bergmann in Ratzabi, Shalom. *Between Zionism and Judaism*. Pg. 105.

¹³⁵ Ibid. pg. 109.

¹³⁶ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 70.

¹³⁷ Ibid. pg. 70.

saw a slow but steady development of Zionist society and culture in the region Jewish immigration to the area increased markedly as anti-Semitism proliferated in Europe in the years leading up to and during WW2.¹³⁸ In response to this huge increase of the Jewish population in Palestine Arab nationalism in the region grew exponentially from the fear that they would soon be politically displaced and disenfranchised in their native land by the British or Zionist factions and culminated in various violent political demonstrations and uprisings.

Both sides of the Zionist political spectrum saw that the British were inept at dealing with the contrary demands of both the Arab and Jewish side of the conflicts. On the Left Brit Shalom (peace alliance) sought what they termed a “binationalist” compromise that hoped to politically empower both Jewish and Arab peoples who they saw as having equal claim to Palestine. This idealistic concession proved to be unswallowable to both sides. On the Right was the Revisionist movement, conceived and led by Vladimir Jabotinsky.¹³⁹ “Revisionism saw itself as the only true heir to the Herzl-Nordau tradition of political Zionism...” and “...the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine... was the first aim of Zionism.”¹⁴⁰ Jabotinsky believed that the only way Zionism could survive the increased nationalistic fervor of the Arab majority would be “...and active British policy establishing a ‘colonization regime’ in Palestine that would grant state lands to the Jews, enable mass immigration and large-scale development, and stop any Arab resistance by force”¹⁴¹ until a Jewish majority could be established, at which time a Jewish state would finally be founded to which governance of the region would be transferred. He saw

¹³⁸ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 80.

¹³⁹ Ibid. pg. 82.

¹⁴⁰ Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 347.

¹⁴¹ Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. pg. 82.

a clash between Arab nationalists and the Zionist settlements as inevitable so that the formation of “a small Jewish [army]... was the prerequisite for any colonisation [sic] scheme.”¹⁴² The British saw any colonizing effort as unacceptable and “in 1934 the revisionists began to advocate non-cooperation with the mandatory authorities...”¹⁴³

While Jabotinsky's initial conception of his Revisionist movement in the mid-1920s had tried to remain centrist, being “...neither Socialist or capitalist,” “...neither of the Right or of the Left,” his distrust of the Soviet Union led “...revisionism [to] become more and more anti-Socialist in character.”¹⁴⁴ In the early 1930s this led to the creation of several radical offshoots of ‘neo-revision,’ led by disillusioned ex-Socialists such as Aba Achimeir and Uri Zvi Grinberg, who rejected the spirit of liberalism and democracy in favor of more authoritarian National-Socialist doctrines. Jabotinsky held an ambivalent view of these extremist offshoots, sometimes “...express[ing] admiration for their activist spirit...” while seeing their political differences as irreconcilable with his Revisionist movement.¹⁴⁵ While Achimeir’s group Brit Habiryonim had little political significance in Israel at the time “its activities and eccentric views are of interest mainly because they served as a source of inspiration to some of the leading figures of the Irgun;... in some ways the Biryonim were their predecessors. But there is no straight line from Achimeir to.... Begin.”¹⁴⁶

The Irgun (IZL – *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, National Military Organization) was another such ‘unofficial’ branch that did not spring directly from Zionist Revisionism, but whose official ranks

¹⁴² Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Pg. 348-49.

¹⁴³ Ibid. pg. 349.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. pg. 350-51.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Pg. 364.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. pg. 363.

and body consisted mostly of Jabotinsky's supporters.¹⁴⁷ The Irgun were a para-military organization that, despite several splits, changes of leadership, and several years of inactivity during WW2, operated in Palestine from 1931 until 1948. While Irgun sought to act as a Jewish defense force against Arab nationalist and the British Mandate government throughout this time the most notable connection between them and this examination of the history of Zionist nationalism was their 7th and final Commander in Chief, Menahem Begin, who led the Irgun from 1943 till the group's liquidation into the IDF following Israeli independence in 1948.

A Coalition of the Right – Begin's Likud Party

After Jabotinsky's death in 1940 leadership of his Revisionist movement was passed to his successor, Menahem Begin, who founded the major right-wing party Revisionist Party – Herut after the liquidation of Irgun during Israeli independence. However, Begin's major success within Israeli politics would not come about for several decades until his founding of the Likud – National Liberal Movement coalition party in 1973 that allied several right-wing and liberal parties. In a major upset in the 1977 Israeli elections Likud was the first right-wing party to win a plurality of the vote, unseating the left-wing Labor Party for the first time since Israeli independence, and installing Begin as the 6th Prime Minister of Israel. While this unexpected shift in the Israeli political field was partially due to a prospering working class and an increase in religious voters in the counter, it was likely more so the result of a deep dissatisfaction with the ruling Labor Party that had recently been rocked with numerous corruption scandals and

¹⁴⁷ Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. 374-75.

infighting among its leadership.¹⁴⁸ Compared to this wobbling establishment powerhouse the Likud represented a breath of fresh air the Right in Israel.

Begin's first term as prime minister was one of transition and the vast coalition of parties that make up the Likud represented a vast, sometimes contradictory, array of political goals. But for Begin his policies as Prime Minister were characterized by fiscal conservatism, a dedication to Eretz Israel (Jabotinsky's goal of "Greater Israel" characterized by an unyielding historical and mythical claim to the entirety of the Palestinian territory by the Israeli state,) and a wish to garner peace with Egypt, who had officially been in conflict with Israel since the Six-Day War in 1967 that resulted in the annexation of the Sinai Peninsula by Israeli forces. These latter two, concerning Begin's foreign policy, were negotiated during the Camp David Accord in 1978, where Begin's government sought to trade the Sinai back to Egypt in exchange for Egypt ceasing aid to the Gaza Strip, hoping this would solidify Israel's claim the area and allow the further construction of Jewish settlements there. As is apparent today, his goals were only marginally successful in this campaign. Peace was finally established with Egypt, and the Sinai was relinquished, but Gaza still remains a contested territory. Also during his first term inflation in Israeli tripled, "privatization was only partially carried out and government spending was not cut."¹⁴⁹ However, the construction of Jewish settlements in strategic locations throughout the West Bank were carried out in the Jordan Valley, in the central mountain ridgeline of Samaria, and around Jerusalem, particularly on the contested eastern side of the city.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Mitchell, Thomas G. *Likud Leaders: The Lives and Careers of Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon*. Pg. 57-58.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pg. 71.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* pg. 65

By contrast, Begin's second government pushed farther to the Right and "...was the first true Likud government in which Herut neo-Revisionist ideology dominated."¹⁵¹ This second term began almost immediately with Begin annexing the Golan Heights bordering Syria and was marked continuously by war with Lebanon, Palestinian, and Syrian forces. This second term was short lived however, ending with Begin resigning his post in 1983 partially as a result of a severe case of depression brought on by the death of his wife and the disastrous outcome of the Lebanon War which resulted in little more than death on both sides and Begin being condemned by the international press. His contributions to the political Right in Israel and his revitalization of the Revisionist-Zionist ideology were unprecedented at this time. During his first public appearance since his resignation in 1991 he stated "...that 'the war for the Land of Israel' was what was left from Jabotinsky's teachings still to achieve."¹⁵² This uncompromising attitude towards Israeli's 'right' to the West Bank and Gaza Strip and his emphasis on military action "...illustrated a tendency on the Israeli Right to attempt to solve political problems with the Arabs through force"¹⁵³ that is still present in Likud policies of the present day. From its unexpected explosion onto the political scene with its first election run the Likud party has maintained general control within the Israeli government from 1977 till the present, only momentarily slipping out of the leading position from 1992-1996 and 2006-2009.

¹⁵¹ Mitchell, Thomas G. *Likud Leaders: The Lives and Careers of Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon*. pg. 72.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* pg. 80.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* pg. 82.

Netanyahu and the Neo-Liberal Right

Netanyahu, the present Prime Minister of Israel who has held the position longer than any politician other than Ben-Gurion, was born into staunchly Revisionist family. Both his father and grandfather were lifelong supporters of Jabotinsky's ideology and Netanyahu certainly follows in their footsteps. His father Benzion held racist views towards the Arab peoples and saw partition as a political impossibility.¹⁵⁴ While Netanyahu publicly tries to appear as more flexible in his views on a Palestinian state "his father has a huge influence on him" and Benzion has argued that Netanyahu's "...2009 Bar Ilan speech in favor of a Palestinian state was just something that he said to please the Americans. 'He doesn't support a [Palestinian state]. He supports the sort of conditions that they will never accept.'" ¹⁵⁵ Ever since 1989, years before he ever held the office of Prime Minister he has constantly attempted to derail various dialogues between Israel, the United States, the PLO and the Palestinian Authority.¹⁵⁶ During his first term in the mid-1990s he has arranged for the exceptions to every possible freeze on the building of Israeli settlements in occupied territory to make any such halt an impossibility.¹⁵⁷ These same strategies have continued to be utilized by his 2nd and 3rd term governments throughout the late 2000s and 2010s. During these latter terms Netanyahu "...has concentrated on settling the West Bank, fending off demands for negotiations [with the Palestinians], and focusing the attention of the West on Iran's nuclear efforts."¹⁵⁸ Netanyahu's terms as Prime Minister have seen record numbers in the construction of Israeli settlements.

¹⁵⁴ Mitchell, Thomas G. *Likud Leaders: The Lives and Careers of Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon*. pg. 147.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 151.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 154.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pg. 163.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* pg. 199.

His economic platforms have also increasingly become more neo-liberal and rightwing. During his term as finance minister in 2005 and during the 2009 elections Likud's economic plans included refocusing the Israeli economy's economic orientation in the direction of free-market capitalism, extensive tax cuts and privatization efforts, reducing salaries and the number of jobs, forcing welfare recipients into the working sector, and the slashing of socialistic economic policies.¹⁵⁹ This was an attempt to combat the massive inflation Israel was facing at the time and in terms of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange it was success, cementing Netanyahu's image as a neo-liberal politician.

During Barack Obama's 2 terms as US President he had hoped to reopen negotiations between the Israeli's that had shown some signs of hope during President George W. Bush's last year in office. Netanyahu's unrealistic stipulations in all these talks doomed them to failure generally before they even began. During the first attempt to revive these talks in 2008 Netanyahu paid lip service to the possibility of a two-state solution but cleverly based on it stipulations that may have appeared reasonable to outsiders but ones that he knew would be unacceptable to the Palestinians, such as conditioning it on Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, as a means to avoid the negotiations.¹⁶⁰ Again in 2013 John Kerry was able to get the two sides to agree to attempt talks once more, only to have Netanyahu announce the plans for the construction of 1,187 new settlement housing units in East Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank on the eves of their meeting. Netanyahu has seemed staunchly determined to follow in the footsteps of his hardline Revisionist predecessors by refusing the cessation of any

¹⁵⁹ Mitchell, Thomas G. *Likud Leaders: The Lives and Careers of Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon*. pg. 186, 188.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 189.

Israeli controlled land and the freeze on any settlement projects in favor of military intervention into Gaza and the West Bank every few years. His ideologically rigid attitude towards territorial issues, coupled with his public presentation of flexibility has been instrumental in maintaining his position as Prime Minister while garnering support of his policies by foreign powers and the more centrist and leftwing political parties within Israel. One prime example illustrating his cleverly slippery rhetoric masking a plan of action predictable to his constituents on the Right was the definitive assertion he made only days before the March 2015 Israeli elections: "If I'm elected, there will be no Palestinian state."¹⁶¹ This statement directly contradicts his stated sentiments in his 2009 Bar Ilan speech and was obviously an attempt to garner votes from the Israel's far-Right just before the election, but certainly reflects his personal political goals as can be seen in relation to his undermining every other Palestinian peace agreement his government has been a part of while he has acted as Prime Minister. Only 3 days later he backtracked "... after the US said it would be forced to 're-evaluate' its approach to the long-running conflict and criticized the 'divisive rhetoric' of his election campaign"¹⁶² in order to save face with the Obama administration. Despite appearing to flip flop so continuously with his public statements his precise actions in regards to policy and negotiating with the Palestinians illustrates the hardline neo-Revisionist beliefs he has held continuously throughout his career. As a result Israeli opinion of the "Palestinian problem" has

¹⁶¹ Ravid, Barak. "Netanyahu: If I'm Elected, There Will Be No Palestinian State" *Haaretz*. Haaretz Daily Newspaper Ltd. 16 Mar. 2015.

¹⁶² Salem, Harriet. "Netanyahu Backtracks on Election Pledge to Refuse a Two-State Solution After Sharp Words from the US." *Vice News*. 19 Mar. 2015.

continuously veered towards the Right and Jabotinsky's iron wall philosophy of Eretz Israel has become nearly universal within his governments and throughout much of the public sphere.¹⁶³

Strange Bedfellows: Anti-Nationalism and Anti-Zionism of the Left and Ultra-Orthodox Jews

Firstly, this paper has attempted to outline the political and historical conditions that led to the demand for Zionism within the diasporic Jewish communities. Secondly, after the initial rise and solidification of Zionism as a worldwide movement, this paper attempted to examine how pressure from the Arab Other within Palestine, along with a synthesis of Zionism with the new totalitarian far-Right political ideologies of the early 20th century, has led to the staunchly militaristic, colonialist, and economically anti-socialist, neo-liberal conception of Zionist Revisionism which remains the ruling ideology within Israeli politics to this day. For the remainder of this examination on Jewish nationalism and anti-nationalism this paper will focus on the specifically Jewish critiques of the Zionist movement. These trends of Jewish anti-Zionism have existed since the beginning in both the extremely religious camps of ultra-Orthodox Judaism, whose arguments rely on theological, mystical, and mythological argumentation, and the intellectual, secular, and revolutionary Leftist side of modern Judaism, focusing primarily on the political, ethical, and humanitarian implications of establishing an exclusionary, specifically "Jewish" state.

¹⁶³ Mitchell, Thomas G. *Likud Leaders: The Lives and Careers of Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon*. 204.

Messianic and Theological Polemics – Ultra-Orthodoxy

Historically the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community has held a conservative, if not outright “apolitical,” view of the profane, earthly politics of the nation-states of our world. However, many Orthodox rabbis of the 19th century were some of the first outspoken critics against the nationalist goals of secular political Zionism. Their rejection of what they deemed as a false “State of Israel” is important to this examination because of the strictly theological and mystical nature of their argumentation that utilized Scripture in order to create some of the first anti-Zionist cultural myths within the Jewish world, or rather utilized Jewish myths for anti-Zionist purposes. Their arguments hinged upon the necessity of Messianism in respect to the creation of any such State of Israel, particularly regarding the reality of exile (*galut*), the Divine promise of redemption, and the Three Oaths made by the Jewish people to God. In his book *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, Ravitzky Aviezer constructs three main messianic “camps” within the Orthodox communities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: the “passive” messianism of the anti-Zionists (well expressed by the works of Hasidic Rabbi Shalom Dov Baer Schneersohn,) the “active” messianism of the “Harbingers of Zionism” (Orthodox proto-Zionists, such as Rabbi Judah Alkalai and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, who would later influence the Religious Zionist movement,) and the ideas of Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines who founded the Mizrachi organization (religious-Zionist) which, at least initially, sought to separate the ideas of Zionism and messianism into two differentiated and unrelated realms, the former concerning the earthly, the latter the Divine.¹⁶⁴ I will be focusing mainly on the anti-Zionist views of the first camp which was the most prominent view among Orthodox Judaism at the

¹⁶⁴ Ravitzky, Aviezer. *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Pg. 36.

time, only referencing the specific views of the latter two camps for the purposes of explanation through juxtaposition.

Arguably, the first use of the expression “the State of Israel” in Hebrew literature directly regarding the end goals of the political Zionist movement was in the writings of the Orthodox Rabbi Elyakum Shlomo Shapira of Grodno in 1900. Like many of his predecessors these initial critiques did not attack Zionism on a theological basis, but instead expressed the great disapproval of the strictly secular nature of the movement: “...Their valor in the land is not for the sake of the true faith... How can I bear that something be called “the State of Israel” without the Torah and the commandments (heaven forbid)?”¹⁶⁵ Even in Theodor Herzl’s seminal work *Der Judenstaat*, published 5 years prior, he refers to the nationalistic goal of Zionism only as “the State of the Jews,” evoking the sociological conception of the present, historical Jewish people in distress, rather than the term “Israel” that was laden with metahistorical and theological implications. Whether purposeful or accidental, Herzl’s avoidance of the term “Israel” was tactical because it was precisely the inherent messianism implied within this name, and thought to be imbued in the geographic region of Palestine (especially Jerusalem,) that many ultra-Orthodox Jews took offense to.

Other than the inherent secular nature of early Zionism, anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox Jews’ main theological concerns with the settling of Jews in Palestine was that their actions were in direct violations of the Three Oaths, and thus inherently sinful and dangerous. These Three Oaths deal specifically with the Jews existential state in exile and the possibility of

¹⁶⁵ Quoted from Shapira’s work *Or la-yesharim* in Ravitzky, Aviezer, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Pg. 4.

redemption and salvation with the coming of the Messiah: 1) “that Israel not ascend the wall” from exile, 2) “that they not rebel against the nations of the world,” and 3) that “they not force the End.”¹⁶⁶ Thus Rabbi Schneersohn argues that Zionism seeks to break all of these oaths by “...represent[ing] a *human effort* to realize decidedly messianic expectations – the ingathering of the exiles [to Palestine], liberations from ‘subjugation to the great powers’ – expectations whose fulfillment should depend solely on the transcendental and miraculous intervention of the Savior of Israel [the Messiah]. Zionism thus appears to be a blatant violation of the oath sworn by the Jewish people to *wait patiently* until the End of Days, a betrayal of the religious norm of exile.”¹⁶⁷ By creating their own Jewish nation within “Israel” the Zionists were actively seeking to no longer live under the nations of the world and reenter history as their own nationally sovereign agent. To the anti-Zionist Orthodox community this could only truly be brought about when the Messiah comes to the world and leads the Jewish people there, any other attempt by humanity was a perversion and could only end in failure. For Schneersohn “all human activity is ipso facto incomplete, relative, and transient, and therefore must fall short of the yearned-for messianic redemption... The redemption of Israel would thus be both initiated and completed by heavenly powers.”¹⁶⁸ Neither force nor prayer should be utilized in quickening the coming of the End Times. “The act of *teshuvah* (repentance) alone is a legitimate means to hasten the End... “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in

¹⁶⁶ Ravitzky, Aviezer. *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Pg. 22.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. pg. 15. (Emphasis added by me.)

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. pg. 17.

vain on it; unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen keeps vigil in vain” [Ps. 127:1].”¹⁶⁹

In contrast to this tradition of “passive” messianism, the “active” messianic camp of the “Harbingers of Zionism’... see messianic redemption not as a onetime event but as a process, not as a revolution but as evolution.”¹⁷⁰ While they agreed that redemption could only be completed by God, they disagreed with the “passive” tradition on the initiation of the process that could be begun by active human intervention. For them the establishment of “the State of Israel” was a messianic act, but one that required the participation of the Jews in the field of world history. “The State of Israel’... is to be no less than the foundation of God’s presence in the world.”¹⁷¹ This last quote is attributed to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook who is considered one of the main influential thinkers that imbued the Religious Zionist movement with truly messianic qualities. And while Jabotinsky was a secular thinker influenced by rationalism his conception of the Jewish people having a mythological and historical right to Eretz Israel has resonated deeply with the Religious Zionist movement. Religious Zionists are generally considered to be on far-Right of the political spectrum, many being members of Likud, and unlike their anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox counterparts they actively participate in Israeli electoral politics. Is voting for far-Right religious politicians bringing us closer to the End Times?

Obviously today “...the concrete fulfillment wrought by Zionism remains relative and contingent, stopping well short of the absolute [and utopian] terms of the classical [Messianic]

¹⁶⁹ A quote by Rabbi M.N. Kahane-Shapira of Kishunez in A.B. Steinberg’s collection of Hasidic writings *Da’at ha-rabbanim*. Ravitzky, Aviezer, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. pg 18.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. pg. 28.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. pg. 5.

vision.”¹⁷² While the Religious Zionists see the Three Oaths as having been fulfilled, and thus no longer apply to the Jewish peoples, the corruption and militarism of the modern Israeli state is evidence enough for many anti-Zionist Orthodox Jews that Zionism has been a spiritual disaster. Today there is a vast array of opinions about Zionism among the Orthodox communities, many having found their own scriptural argumentation to justify the existence of the State of Israel as a positive Divine sign. Certainly in the 19th century most Orthodox Jews and rabbis fell into the anti-Zionist camp, but much has changed over the past century and “...the question of the State of Israel has proven even more divisive than the issue of modernity” within contemporary Jewish Orthodoxy.¹⁷³

Mystical Revolutionaries and Secular Leftists – Landauer, Arendt, and Butler

Gustav Landauer – Mystical Anarchism and the Revolution of the Spirit

Gustav Landauer was one of the most prominent and influential German-Jewish anarchist writers and theorists in Germany at the turn of the 20th century. He was deeply concerned with the study of mysticism and revolutionary politics which he saw as codependent with each other in the formation a new socialist form of society and way of living. While his political ideas were inherently anti-statist many of his theories would influence the religious and political writings of Gershom Scholem and Landauer’s contemporary, Martin Buber, both of whom were cultural Zionists. This brief overview of his political and religious theories will firstly cover the distinction he creates between State and Nation and how this plays into his critic of

¹⁷² Ravitzky, Aviezer. *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Pg. 1.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* pg. 7.

political Zionism in the early 20th century. Secondly, a look at his concept of a “revolution of the spirit” and his detailed social plans for the formation of alternative anarchist settlements alongside, but outside of, bourgeois capitalist society that would be the main revolutionary institutions used to non-violently abolish the institutions of capitalism and the state.

As a libertarian socialist (anarchist) Landauer’s works show an early distrust for Marx’s concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the historical inevitability of scientific-materialism.¹⁷⁴ In fact one of his seminal works contains an extensive critique of Marxism in which he passionately claims “Marxism is ‘the plague of our time and the curse of the socialist movement!’”¹⁷⁵ Landauer worried that any form of governance, even a socialistic one, which centralized power into the institution of a state would not in fact slowly decay into communism, as Marx predicted it would, but would only solidify and perpetuate the apparatus of the state itself.¹⁷⁶ “...In Landauer’s theory state and capitalism are inseparable entities... [while] socialism and the state remained for him irreconcilable enemies.”¹⁷⁷

In contrast to this concept of the state, proletarian or otherwise, that Landauer rejects in its entirety, he defines his concept of *Nation* or *Nationen*, which could be utilized in organizing humanity into a truly socialist society. In the above sections of this paper the terms “state” and “nation” have been used essentially conterminously, the former being the institutional governing structure of modern societies and the latter being the geo-political entities tied to a group of people’s national identities. Landauer defines nations quite different

¹⁷⁴ Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. Pg. 114-15.

¹⁷⁵ Quoted from Landauer’s *Aufruf*. Ibid. 115.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 116.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. pg. 111.

and are the embodiments of a historical group of people's *Geist* which drives their organization. For Landauer "*Nation* is the particular way in which human nature in general and the unique traits of the individual express themselves within a community whose element of cohesion is a common historical background."¹⁷⁸ This is contrasted with his concept of the state "...being an artificial, fortuitous, political structure based on accidents of history rather than on a mutual experience in history."¹⁷⁹ Any such "...state was necessarily the opposite of the desirable social organization."¹⁸⁰ Thus a nation for him was not the political bodies of society but the *Geist* of a community that is not bound by geography or even necessarily a common language. Jews and Christians were such nations that shared a mutually experienced history but were not bound by geography, language, or politics. Living during the late stages of Jewish Emancipation in Europe Landauer saw himself as a single individual belonging to three nations simultaneously: as a German, a south German and a Jew¹⁸¹ (although he rejected the Jewish religion.)¹⁸² In his conception of a truly socialist society these "nations" would coexist alongside each other, share, amalgamate, mutate, and grow, but under the current capitalist structure many of these nations worked in conjunction with the state at the exclusion of others and a "strong emphasis on one's own nationality, even when it does not lead to chauvinism, is weakness."¹⁸³ The same charges Landauer brought against German nationalism also applied to the political Zionist movement of his time which "...frequently resulted in, and in part arose from, attitudes quite as

¹⁷⁸ Quoted from Landauer's *Der werdende Mensch: Aufsätze über Leben und Schriftum* in Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. pg. 78-79

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. pg 79

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 194.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. pg. 79

¹⁸² Ibid. pg. 80.

¹⁸³ Quoted from Landauer's "Sind das Ketzergedanken?" Ibid. pg. 81.

chauvinistic as those of [Houston Stewart] Chamberlain and his followers [racial philosopher of elitist Aryanism who sought to justify the anti-Semitism within 19th century German society].”¹⁸⁴

While most of Landauer’s political activities were focused in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century he sought to address the dangers of Zionist nationalism in several of his works at the time as well. His universalist attitude towards humanity in its entirety saw the goals of political Zionism as horribly misguided for they sought the creation of an exclusively Jewish state, rather than defining themselves through their uniquely Jewish *Geist* in relation and conjunction with all of humanity. Landauer posited his idea of ‘true Zionism’ as:

Like a wild cry over the earth and like a soft whisper in our innermost heart, a voice tells us urgently that Jews can find salvation only in common with all humanity, and that it is the same thing to await the Messiah in banishment and Diaspora and to be the Messiah for all peoples.¹⁸⁵

This reworking of Zionism still charges the Jewish people with their uniquely historical-mystical Messianic potential as the eventual redeemers of humanity, but denies them the necessity of a political state to do so. Landauer’s statement seems to show that his own personally mystic view of the Jewish people saw their state in exile as divinely ordained, and thus any formation of a political state in Palestine would not only adversely affect their political potential in the world but also their theological potential in regards to Messianism. He worried that the Zionist formation of a specifically Jewish state would only exacerbate the anti-Semitism spreading throughout the Western world by giving evidence to the charge of separatism that

¹⁸⁴ Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. pg. 82.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted from Landauer, “Sind das Ketzergedanken?” in *Ibid*. pg. 82.

was so often leveled against the Jewish people. He proposed reworking the goals of Zionism in a more universalist fashion:

The movement going through the world of Jewry, generally under that name Zionism, should have, whatever its external forms and fluctuations, the following purposes: that Jews, under the leadership of spiritual and strong individuals, mold purely and creatively that particular nature which they, like every *Nation*, have developed over thousands of years; that in the battle for that which is holy they save their souls from the chaos of misunderstanding and superficially mechanical custom; that they fill their souls with urgent life and present themselves and their nature to developing mankind, which an as little stand to do without the Jews as it can any other level or gradation of humanity. Humanity does not mean identity; humanity is the union of the manifold.¹⁸⁶

While Landauer's statements could be viewed as a kind of cultural Zionism I would argue that his rejection of a state, Jewish or otherwise, coupled with his view of exile that, if not condemning of, at least did not encourage the mass settlements in Palestine, which makes his views particularly anti-Zionist in regards to the goals of political Zionism. He would never think about immigrating to Palestine, although he may have been supportive of some of the anarchist-style kibbutz communities that established themselves in Palestine shortly after his death in the 1920s and 1930s. He saw his place in Germany where he actively tried to establish agrarian anarchist settlements through his organization the Socialist Bund and participated in the founding of the council republic (*Räterepublik*) in Bavaria during the German Revolution of 1918/1919.

Throughout his entire life Landauer was a pacifist and in all of his politic projects stressed the necessity of a nonviolent subversion of capitalism that would socially and spiritually pave the way for a socialist society. He was greatly disturbed by the violent tactic of

¹⁸⁶ Quoted from Landauer, *Der werdende Mensch*. in Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. pg. 82

‘propaganda of the deed’ that was popularly used by anarchists at the time to justify assassinations and public bombings. Landauer’s pacifist alternative to violent revolution was to establish exemplary anarchist settlements. In the six years preceding World War I his Socialist Bund organization attracted hundreds of followers that were dedicated to the project of establishing these anarchist settlements in rural Germany¹⁸⁷ that would “...create a socialist life for themselves – outside the state, but at first, necessarily alongside the state... [A confederation] of small communities that could function for the benefit of all their members, as a family serves all those who belong to it.”¹⁸⁸ These settlements were meant to act as working examples of purely voluntary socialist societies “...where individuals would join together, within but separate from the bourgeois society, to build a life free from the pressures of modern civilization and consistent with the dignity of the human being. This proposal was based on the concept of mutual aid, which the workers had [already] seen in action in their unions and cooperatives...”¹⁸⁹ Unlike many of his contemporary anarchists Landauer argued that the ownership of private property should still exist in these communities, but in a Jubilee system organized like the Jewish communities in Leviticus where every 7 years property and land would be redistributed according the needs of the community members.¹⁹⁰ But he also stressed that his conception of these communities were not the end-all-be-all of how true socialism should operate on a global scale. He was pragmatic in the sense that different areas and different “nations” of people would have to organize differently base on their own personal

¹⁸⁷ Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. pg. 120

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* pg. 102.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* pg. 38

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* pg. 120.

tastes and needs and even then, they would have to constantly adapt and change according to the needs of history and their environments. Ultimately “...there would never be a finished, perfect socialist society... socialism is not a goal but a way of acting... real socialism is always just beginning, is always something moving.”¹⁹¹

Operating as such these communities would help to initiate the Social Revolution and a “Revolution of the Spirit”¹⁹² that would need to precede any kind of political revolution in order to mentally, socially, and spiritual prepare the masses for such types of communal living and recondition themselves away from the selfish hyper-individualism of capitalist society. In this way, the need for violence and destruction at the time of a final political revolution could be greatly mitigated in favor of a “...revolution that is [based on] building and regeneration...”¹⁹³ However, as could be expected, when his movement began gaining popularity they were met with constant police raids at their meetings and their newspaper headquarters, especially as they began to publish more antiwar articles in the years leading up to the war. His newspaper, the *Sozialist*, and the Bund were finally forced to discontinue in April 1915.¹⁹⁴ As such he lost the organizational means to further his social/spiritual revolutions as Germany was swept up into the war, which “to Landauer marked the total failure of the German *Geist*.”¹⁹⁵

The fact that no true social revolution had yet been able to occur was Landauer’s greatest worry at the beginning of the German Revolution in 1918. He would not join in this struggle until almost 2 weeks into the events, on the day after the republic was proclaimed and

¹⁹¹ This was the first principle given in his work “Sozialistisches Beginnen” (“Socialist Beginnings,” 1909). Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. pg. 123

¹⁹² Ibid. pg. 167.

¹⁹³ Quoted from Landauer, *Ein Weg deutschen Geistes*. in Ibid. pg. 188

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. pg. 133.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. pg. 132.

revolutionary councils were elected. There were very few leaders of this new movement who he trusted and as a result he joined the fray in the hopes “...to push events in the direction he desired...”¹⁹⁶ He briefly served as the Commissioner of Enlightenment and Public Instruction in the new government of the first Soviet Republic of Bavaria but quickly became disheartened and resigned on April 19th 1919 after it was taken over by the KPD (Communist Party of Germany). On May 1st the German Army reconquered the area, Landauer was arrested and beaten to death by a group of soldiers in Munich’s Stadelheim Prison.¹⁹⁷

While Landauer’s sad end would also coincide with fall of the last of the revolutionary council governments of the German Revolution his legacy would go on to inspire many Jewish, German, and anarchist thinkers. Martin Buber, who was a colleague of his, is responsible for editing various volumes of Landauer’s work, and Gershom Scholem has also acknowledged an affinity for Landauer’s political and mystical ideas. Having outlined one of the more detailed plans for the construction of alternative anarchist communities outside of the state it would also not be surprising if his work inspired some of the first kibbutz pioneers of the far-Left. His cautionary writings about the inevitable oppressiveness of any kind of political state would certainly have put him in the camp of the anti-Zionists, or at least the binationalist Left Zionists out of necessity, had he survived long enough to witness the increased development of Palestine under the British Mandate and all of its political and ethical repercussions.

¹⁹⁶ Mauer, Charles B. *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer*. pg. 170.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pg. 182-82.

The “Loyal Opposition” - Hannah Arendt’s Federated Community Councils

In discussions of Zionist politics in Israel today, Hannah Arendt is a name that is seldom heard. Even though she is better remembered for her larger works such as *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, *The Human Condition*, and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she also penned numerous works on the topics of Zionism and the Jewish question throughout the 1940s-1960s, many of which are more pertinent than ever today. She was born in the first decade of the 20th century into a family of secular German Jews outside of modern day Hanover. As a girl the “Jewish question” was one she rarely considered and honestly found “boring”¹⁹⁸ as her family never particularly identified with their Jewishness. This all changed for her however with Hitler’s rise to power in German politics in the early 1930s. Fleeing the fledgling Nazi regime in 1933, she became embroiled with the study of politics and history, particularly in relation to the Jewish people. This was the only time in her life where she could have been considered a supporter of the Zionist movement, but this would change shortly afterwards in the early 40s in reaction to the Zionists’ refusal to acknowledge responsibility in the Jewish-Arab conflicts in Palestine and the inherent dangers she saw in the Herzlian “political” Zionists’ dependence on the imperialist, anti-Semitic “great powers” in their quest for Jewish statehood. While Arendt was accused of anti-Zionism on several occasions throughout her career this charge depends solely on the definition of Zionism in question. Throughout the above examination of nationalism in Jewish politics the term “Zionism” has been used primarily in relation to the dominant forms of Zionist ideology found among the pre-state settlers and the post-independence politic system of the Israeli state, namely Herzlian “political” Zionism and the Revisionist Zionism that gave rise to

¹⁹⁸ Bernstein, Richard J. “Hannah Arendt’s Zionism?” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 195

the ruling Likud party. In relation to these forms of Zionist ideology Arendt was staunchly opposed. However, since Arendt rejected the label of “anti-Zionist” for herself I will refrain from placing her within this camp, but, according to her own words, she was continuously “...a member of the loyal opposition.”¹⁹⁹

For Arendt, her relations to Zionism were always driven solely by politics. In fact, it was “...the *need* for a Jewish politics...[that] led her to Zionism...[and] her critique of Zionist politics...was the reason for her later break with it.”²⁰⁰ Like Herzl, she agreed that “...the modern European Jewish project of social assimilation was a complete disaster”²⁰¹ and that “...politics alone...provided any real hope for a solution to the Jewish question.”²⁰² Herzl’s solution to this political problem was his conception of political Zionism, but Arendt, writing 50 years later in 1946, understood that “...the basic problem of [contemporary] Zionism is not its deviation from the Herzlian vision, but Herzlian Zionism itself.”²⁰³ Herzl’s Zionism had planned to use an alliance with the anti-Semitic “great powers” to further his formation of a Jewish state by utilizing their want to rid themselves of their Jewish populations and thus transplanting them to Palestine. The Gentiles nations’ expulsion of the Jews from their borders would end the need for anti-Semitism in Europe. “[Hannah Arendt] condemned [this] Zionist reliance on imperialist power as an adoption of the same principles that enabled the political influence and victory of anti-Semitism [in the first place].”²⁰⁴ Writing later in 1963 Arendt would argue against

¹⁹⁹ Bernstein, Richard J. “Hannah Arendt’s Zionism?” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 201.

²⁰⁰ Bernstein, Richard J. “Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?” *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*. pg. 102. (Emphasis added by me.)

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 103.

²⁰² Bernstein, Richard J. “Hannah Arendt’s Zionism?” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 196.

²⁰³ Zimmerman, Moshe. “The Early ‘Post-Zionist.’” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 183.

²⁰⁴ Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon. “Binationalism and Jewish Identity.” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 168.

one of the popular Zionist myths of the time, that the formation of Israeli had discredited the anti-Semitic movement, by countering that in fact “...’anti-Semitism was discredited thanks to Hitler,’ not because of Zionism’s success.”²⁰⁵ Today we can see that political Zionism’s early collusion with these foreign powers and the forceful colonialist formation of a sovereign Jewish majority state “...*did not* solve the problem of anti-Semitism... Zionism only helped the center of anti-Semitism to shift from Europe to the Middle East.”²⁰⁶

Today “Arab anti-Semitism, nearly nonexistent before Zionist migration to Palestine, is ...the most dangerous brand of anti-Semitism...”²⁰⁷ facing the Palestinian Jews. As Zionism recognized its inability to destroy or negate anti-Semitism throughout the world, the Revisionist Zionists cleverly and cynically flipped this failure and turned it into the theological-political myth that anti-Semitism naturally arose in any Gentile that lived in contact with Jews. This myth of a worldwide predisposition to anti-Semitism helped to justify Zionism’s political aspirations in the Palestinian region of creating a specifically Jewish shelter and transformed themselves into “eternal victims” who were devoid of all responsibility for any hatred, or even criticism, thrown their way.²⁰⁸ This disposition, that would automatically negate any Jewish responsibility for Arab oppression in the Near East or simply erase the existence of the Palestinians from any discussion of national sovereignty in the region, is a major factor that has contributed to the collapse of every peace talk between the Arabs and Jews that has taken place from before the founding of the Israeli state to the present. Hannah Arendt first identified this theoretical shift

²⁰⁵ Zimmerman, Moshe. “The Early ‘Post-Zionist.’” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 183.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 183.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* pg. 184.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* pg. 184.

towards unapologetic nationalism and Revisionism in the harshly exclusionary language of the Zionists' Atlantic City Resolution in 1944, which demanded a "free and democratic Jewish commonwealth... [which] shall embrace the whole of Palestine, undivided and undiminished." Obviously this rings of Jabotinsky's uncompromising Eretz Israel plan. Arendt saw the unanimous approval of this resolution as "...a turning-point in Zionist history; for it means that the Revisionist program, so long bitterly repudiated, has proved finally victorious...The majority [of Zionists]... have turned more than ever nationalistic."²⁰⁹ Arendt was perturbed by this shifting in Zionist ideology but not all together surprised as she wrote later that same year that the roots of this nationalistic Revisionism that demanded a Jewish state for itself were imbedded in Zionism as far back as Herzl himself.²¹⁰

Before this point, a healthy plurality of political plans had existed among the Zionists in Palestine (a necessary feature of any free society according to Arendt's theory of politics), some wishing to establish a Jewish majority European-style nation-state, others seeking reconciliation with the Arabs through partition or binationalism, and others, like some in the early kibbutz movement, who rejected the formation of any kind of nation-state altogether. During World War 2, nationalism began to rise not just among Palestinian Jews, but also among the American and European Zionist organizations. "[Arendt] was not only disturbed by the Zionist turn to revisionism, but was alarmed by the growing pressures toward ideological conformity, a conformity that did not tolerate any dissent and suppressed conflicting opinions."²¹¹ She

²⁰⁹ Arendt, Hannah. "Zionism Reconsidered." *The Jewish Writings*. Pg. 343.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Pg. 346.

²¹¹ Bernstein, Richard J. "Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?" *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*. pg. 105.

“...lamented the fact that among American Jews and Jews in Palestine, there was an overwhelming consensus to found a new sovereign state.”²¹² In view of this overwhelming push in Zionism towards nationalism Arendt argued that “...the establishment of a Jewish state and its dramatic growth made the dispossession of the Palestinians inevitable.”²¹³

After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved – namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory – but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people.²¹⁴

Today it can clearly be seen that this prophetic criticism has come true as the Arab populations of Palestine are treated as second-class citizens and the Likud’s politicians still refuse to seriously consider even the possibility of a two-state solution in their peace negotiations with the PLO and Palestinian Authority. Any criticism from the worldwide community aimed at “...Israel’s discriminatory policy toward its Arabs [is] perceived in Israel as a confirmation of the Goyim’s intrinsic, everlasting hatred of the Jews/Israel so essential to Zionism.”²¹⁵ If peace is ever to be achieved and the “insoluble” Arab-Jewish problem solved it “...cannot be imposed from outside, it can only be the result of negotiations, of mutual compromise and eventual agreement between Jews and Arabs.”²¹⁶

Even before the proclamation of the Israeli state in 1948 Hannah Arendt had argued that “...the nation-state was no longer an appropriate model for founding a Jewish state (or any

²¹² Ibid. pg. 114-15.

²¹³ Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon. “Binationalism and Jewish Identity.” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 170.

²¹⁴ Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Pg. 290.

²¹⁵ Zimmerman, Moshe. “The Early ‘Post-Zionist.’” *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 186.

²¹⁶ Bernstein, Richard J. “Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?” *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*. pg. 108.

other new state.)”²¹⁷ This concept had quickly become outdated by the mid-20th century as “a nation-state, in the European sense of the word, meant a state governing a basically homogenous population – that is, a population unified by common traditions, language, and shared experiences. The ‘logic’ of the nation-state meant that minority populations were always problematic.”²¹⁸

National sovereignty which so long had been the very symbol of free national development has become the greatest danger to national survival for small nations. In view of the international situation and the geographical location of Palestine, it is not likely that the Jewish and Arab people will be exempt from this rule.²¹⁹

As an alternative to a classical European nation-state Arendt proposed a new conception for an Arab-Jewish government that was a step beyond that of binationalism: a “Confederation of Palestine”²²⁰ based on council governments:

Local self-government and mixed Jewish-Arab municipal and rural councils, on a small scale and as numerous as possible, are the only realistic political measures that can eventually lead to the political emancipation of Palestine.²²¹

This type of federated state would “...avoid the troublesome majority-minority constellation...” and by relying on this localized Jewish-Arab council system the Jewish-Arab conflict would be resolved on the lowest and most promising level of proximity and neighborliness.”²²² Only by rejecting a Jewish majority state and bringing the Arab

²¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 117.

²¹⁸ Bernstein, Richard J. “Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?” *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*. pg. 109.

²¹⁹ Arendt, Hannah. “Peace or Armistice in the Near East?” *The Jewish Writings*. Pg. 450

²²⁰ This idea was originally proposed by her dear friend Dr. Magnes and his Ihud group as far back as 1943. Ibid. pg. 446.

²²¹ Quoted from Hannah Arendt’s *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*. Bernstein, Richard J. “Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?” pg. 118.

²²² Quoted from Hannah Arendt’s *The Jew as Pariah*. Bernstein, Richard J. “Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?” pg. 117.

communities into the fold of Palestinian politics as equals could the Arab-Jewish conflict be resolved and a true Jewish homeland achieved. This Jewish homeland, as opposed to a Jewish state, was always Arendt's goal for Zionism²²³ if the movement was to be based on equality, freedom, and Jewish empowerment. In this way, her aspirations for the Jewish settlement of Palestine mirrored those of the leading cultural Zionist "Ahad Ha'am, [who] saw in Palestine the Jewish cultural center which would inspire the spiritual development of all Jews in other countries, but would not need ethnic homogeneity and national sovereignty."²²⁴ Once this "Confederation of Palestine" and the Jewish homeland could be established then there would also be the possibility of bring in other Near Eastern and Middle Eastern nations into a kind of grand federation of the region (such as in Aubrey Eban's conception of a Near Eastern League.)²²⁵ "She reminded her readers that those who claimed that such a confederation [or larger federation] was utopian should remember that there was a model for such a confederation – the Constitution of the United States."²²⁶

Many of Hannah Arendt's controversial views isolated her from various academic, political, and Jewish communities during her lifetime. More recently however her work seems to be gaining popularity again in universities and political discussions throughout the West. The 21st century has given us new perspective and new problems that require not only innovation, but a reaching back to ideas from the past. Fifty years after she wrote the political system in Israel continues on its march of Revisionist nationalism that she illuminated in her works on

²²³ Bernstein, Richard J. "Hannah Arendt's Zionism?" *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 199.

²²⁴ Arendt, Hannah. "Peace or Armistice in the Near East?" pg. 443.

²²⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 446.

²²⁶ Bernstein, Richard J. "Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?" pg. 121.

Jewishness and Palestine. It seems likely that she would not be surprised at all had she witnessed the rise of Likud or the institutionalization of Netanyahu's neo-liberal Revisionist Zionism. When discussing the early beginnings of Zionism Arendt recognized two driving ideological currents in its initial conception: the nationalist and the revolutionary socialist.²²⁷ Ultimately, with the normalization of Revisionism, the former consumed the latter "...with the unequivocal support not only of national but of chauvinistic claims – not against the foes of the Jewish people but against its possible friends and present neighbors."²²⁸ With this defeat she broke from the Zionist movement. Would it ever be possible to ever reverse this bitter defeat with 80 years of history now weighing upon it? Arendt believed that if anyone, the Jews could understand and empathize with the realities of statelessness and subjugation, which is why she always "...emphasized the need for Jews to join in coalition with the downtrodden people in order to fight for their political freedom."²²⁹ Collaboration with the "great powers" would not only place one in the position of being their tool but would actively hurt the trust and causes of one's equals with whom the true strength and numbers lie. Arendt understood politics as the greatest tool the Jews could harness for their own emancipation and empowerment, but "politics requires equality... among those who form a political community where individuals debate, deliberate, argue, and act collectively"²³⁰ and for her Zionism had bitterly lost its way.

²²⁷ Bernstein, Richard J. "Zionism: Jewish Homeland or Jewish State?" pg. 110.

²²⁸ Ibid. pg. 113.

²²⁹ Bernstein, Richard J. "Hannah Arendt's Zionism?" *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. pg. 197.

²³⁰ Ibid. pg. 198.

Judith Butler's Dispersion and Single State Binationalism

In Judith Butler's work *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* she seeks to disassociate the charge of anti-Jewishness that has become inextricably linked to any criticism of political Zionism or the State of Israel by exploring the "...commitments to social equality and social justice... [that are] an integral part of Jewish secular, socialist, and religious traditions."²³¹ The tension in her argument lies in the fact that at the present moment "...Zionism...controls the meaning of Jewishness..." and the State of Israel assumes "...the right... to speak for Jewish values, or indeed, the Jewish people,"²³² but at the same time if one is to successfully critique Israel and "...be ethical, one must depart from Jewishness as an exclusive frame for ethics."²³³ This departure is precisely necessary because if any binationalist cohabitation is to be implemented it must be done through a framework that allows a variety of traditions to exist together. If the principles of "...equality, justice, cohabitation, and the critique of state violence [are to be derived from Jewish sources and traditions, then they] can only remain Jewish values if they are *not* exclusively Jewish values."²³⁴ If these values, that are inherent in Judaism, are to be applied to other traditions (such as the Palestinian Arabs) or used to critique states other than Israel who perpetuate similar acts of injustice, then by leaving the framework of an exclusively Jewish context and assuming new historical forms they are placed in exile and no longer belong to any single source or tradition. This non-belonging, "exile," is precisely what

²³¹ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. Pg. 1.

²³² Ibid. pg. 3

²³³ Butler, Judith. "Flashing Up: Benjamin's Messianic Politics." *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. Pg. 99.

²³⁴ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism. Pg. 5.

makes these principles generalizable and transposable to other traditions and other historical contexts, which is the basis of any “strong political principles.”²³⁵

Butler argues that this need for dispersal is absolutely necessary for an ethical and historical reevaluation of Jewishness in a global political context. She understands that political Zionism actively seeks homogenization, a ‘counter-dispersal,’ that will return the diasporic Jews to their “homeland” because history has shown that “...Jews cannot survive in dispersion...”²³⁶

She counters this Zionist myth with two arguments:

First, nothing risks courting aggression more than instituting, through violent means, modes of colonial subjugation that deny the subjugated population basic rights to self-determination. Second, not only is there substantial evidence that dispersion is the mode in which Jews have in fact survived, but the idea that dispersion is a threat to Jews that must be overcome often relies on the notion that “dispersion” is a form of exile *from* the homeland (a condition of *galut* that can only be reversed through “returning” to the homeland).²³⁷

These arguments hinge on a reevaluation of dispersal as not just geographic, but actually as an ethical modality. This principle of dispersal must in fact “...be ‘brought home’ to Israel/Palestine in order to ground a polity where no one religion or nationality may claim sovereignty over another, where, in fact, sovereignty itself will be dispersed.”²³⁸ Just as a religious or secular tradition must “cede ground” by adapting to departures from and returns to itself in order to survive throughout history [for “...even those traditions that appear to sustain continuity do not reproduce themselves in time by remaining the same”²³⁹] and in order to bear itself in the present anew, so too must ethical and political traditions become temporally

²³⁵ Butler, Judith. “Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism.” Pg. 5.

²³⁶ Ibid. pg. 5.

²³⁷ Ibid. Pg. 6. (Emphasis added by me.)

²³⁸ Ibid. pg. 6.

²³⁹ Ibid. pg. 11

and culturally translatable in order to become available in the present,²⁴⁰ especially in the globalized context of the 21st century in which no tradition can remain truly insular.

It is precisely this act of dispersal, or “exile,” and the notion of ceding ground (geographically, politically, and in discourse) which political Zionism rejects. The myth of political Zionism is that exile and diaspora is a kind of “fallen realm” for the Jewish people that can only be countered with a physical return to the homeland.²⁴¹ However, “these arguments have been made ex post facto in order to legitimate a state apparatus and a militarized colonial occupation, to build a sense of nationalist entitlement, and to rename all acts of military aggression as necessary self-defense.”²⁴² Butler reverses this claim by arguing that it is precisely the act of dispersion that functions as a means of “power” for Jewish identity. “...To ‘be’ a Jew is to be departing from oneself... bound to make one’s way ethically and politically precisely there within a world of irreversible heterogeneity.”²⁴³ To accept the permanent heterogeneity of the modern world and learn to move through it ethically is certainly an empowering quality for anyone living within today’s increasingly heterogenetic society, Jew or non-Jew. But Butler is careful to make a distinction between the exile of the Jews and the displacement of

Palestinians in 1948 and 1967:

Jewish populations, when not explicitly destroyed, were certainly dispossessed from home and land under the Nazi regime, but not from Palestine. The idea that a forcible dispossession of others might rightfully compensate for having been forcibly dispossessed follows no legitimate ethical or legal line of reasoning. But if the basis for the Jewish law of return is understood as biblical, we have surely to oppose the use of religion as a justification for the perpetration of internationally recognized crimes of dispossession and depopulation against Palestinians. One surely has to think carefully about the right of return (Palestinian) in relation to the Law of

²⁴⁰ Butler, Judith. “Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism.” pg. 8.

²⁴¹ Ibid. pg. 15.

²⁴² Ibid. pg. 26.

²⁴³ Ibid. pg. 15.

Return (Israel), especially when the effort to rectify one form of exile by instituting another clearly repeats rather than resolves the crimes.²⁴⁴

From this line of thinking Butler references Edward Said's book *Freud and the Non-European* that she considers "...an incitement to consider that 'displacement' characterizes the histories of both the Palestinian and the Jewish peoples and so...constitutes the basis of a possible, even desirable, alliance."²⁴⁵ While these two histories of dispossession cannot be made analogous "...it is precisely at the point where analogies break down that translations begin and certain generalizable principles become possible."²⁴⁶ These generalized principles can then lead to a new means of language through which these desirable alliances can be formed.

One such false analogy that is perpetuated by the Israeli state itself is the intense vilification of their critics who they charge outright with anti-Semitism. If an Israeli were to publicly remarks that they prefer to live in a secular state that did not discriminate based on religion, race, or ethnicity they are labeled "treasonous." If a Palestinian makes these same claims for a democratic state that would include them as an equal citizen they are labeled as a "terrorist."²⁴⁷ "If one asks what kind of polity would honor all these claims [of both the Jews and Palestinians], then one is apparently no longer a Zionist within the contemporary understanding of that term."²⁴⁸

The only way to fight against the equation of the criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism is to clearly and repeatedly, and with strong collective support, show both that the criticism of Israel is just and that all forms of anti-Semitism, along with any other racism, are absolutely

²⁴⁴ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." Pg. 15.

²⁴⁵ Butler, Judith. "Impossible, Necessary Task: Said, Levinas, and the Ethical Demand." *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. pg. 29.

²⁴⁶ Butler, Judith. "'What Shall We Do Without Exile.'" *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. Pg. 216.

²⁴⁷ Butler, Judith. "Impossible, Necessary Task: Said, Levinas, and the Ethical Demand." Pg. 32.

²⁴⁸ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." Pg. 19.

unacceptable. Only when this double position becomes legible in public discourse will it be possible to 'apprehend' a [non-Zionist] Jewish Left...²⁴⁹

If criticism of the Israeli state in public discourse can finally be disentangled from these erroneous claims, and these "desirable alliances" can begin to form between the Jews and Palestinians who recognize their own mutual benefit in truly democratic cohabitation, then what does Butler envision to replace this exclusionary state? In her final essay in *Party Ways* she acknowledges her support for a binationalist solution along the lines of that argued by Edward Said, specifically a "...binationalism [that] leads not to a two-state solution, but a single state, one that would eradicate all forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, and religion."²⁵⁰ If this project of single state cohabitation is to be truly democratic and egalitarian and still supports the Jews' law of return it must also equally institute the right to return for Arab Palestinians in a manner that "...has to be grounded in the rights of refugees, the illegitimacy of dispossession, and a new conception of the redistribution of lands..."²⁵¹ and extend to all dispossessed Arab "...Palestinians who have been forced to become diasporic, those who live with partial rights within the borders and those who live under occupation in the West Bank and in the open-air prison of Gaza or other refugee camps in the region."²⁵² Until such a rebalancing of recognition and sovereignty has occurred Butler makes the radical proposal that it is "...necessary to impose an indefinite moratorium on the Law of Return,"²⁵³ which in its current form is primarily utilized to maintain the demographic supremacy of the Jewish population.

²⁴⁹ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." Pg. 20.

²⁵⁰ Butler, Judith. "'What Shall We Do Without Exile.'" Pg. 208.

²⁵¹ Ibid. Pg. 207

²⁵² Ibid. Pg. 216.

²⁵³ Ibid. pg. 209.

Butler does acknowledge that there are marginalized examples of communities in which the implementation of this form of binationalism has already been attempted: "...those chosen and semideliberate forms of alliances that one finds sporadically in Budrus and Bil'in and other towns along the separation wall where Israeli anarchists and Palestinians resist Israeli military force."²⁵⁴ Unfortunately she does not take a closer look at the organizational styles of these communities or state whether she believes their models could be applied on a farther spread scale across Palestine.

Unlike some of the other critics of Zionism examined above Butler sees the entire ideology of Zionism, in all its forms, as incompatible with any binationalist solution for the Palestinian region that would grant equal sovereignty to both Jews and Arabs. In her introduction to *Party Ways* she explicitly states: "I write neither as a cultural nor a political Zionist...it is my view that one cannot be a Zionist and struggle for a just end to colonial subjugation."²⁵⁵ For Butler, colonialism and dispossession were inseparable qualities of the Zionist movement, if not initially then certainly in the form it had assumed by the 21st century. "...Only through an end to political Zionism, understood as the insistence on grounding the State of Israel on principles of Jewish sovereignty, can broader principles of justice be realized for the region."²⁵⁶ These principles in support of binationalism and mutual empowerment of all traditions and populations did exist within the Jewish tradition, but if they were to be utilized in the heterogeneous context of the Near East then they must not remain exclusively Jewish. And just as these principles must demarcate themselves from the Jewish tradition, so too must

²⁵⁴ Butler, Judith. "What Shall We Do Without Exile." Pg. 211.

²⁵⁵ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." Pg. 19

²⁵⁶ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." pg. 18.

Jewishness delineate itself from Zionism. For Butler, “...Jewishness has been, remains, and must remain, separate from Zionism.”²⁵⁷

Revolutionary Anti-Zionist Jewish Politics in the 21st Century

For this final section of this examine I will survey a few of the new 21st century Jewish anarchist organizations and writers – in Israel and the diaspora – focusing on their political influences, their critiques of anti-Semitism in Leftist political circles, and their methods in combatting state sanctioned violence, particularly in regards to Israel. Through this I hope to understand some of the specifically Jewish perspectives in regards to revolutionary politics in the 21st century from the vantage point of activists on the ground.

Writing in 2008 the anarchist writer Uri Gordon estimated that there were only about 300 individuals – Israeli women and men – who were politically active and considered themselves anarchists.²⁵⁸ However, through their exhaustive work amongst themselves and with other Left-leaning activists they were able to found several anti-authoritarian politic organizations whose ranks were bolstered by large numbers from the international community to traveled to Israel to help their various causes. The most successful and well-known of these was the group Anarchists Against the Wall founded in 2003 during a political encampment that was formed to protest the Israeli government’s plan to build a partition wall along their western border with Gaza.²⁵⁹ They worked closely with both Palestinians and internationals and in March 2003 they were invited by the village of Mas’ha to construct their protest camp on

²⁵⁷ Gordon, Uri. *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*. Pg. 26.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. Pg. 140.

²⁵⁹ Gordon, Uri. *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*. pg. 141.

their land through which the wall was scheduled to be built. The encampment lasted for several months but was finally broken up in July, resulting in 90 arrests.²⁶⁰ However, after the shutdown of the camp these activists formed a “direct-action network” with the Palestinians across the occupied territories and continued to participate in demonstrations and actions “...in various villages such as Salem, Anin, Biddu, Beit Awwa, Budrus, Dir Balut, Beit Surik and Beit Likia, as well as with Palestinian communities... in and around Jerusalem.” Since 2005, Anarchists Against the Wall have been primarily active in the village of Bil’in.²⁶¹ While some of their tactics involve the destruction of property, largely aimed at the dividing walls put in place by the Israeli government, “...Israeli and international anarchists take only non-violent action in Palestine”²⁶² out of respect for their Palestinian comrades who are all too easily labeled as “violent terrorists” by the state. Some of these less confrontational tactics include “...bringing food to besieged cities and towns and defending farmers [linking arms to form their own wall of bodies] from settlers and soldiers as they worked their land.”²⁶³ However, due to “...the uncommon degree of state violence faced by Israeli and international anarchists... [as opposed to their counterparts in Western countries]... the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative has seen high degrees of burn-out and withdrawal from activity, creating a lack of continuity in the group,”²⁶⁴ as the result of post-traumatic stress caused by police and military tactics. While the group remains active today only a handful of the founding participants are still involved.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. pg. 145.

²⁶¹ Ibid. pg. 145.

²⁶² Ibid. pg. 148.

²⁶³ Ibid. pg. 141.

²⁶⁴ Gordon, Uri. *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*. pg. 148-49.

A particular sensitivity to tactics has had to be developed by anarchists in Palestine due to the overtly violent nature of the occupation. Aside from adopting a strictly non-violent code of conduct they have particularly stressed against any form of “...an arrogant ‘savior’ activism model of activism...” being utilized by their fellow anarchists and any organization they participate with. In his article “Israeli Anarchism: Being Young, Queer and Radical in the Holy Land” Yossi Bar Tal attempts to make clear that:

...we’re not working in Palestine to educate... We would never hand out leaflets in Arabic explaining what anarchism is and why you should join us, because this is not our way... we’re not there to educate, because while they’re being occupied by our state we have no reason to come here and preach.²⁶⁵ (**** pg number needed ****)

This reorganization and suspension of traditional anarchist tactics illustrates the sensitivity and adaptability of this first generation of anarchists in the 21st century. Operating political in our contemporary globalized context certainly calls for new forms of organization and action in replace of the old, which today can be, at best, irrelevant, and at worst, patronizing, dismissive, or sectarian. However, while these reworkings are exemplary of anarchism’s malleability and perspective in the 21st century not all of them lack that utopic daydreaming that anarchists are most famous for:

Reinventing politics in Israel and Palestine means laying the groundwork now for a kind of Jewish-Palestinian Zapatismo, a grassroots effort to ‘reclaim the commons.’ The would mean moving towards direct democracy, a participatory economy and a genuine autonomy for the people; towards Martin Buber’s vision of ‘an organic commonwealth... that is a community of communities.’ We might call it the ‘no-state solution.’²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Lakoff, Aaron and Yossi Bar Tal. “Israeli Anarchism: Being Young, Queer and Radical in the Holy Land.” *Anarchist Studies* 13.2 (2005).

²⁶⁶ Templer, Bill. "From Mutual Struggle to Mutual Aid: Moving Beyond the Statist Impasse in Israel/Palestine." *Boderlands* 2.3 (2003).

Not even a month ago now, across the Mediterranean from Israel, a new Jewish anarchist organization announced their formation in Germany under the name Jüdische Antifaschistische Aktion – Berlin.²⁶⁷ This group of German Jews and “former Israelis” declared their formation and published their manifesto on April 24, 2017. Their motives in forming a specifically Jewish chapter of the international Antifascist Action movement was to address what they saw as a rise in pro-Zionist and anti-Semitic attitudes throughout the Left in Germany and abroad, particularly in the new “Anti-German” ideology²⁶⁸ gaining in popularity in Germany and Austria since the mid-2000s. Quoting from their manifesto: “...die antideutsche Ideologie... definiert sie jede Kritik an der politischen Struktur und Politik des Staates Israel als antisemitisch.”²⁶⁹ As discussed above, this is the same type of argument used by the Israeli government against political dissenters and those they label “anti-Zionist.” However, the Jewish Antifascist Action actively identify themselves as an anti-Zionist organization. While they do acknowledge that anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism attitudes do go hand-in-hand for some on the far-Right they reject the idea that the two are mutually inclusive sentiments:

Uns ist ebenso klar, dass antisemitische Positionen oft antizionistische Kritik benutzen, und begegnen allen Verbündeten mit Vorsicht. Wir denken jedoch, dass Antizionismus als eine politische Definition, und als Teil einer anti-nationalistischen Ideologie, keine inhärenten antisemitischen Implikationen hat. Einige der inspirierendsten jüdischen Intellektuellen – Marek Edelman, Yoel Teitelbaum, Hannah Arendt, Avraham Sarfati, Noam Chomsky, Erich Mühsam,

²⁶⁷ “Jewish Antifascist Action Berlin” – A new, specifically Jewish branch of the international Antifa movement based in Berlin, Germany.

“Jüdische Antifaschistische Aktion Berlin Gegründet.” *Klasse Gegen Klasse*. 26 Apr. 2017. (From here on all quotes in German from the Jewish Antifascist Action’s manifesto are from this source.)

²⁶⁸ A collection of recent political and theoretical tendencies that identify as pro-Israel and far-Left, mainly within Germany and Austria.

Erlanger, Dr. Simon. ““The Anti-Germans” – The Pro-Israel German Left.” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 21.1-2 (2009) *Jewish Center for Public Affairs*. 30 June 2009

²⁶⁹ “the Anti-German ideology...defined any criticism of the political structure and policies of Israel.”

Judith Butler und Emma Goldman – sind/waren Antizionist_innen oder kritisier(t)en den Zionismus scharf.²⁷⁰

Through this statement, they are attempting what Judith Butler sees as necessary by drawing a strict demarcation between the ideas of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism within a political discourse, citing their influence from numerous Jewish thinkers who could be considered critical of Zionism. They claim that this sentiment expounded by the “pro-Israel Left in Germany” is itself anti-Semitic and racist because they “...missbrauchen die Existenz von Jüd_innen für die Legitimierung ihres seit Langem schwelenden Rassismus und ihrer Islamophobie.”²⁷¹ For this group even the identification of Israel as a “Jewish state” is incredibly problematic as it is seen as racially and religiously exclusive:

Wir sehen im „Jüdischen Staat“ einen rassistischen und diskriminierenden Begriff, der diejenigen Jüd_innen und Nicht-Jüd_innen, die zwischen dem Jordan und dem Mittelmeer leben, betrifft, sowie auch die Bevölkerung der von Israel kontrollierten palästinensischen Gebiete, die seit Jahrzehnten von systematischer, alltäglicher Diskriminierung betroffen ist – sei es durch die Konfiszierung von Land oder Gefängnisstrafen, Demütigungen und physischer und psychischer Gewalt.²⁷²

In line with Judith Butler’s writings in *Parting Ways* it appears as if this group is hoping to establish themselves as a legitimate “Jewish Left,” seeking to transcend the Zionist myth that criticism of the Israeli state is coterminous with anti-Semitism and actively pledging their solidarity with the displaced Arab Palestinians in the Near East.

²⁷⁰ “We are also aware that anti-semitic positions often utilise anti-Zionist criticism, and we are very cautious toward our comrades in the movement. We believe that anti-Zionism as a political definition, and part of a wider anti-nationalist ideology, has no anti-semitic aspects. Some of the most inspiring Jewish people, including Marek Edelman, Yoel Teitelbaum, Hannah Arendt, Avraham Sarfati, Noam Chomsky, Erich Mihazem, Judith Butler and Emma Goldman, were/are anti-Zionists or sharply criticized Zionism.”

²⁷¹ “...exploit our existence as Jews to justify their longstanding racism and Islamophobia.”

²⁷² “We see the “Jewish State” as a racist and discriminatory term toward Jews and the non-Jews who live between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea, including half of the population of the territories controlled by Israel, who are suffering from decades of daily systematic discrimination. “

Both of these examples discussed above, the Anarchists Against the Wall and the Jewish Antifascist Action – Berlin, represent just singular examples of the contemporary Jewish Left, in Israel and the diaspora, that are seeking new language, tactics, and means of identity to challenge the Israeli state's claim that they speak for the Jews as a whole. Dissenting Jewish voices like these are becoming more and more important in the 21st century as Netanyahu and the Right in Israel continue to utilize physical violence and ideological dismissal of any opposing political ideologies or criticism.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have sought to showcase the political and religious circumstance surrounding the Jewish identity that gave rise to Zionism in its initial political form in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a brief history of the influx of nationalist, colonialist, and Revisionist rhetoric that infiltrated the movement and slowly seized a monopoly on state politics, and, most importantly for today, the critical voices throughout Jewry that have sought to challenge this exclusionary endeavor of building a nation-state from Zionism's conception to the present. As many of these critics have illustrated even the most socialistic and inclusionary forms of Zionism, that were a part of it from the very beginning, have slowly eroded and been coopted. "Even the experiments in socialism that characterized the kibbutz movement were an integral part of the settler colonial project, which means that in Israel socialism was understood to be compatible with colonial subjugation and expansion."²⁷³ Today these egalitarian elements of Zionism seem nonexistent within the Israeli government as Netanyahu continues the

²⁷³ Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Self Departure, Exile and the Critique of Zionism." pg. 19.

expansion of the settlements and the further dissemination of his neo-liberal Revisionist ideology throughout the Israeli public. Even any fears he may have had from dissenting voices within the United States government have been assuaged with Obama's departure from the White House and Trump's ascension to power.²⁷⁴ Already he has made it clear that he does not plan to abide by any resolutions passed by the international community that does not fall into his own ideological schemes.²⁷⁵

On the other hand, even if they are small, many Jewish anarchist groups are attempting to define a new Jewish-Left that can revitalize an opposition movement to the populist nationalism of Likud. Taking points from Butler, Arendt, and Landauer organizations such as Jewish Antifascist Action - Berlin and Anarchists against the Wall are attempting not only to breakdown the mythical equation between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in political discourse, but also form various means of cohabitation with the Arab Palestinians as their equals against the forces of state repression and dispossession. If a one-state (or even idyllically, a 'no-state') solution is ever to be realized in Palestine then it must come from grass roots efforts such as these. Even if tomorrow the Likud government was to completely reverse their platform tomorrow, offer Arab Palestinians equal citizenship, remove the "Jewish" label from the Israeli state, and a grant a full right of return for all Palestinians refugees, I do not think they would accept it. There is too much bitterness between the two sides at this point, and if a binationalist solution is to ever be achieved it must be organized from the ground, not imposed from above as their dispossession was. If these handfuls of anarchists can push

²⁷⁴ "Netanyahu: World's Silence on Iran's Threats to Destroy Israel Will End with Trump." *The Times of Israel*. 27 Jan. 2017.

²⁷⁵ "Netanyahu Warns Israel Not Bound by 2015 Iranian Nuke Deal." *The Times of Israel*. 4 May 2017.

onwards and begin to bring in others from the Left from both Israel and Palestine then these small grass roots endeavors could surely be the new seeds of not only a new Jewish/Palestinian-Left, but a unified, equitable, democratic Palestine.

In Summation

Throughout this project, I have attempted to examine the rise of nationalist identities that have recently blossomed within the traditions of Hinduism and Judaism in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Both of these movements culminated from the experiences of Indians and Jews living under the oppression of European colonial and nationalist regimes. In many ways both Revisionist political Zionists and followers of the Hindutva ideology have adopted the exclusionary methods that their oppressors had once imposed on them, now directing these efforts of homogenization against minority ethnic and religious communities within their recently obtained ability to sanction state violence of their own. It is notable that in recent years, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Modi have shown great affinity for each other's exclusive nationalist governments. Just last month the Israeli Department of Defense signed their largest contract ever to provide Modi's government with \$2 billion worth of missile defense systems²⁷⁶ and after several years of anticipation Modi is set to make his first visit to Israel in a show of solidarity with Netanyahu's government this summer.²⁷⁷ It was my purpose through this research project to illustrate many of the similarities, not only between the Likud and BJP governments, but also between their success and the recent spike in approval of other far-Right populist movements throughout the world right today, such as Marine Le Pen's National Front and Donald Trump's upset during the US elections last year. While it is true that all of these examples rely heavily on the support of religious voters and utilize Islamophobic

²⁷⁶ Coren, Ora. "In Its Biggest Security Deal Ever, Israel to Sell India Missile Defense Systems for \$2 Billion" *Haaretz*. Haaretz Daily Newspaper Ltd., 6 Apr. 2017. Web.

²⁷⁷ Agarwal, Nikhil. "Netanyahu to Narendra Modi: People of Israel waiting for your historic visit." *India Today*. 12 Apr. 2017. Web.

rhetoric to stir up fear amongst their constituents, the Likud and BJP parties are the only specifically successful examples from the Hindu and Jewish traditions. Their echoed assertions of the ethnic and religious superiority of their own groups is particularly troubling in the increasing heterogeneity of our global societies today. Obviously, their sentiments are in part a backlash to this trend of cohabitation, as their own platforms and ideologies rely on a singular, unified identity in the face of the “dangerous” Other. To actively encourage or facilitate this planetwide shift towards cohabitation would not only discredit them in the eyes of their constituents, but would dilute the homogenous population of voters upon which their ideology and political authority is based. Xenophobia and self-superiority are powerfully visceral narratives in the realm of nationalist politics, and excruciatingly difficult to combat once they have been absorbed by the population at large.

In the spirit of such a call for compassionate heterogeneity the particular communities in Israel and India whose narratives and very existence actively undermine these exclusionary ideologies vary wildly. Upon first glance one might find hardly anything in common between Jewish anarchists and tribal Dalit communities, but this is precisely the point. The Jewish anarchists are few and Dalits are many; the Jewish anarchists are (generally) secular and Dalits are (generally) religious; many Jewish anarchists have the privilege living with majority rights in the countries where they reside and Dalits are valued less than livestock in many parts of the dominant culture of their society. But these two groups, with virtually no shared political or religious beliefs, have found, or are seeking to find, their own niche ways to undermine and combat the same threat. One way is political, the other existential, and while neither may be “winning” this fight the responses both have received from their respective state governments

show that they represent an ideological and narrative threat that either must be crushed or coopted. I agree wholeheartedly with Yossi Bar Tal that anarchists have no right to go and “preach their gospel” to communities that are actively disenfranchised by the state, or by religious authorities, especially when those communities have lived under that yoke for generations, if not centuries. But I do believe that Leftists of all backgrounds have much to learn from the Dalits, the Palestinians, and other such disenfranchised groups. It is one thing to choose to live outside the sanctions of the state, it is another thing entirely to be cast out. But could the Dalits in some way act as a model for cohabitation that some critics of Zionism seek with Arab Palestinians? Especially those who would welcome a new mode of social organizing that no longer has a need for the apparatus of the nation-state. By seeking to work and live with these dispossessed communities in a manner that avoids any and all forms of intellectual superiority, not only could the Left actively combat its own prejudices against religious and spiritual lifestyles but maybe they could learn new ways to live and organize their own communities in more equitable and compassionate ways.

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