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Editors

MARTIN KAVKA  
*Florida State University*

ZACHARY BRAITERMAN  
*Syracuse University*

DAVID NOVAK  
*University of Toronto*



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for catastrophe identified by Scholem as the motor of messianism. A more mundane "redemption" was sought, not the kingdom of God, but an internationally recognized, territorially entrenched basis for the regeneration of Jewish life in all its material and spiritual facets.<sup>3</sup>

What is the nature of that basis? Is it stable or unstable? Zionism is a central chapter in larger stories about modern Jewish identity, which in the nineteenth century was framed largely around religion, as seen from the emergence in Germany of Reform, modern Orthodox, and Positive Historical (Conservative) Judaism. By turning the traditional religious culture of the Jews into the religion of "Judaism," emancipated Jews from all camps in western and central Europe ceased to see themselves politically as a people in exile. They were now members of a religious confession, citizens at home in the lands of their birth, devoted to a pared-down and pure form of ethical monotheism. As the century wore on, the supporters of Zionism came to reject this picture of liberal emancipation, not because they rejected the project of Jewish modernity and emancipation, but because they wanted to shore it up on new, more self-reliant foundations — the open space of politics and culture, not the closed place of religious belief and cult.

As ideology, Zionism rests foundationally upon an unstable set of theoretical claims about Jewish social identity, itself an indeterminate entity. The first claim, propounded by Theodor Herzl, is that the Jews are a "nation," not members of a religious confession *per se*. For Leon Pinsker, the Jews were not yet a nation, but *must* now constitute themselves as such. Zionism was "auto-emancipation."<sup>4</sup> Presuming that "Jewishness" is neither stable nor reducible to religion, these claims remain more or less sound. Participants in broader European patterns of thought, early Zionist thinkers saw the Jews as a distinct, racial group or substance. The Germans "hate the peculiar faith of the Jews less than their peculiar noses," the socialist Moses Hess quipped,<sup>4</sup> while the young Martin Buber imagined the Jew as an oriental type whose true place is in the East. By the 1920s, this type of racialism dropped out of Zionist discourse. In Buber's mature judgment, the Jews represent no type at all. Neither nation nor creed, they uncannily combine national and spiritual elements. This hybrid conception of Jewish identity reflected a rough international consensus at midcentury about the reality of a "Jewish people" while resisting a narrow-minded nationalism. But even Buber, who personified the most self-critical strain within midcentury Zionist thought, never fully realized how the historically and geographically-diffuse character of Jewish existence complicates discourse about "a Jewish people." Nor was he in a position to grasp how the invented, imaginary constructs at work in identity formation modulate the semblance and reality of distinct peoplehood. The construct of a people (there is still no

## ZIONISM

ZACHARY BRAITERMAN

Like run-down modern architecture in Tel Aviv, Zionism comes increasingly into view as time bound and untidy with each passing year. A complex ideological form, Zionism historically reflected and responded to all early twentieth-century political currents (liberalism, nationalism, socialism, colonialism, and fascism) and cultural styles (art nouveau, expressionism, modernism, Bauhaus). We view these currents today from perspectives that reflect and respond to situations and contexts that are specific to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, understanding that historical distance necessarily modulates its "object." My purpose in this chapter is to examine Zionism in light of postmodernism and postcolonialism at a juncture when the imagistic dimension of human reality is seen as a basic given and when the rightness of Zionism, the claim to Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel, and the claim to sovereignty *tout court* are no longer taken for granted. Zionism and discourse about Zionism today have been stressed by more than one hundred years of conflict between Jews and Arabs, more than forty years of occupation in the West Bank, some twenty years of post-Zionist criticism, and by our current post-9/11 time when the poisoned overlap between Islam and the West has caused no small panic against and in support of Israel.

Keeping pace with its object, the sympathies in this chapter are politically and philosophically secular. Zionism offers a corrective to modern Jewish philosophy, which, having developed as a diaspora discourse, tends in most of its incarnations to revolve around concepts pertaining to religious belief, community, ethics, ritual practice, and textual interpretation. Jewish philosophical practice remains overinvested in frozen figures and sentimental notions about Judaism, time, and ethics. In contrast, Zionism first focused upon ideas about and images of political bodies in space and their collision in the here and now, under the impact of history.<sup>1</sup> Re-territorializing itself upon open and morally ambiguous theoretical and practical planes, the project of creating a people under the stars of enlightenment and emancipation brackets religious claims about God, Torah, covenant, and mitzvot. Steeped in the traditional religious concepts and symbols it displaced and transformed, most forms of secular Zionism ultimately lacked that ideological passion

better translation for the Hebrew *'am*) or nation (*goy*) does not stand upon a prior substance as much as the emergence and articulation of the construct, in space and time, constitute its own reality.<sup>7</sup>

Zionist ideology is predicated upon a second set of theoretical claims that concern "culture," constructs, territorial contiguity, and demographic mass. Zionism creates a platform for the formation of what Hannah Arendt called a "space of appearance," that public space where things are allowed to be seen and to be heard, "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly."<sup>8</sup> Groups disappear without such a space or without a semblance of such a space. Responding to the collapse of traditional Jewish society and culture, classical Zionism was especially sensitive to the sustained period of crisis in the Pale of Settlement in eastern Europe, which constituted at the time the largest and most dynamic area of Jewish settlement. Zionism made the radical claim that religious and other diaspora forms of space are an *insufficient* basis upon which to secure identity in the modern world. Progressive religious thinkers such as Buber and Mordecai Kaplan supported Zionism because they rejected the closed confines of nineteenth-century "religion" in favor of the more dynamic spatial features that "culture" would bring to Judaism.

From the very start, three practical questions drove the Zionist movement. Where to establish a Jewish home? How much territory does such a construct require? What type of political form should stamp this space? Despite a small, first wave of immigration to Palestine under the banner of *Hibbat Zion* ("love of Zion") in the 1880s, the creation of a Jewish national home in Argentina or Uganda was briefly considered before finally settling on Palestine in the early 1900s. Starting in the 1930s, fierce internal debates were waged and continue to be waged between those advancing more or less exclusive claims to the entirety of Israel/Palestine (including the present-day Kingdom of Jordan) versus those advancing more or less non-exclusive claims to parts of it. Various arrangements were first floated (a "national home," a "spiritual center," a "binational state") before it was finally decided by the Zionist Congress at the 1942 Biltmore Conference to support in Palestine the "creation of a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world."<sup>9</sup>

Against this commonwealth there was once a consensus across the ideological spectrum spanning Jewish society. Historically, Jewish opposition to Zionism ran the gamut from those who rejected modernity, to those who embraced it, to those who wanted to revolutionize it. Prior to the Holocaust, the ultra-Orthodox Jewish leadership in eastern Europe rejected Zionism because they predicated any

large-scale return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel upon the coming of the Messiah. They opposed the free, irreligious ethos that characterized Zionist culture, especially the socialist youth culture and the middle-class hedonism of Tel Aviv. In contrast, liberal Jews saw a threat to bourgeois emancipation and to their conception that Judaism was religion and humanism, not national culture. Committed first and foremost to faith in God and/or the observance of mitzvot, both religious camps rejected the revolution in Jewish life presented by Zionism.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Zionism was not modern enough for many middle-class intellectuals and cosmopolitans who had faith in and forged networks in the larger world culture, nor for the Jewish socialists and Marxists who believed in and worked for revolution at home. From these ultramodern perspectives, Zionism was and remains "romantic," "provincial," "reactionary," "anachronistic," and "racist."

Despite the virtual consensus won by Zionism after the 1967 Six-Day War, Israeli legal scholar Ruth Gavison concedes that it is no longer possible to ignore larger, normative questions regarding the right of Israel to maintain itself as a Jewish state.<sup>11</sup> At the turn of a new century, such normative questions are determined by a unique set of philosophical conditions almost axiomatic in contemporary intellectual culture. Avoiding flat assertions regarding the absolute justice or injustice of Zionism, one can claim very simply as a theoretical and practical truism that there is nothing "natural" about Zionism. The artifice at play in Zionist discourse does not mean, however, that its constructions are as arbitrary as its critics contend. Like any social phenomena, Zionism and the state and cultures in Israel founded on its ideological basis do not represent a static essence. They are subject to changing social conditions, category assumptions, and perspectival positions that undermine and rework myths, images, and oppositions once central to its practice. In the attempt to consolidate Jewish life in Palestine, Zionism enacted two fundamental collisions: between Jews-Israelis and Arabs-Palestinians, and between the secular and the religious components of Jewish culture and Israeli identity. Both sets of collisions are fundamental to current debates regarding Zionism and "the question of Palestine." For a people without a land coming to a place already inhabited by other people, by another "people," exigencies of space and identity lead to the problem of right.

#### ZIONISM(S)

Most contemporary theorists agree that identity does not exist as a reified object, but instead rolls out in the fleeting impressions and objects that constitute interlocking systems of production and consumption. While "postmodernism" undermines the view of Zionism as a coherent whole, it also allows Zionism to elude

the critical scrutiny that reduces it to a single impulse. As pure constructed process, Zionism has no essence apart perhaps from the one identified by Yeshayahu Leibowitz as "the endeavor to liberate Jews from being ruled by Gentiles."<sup>10</sup> Rather than bog down around any single ideological program or substantive content, its negativity frees Zionist discourse from the ready-made concepts and categories of its most dogmatic proponents and unbending critics. The empty, emergent forms of identity posited in postmodern theory suggest that any simple claim about Zionism is immediately overwhelmed by the sheer variety of internal ideological fissures grouped under its umbrella. Zionism thrived upon the very unstable basis of these confrontational tensions, a basis that is not so much a secure foundation as much as an ever-shifting ground.

The first historical fissures defining the Zionist movement were largely among forms of Jewish secularism. In the 1890s and early 1900s, the main split was between two liberal ideological formations – political Zionism and cultural Zionism – whose proponents emphasized either the one or the other dimension of Jewish identity and Zionist activism. After World War I, the most prominent schism fell between the socialist parties (primarily from Russia and Galicia), which dominated Zionist and then Israeli politics from the 1920s until 1977, and the more strictly nationalist impulse represented by the right-wing Revisionists. Despite the cultural appeal of biblical symbols and despite the small number of religious Zionists in the earliest days of the movement, religious motivations (faith in God, the election of the Jewish people, observance of mitzvot, the coming of the Messiah, rebuilding the Temple) played no systemic role in mainstream Zionist politics and culture until the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza after the Six-Day War. Today, the main fissures shaping discourse about Zionism fall around security and demographics, the occupation and evacuation of territories, and the formal legal constitution of ethnic and religious identity in a multicultural society.

#### POLITICAL ZIONISM

All forms of political Zionism – the classical liberal Zionism of Herzl, Pinsker, and Max Nordau, as well as that of the socialist Po'alei Tzion and Hapo'el Hatzvai ir parties, and the right-wing Revisionists – start with a critical diagnosis of the diaspora crystallized into the negative image of "the ghetto Jew." In its most extreme formulations, political Zionism based Jewish existence primarily on land and language, "negating" the diaspora as a doomed and degenerate form of national existence. Political Zionism was fueled by a succession of systemic, anti-Jewish exclusions and violence at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth: the rise

of political and racial antisemitism in Germany and in Austria during the 1870s, pogroms in Czarist Russia from the 1880s until the 1917 Revolution, the Dreyfus affair in France during the 1890s and early 1900s, the devastation of Jewish society in Galicia and in the old Pale of Settlement during World War I and the Russian Civil War, the emergence of ethnically based nationalisms in Poland and in the Baltic states in the interwar period, and Hitler's ascent to power in 1933. The trump card of Zionism as a modern political movement has always been its claim to a people's right to physical self-preservation and to the historical impossibility of securing that right for the Jews in Europe.

Herzl called his program in *The Jewish State* (1896) a "construction" whose "propelling force is the plight of the Jews."<sup>11</sup> A journalist for the influential liberal Viennese newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse*, for which he covered the Dreyfus affair, Herzl understood that antisemitism was not a religious phenomenon or medieval relic to be cured by more enlightenment and modernity. It was an incorrigible national problem. Modern antisemitism was grasped as the direct historical fallout from the emancipation at the end of the eighteenth century, as Jews left the ghetto and inevitably came into economic competition with the majority middle class. Herzl insisted that all of the other solutions to "the Jewish question" were unfeasible: economic assimilation was not a solution but rather the chief motor of modern antisemitism, and emigration to new lands or reintroducing them to agricultural labor would only bring the Jews into new areas and forms of competition and conflict. With no future for the Jews in Europe, the solution proposed by him in *The Jewish State* was to prepare for the gradual emigration of European Jewry. Herzl's principal activity as leader of the Zionist movement was to organize diplomatic delegations to persuade world powers (Germany, Turkey, England) to help secure territory for a state.

Classical political Zionism addressed from within the parameters of liberalism the failure of the old liberal order in Europe prior to World War I. The feasibility of Herzl's scheme lay in its modern, pragmatic character. Against all appearances to the contrary, it was anti-utopian and nonabsolutist in its claims and expectations. Anticipating Herzl's intensive diplomatic activity, Pinsker wrote in "Auto-emancipation" (1882), "Long will the world have to wait universal peace; but in the interim the relations of the nations to one another may be adjusted fairly well by explicit understandings, by arrangements based upon international law, treaties, and especially upon a certain equality in rank and mutually admitted rights, as well as upon mutual regard."<sup>12</sup> This then was the right to a Jewish home as understood from the time of the movement's institutional inception. Even as it relied upon courting imperial colonial powers, political Zionism in its classic, public expression

## CULTURAL ZIONISM AND CULTURE CRITICS

Cultural Zionism was the first opposition party within the Zionist movement prior to World War I. Against Herzl's formal emphasis on international diplomacy and top-down, institutional approach to state creation, proponents of cultural Zionism such as Ahad Ha'am, Buber, and Chaim Weizmann emphasized the creation in Palestine, from the bottom up, of a "cultural center" based on the transmutation of Jewish religion and tradition into language, history, and values. In conjunction with the socialists, their activity doomed the proposal to create a Jewish national home in Uganda. The argument for Palestine was based on historical-cultural ties. Looked at more broadly, the chief contribution of cultural Zionism was to present a humane face, to pull the movement away from a narrow, political form of nationalism toward a distinctively Jewish secular culture. Cultural Zionism took root in the renaissance of Hebrew both as a living language and as a language of literature, art, and music, in the secularization of religious texts, symbols, and observances, and in the establishment of concert halls, museums, publishing houses, and universities, including academic centers for the study of Judaism and Jewish history. The frame of reference was liberal. Cultural Zionists sought to create modern Hebrew culture as universal culture.

Writing under the pen name Ahad Ha'am, Asher Ginsberg (1856–1927) was the foremost proponent of cultural Zionism. Born outside Kiev, he moved to Odessa, a major center for East European Jewish Haskalah, where he established himself as a major shaper of Zionist opinion while editing the magazine *Ha-Shiloah*. In 1908, he left Odessa for London, and then went to Tel Aviv in 1921. In "*Lo' zeh ha-derekh*" ("This is not the way") (1889) and "*Emet me'eretz yisra'el*" ("Truth from the land of Israel") (1891), Ahad Ha'am confronted the disconnect between the Zionist dream and the reality of life in Palestine. He launched a devastating critique of the first Aliyah settlements, which he saw marred by land speculation, lack of proper agricultural experience, economic dependence, and flagrant contempt for the local Arab population and Turkish administration. But Ahad Ha'am was more concerned about and most critical of Jewish life in the diaspora, where he saw two sets of dangers. The first set was presented by assimilation and fragmentation. The second set of dangers was posed by ultra-Orthodox, ghetto Judaism, an artificial body politic, its "life" enslaved to inertia and to the "book." He proposed instead a Jewish "spiritual center" in Palestine, as only this could unify the disparate parts of world Jewry and preserve Jewish cultural values after the collapse of traditional religion.<sup>15</sup>

The difference between cultural and political Zionism is too easily overstated. Herzl's vision of a Jewish state was not, as Ahad Ha'am argued, simply a liberal polity with no identifiable Jewish features. As Herzl imagined it in his novel *Altneuland*

was based upon universal human values and liberal order, not upon narrow nationalism, direct military conquest, divine right, or civilizing mission.

More than any other movement in modern Jewish history, political Zionism recognized the importance of public space for Jewish culture. It did so, however, from within a limited political conception. On the one hand, the public space envisioned by Zionism allowed for the appearance of new Jewish subjectivities that were not possible in the more constricted public space of diaspora Judaism. In his public activity and in his personal diaries, Herzl recognized that any image blends real and fantastical elements. Classical political Zionism is structured by dyspeptic diagnoses of diaspora existence circa 1900 and a practical program of action alongside prescriptive visions of modern Jewish life marked by the frothy flourish of fin-de-siècle aesthetics (think Nietzsche and art nouveau). In this respect, the image of the "muscle Jew" that so enthralled Max Nordau<sup>16</sup> was not so much a political program as an erotic posture. On the other hand, most of the heroic stylings of classical political Zionism could not foresee the juxtaposition of autonomy alongside genuine banality, vulgarity, and venality. Too aesthetic, the Zionism of Herzl and Nordau was never political enough. Most notably, the play of images in their thought left unthought the constitutional design of a "reasonable pluralism" that might have bridged the difference between a Jewish majority polity and a non-Jewish minority. Beyond these procedural matters lies the more fundamental failure to look into the abyss and address the morality of killing.

Critics have made much of the colonial legacy in classical Zionism: the historical reliance on the British Empire and the combination of indifference, contempt, and fear that continue to determine broad attitudes toward the Arab "other."<sup>14</sup> Viewed dispassionately, this legacy calls attention to the sad, unremarkable facts that people despise one another, that the distribution of power is never even, and that small powers seek the cooperation of larger powers (just as some Arab nationalists in North Africa, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine sought support from German and Italian fascism as the emergent competition to British colonialism in the 1930s and 1940s). Rather than reflecting anything definite about the "essence" of Zionism or reducing Zionism to a colonial stock figure, the linkage marks a complex and unsteady interplay among historically shifting colonial and national interests. In tension with promises made concurrently to Arab political interests, British support for a "Jewish national home" in Palestine as inaugurated by the 1917 Balfour Declaration effectively came to an end with the issue of the 1939 White Paper, a plan by the British to cap and then terminate Jewish immigration to Palestine in response to the Arab Rebellion of 1936–39 and the failure of the Peel Partition Plan of 1937. In the 1940s, Zionism and colonialism came to loggerheads, although never completely, given the enemy common to both in Europe at the time.

("Old New Land"), the "New Society" to be established in Palestine was a liberal polity, which includes the expression of Jewish religious ceremony and artistic expression (a rebuilt Temple relocated off the Temple Mount, the observance of sabbaths and holidays, and artistic productions based upon Jewish themes, e.g., an opera based on the life of Shabbetai Zvi). At the same time, cultural Zionism was politically slippery. Ahad Ha'am firmly held that a state could provide no solution to the problems of antisemitism and assimilation since most Jews would continue to live in the diaspora, and he fundamentally opposed normal states based on material power and political dominion. Ahad Ha'am nevertheless assumed that a Jewish spiritual center in Palestine would gradually evolve into a national center, and then into a state — not a "state of the Jews" but a genuine "Jewish state," reflecting the quintessence of Jewish moral values that he consistently upheld as a polemicist against political Zionism.

Ahad Ha'am's unified and organic conception of culture failed to anticipate the centrifugal effects of cultural production and consumption. In particular, he was unable to keep pace with a younger generation of writers and cultural critics, unable to foresee the rupture between the Hebrew culture that would emerge in Palestine against diaspora Jewish history and culture. Ahad Ha'am already worried about writers not much younger than himself, followers of Nietzsche like Micha Berdichevski (1865–1921). He could not have appreciated the irony that Berdichevski's call for a transvaluation of values and his embrace of the image of the sword and blond beast-ism were brought under the rubric of Judaism. In creatively crafting a "counterhistory," he turned away from prophetic ethics to more archaic strata in the Hebrew Bible, seeking there to recapture an image of nature. Immersed in an over-the-top form of literary violence quite common to the *Jugendstil* milieu in which he wrote, Berdichevski sought to reorient Jewish identity by looking past the ancient moribund practices of traditional Judaism and the moralizing and idealizing platitudes of liberal Judaism, to create out of Judaism something virile and sensual.<sup>16</sup>

In their own negation of diaspora Jewish culture, Ahad Ha'am's young heirs rejected Jewish history itself. In the bleak vision of Joseph Haim Brenner (1881–1921), the most celebrated writer of the second Aliyah, the Jews survived exile at a terrible cost. "Our function now is to recognize and admit our meanness since the beginning of history to the present day, all the faults in our character, and then to rise and start all over again."<sup>17</sup> Or consider the short story "*Ha-Dorashah*" ("The Sermon") (1942) by Haim Hazaz, in which the antihero Yudka stands up at a kibbutz meeting to declare his opposition to Jewish history. Referring to the new Jewish youth, he demands to know, "Why the devil teach them about our ancestors'

shame? I would just say to them: Boys, from the day we were driven out from our land we've been a people without a history. Class dismissed. Go out and play football."<sup>18</sup> Fully prepared to jettison two thousand years of Jewish culture, Yudka's stance toward the future remains just as unrelenting. He is ready to see emerge out of "the wreckage of Judaism" a "different Judaism" that no longer anticipates the redemption proffered by a personal Messiah.<sup>19</sup> Advancing a bracing self-criticism unique in early and mid-twentieth-century Jewish thought, these types of rash, myopic, and severe literary personae left no room for apologetics, nostalgia, and preciosity.

#### SOCIALIST ZIONISM

The question of culture aside, socialism was the ideology best suited for the emergence of Zionism as a revolutionary movement. As Herzl noted in *The Jewish State*, the first wave of immigration required workers who could prepare the infrastructure of the country for large-scale immigration. These workers, Jewish masses from eastern Europe, overwhelmingly socialist in orientation, understood that the only way to create a Jewish national home was through cooperative institutions, not capitalist competition. The small number of immigrants who came to and actually stayed in Palestine during the second and third Aliyah (1902–14, 1919–23) were to become the primary agents in the project of state building: the founding of worker communes (kibbutzim), labor organizations (the Histadrut, Solel Boneh), cooperatives for the sale of goods (Hamashbir, Tenuvah), and self-defense organizations (Hashomer, the Haganah, and Palmach). While Nahum Syrkin (1867–1924) held out a classless society and national sovereignty as the only means to solve the Jewish question, the tension between Jewish nationalism and socialist internationalism became bitterly pronounced in the 1920s, notably in relation to the conflict between Hebrew labor and Arab workers in Palestine.

Intensely inward in focus, Labor Zionism was myopic in its pursuit of Jewish national interests. Ber Borochov (1881–1917), the most important Marxist theorist in the Zionist camp, focused on the material and economic conditions, the relations of production, and the tension between structure and superstructure that determined Jewish life. The Jews, he thought, are an abnormal nation, without territory and cultural organs, and for whom feelings of national unity mollify class conflict. Borochov therefore posited the need to normalize the economic base of Jewish society so as to create a sound class structure composed of competing social classes. He thought that settling the Jews in a semi-agricultural land (one that he believed no one else wanted) would proletarianize the Jewish petit bourgeois and prepare them

for class struggle. For Borochov, Zionism was an immediate need that only served the ultimate goal of socialism.<sup>40</sup> And yet, the critics of Labor Zionism from the left rightly saw that proponents of socialist Zionism were less interested in class struggle for the sake of socialism than in national consolidation for the sake of Zionism.<sup>41</sup>

Among the various theoreticians of Labor Zionism, it was the non-Marxist socialism of Aaron David Gordon (1856–1922) that most conveyed the early pioneering spirit in Jewish Palestine. Gordon is associated with the main mythic strands and slogans of historical, left-wing Zionist culture (“self-fulfillment,” “religion of labor,” “conquest of labor”). A living icon of second-Aliyah youth culture, he immigrated to Palestine at the old age of forty-seven. In turning from white-collar to agricultural work, Gordon personalized the transformation of the Jewish people as envisioned by Labor Zionism. He struck a Tolstoyan pose, possessed by mystical faith in the regenerative powers of nature and of physical labor. Labor Zionism marked a revolution in Jewish life, a return to self from bifurcated life represented by diaspora Judaism and city life, a turn to a different life, no longer ready-made. Labor possessed value in its own right as the foundation of “culture,” understood as habits and patterns of ordinary work alongside products of high culture. Gordon opposed the exploitation of other people’s labor, insisting that the Jews must work for themselves.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the impact of Zionism on the indigenous people, Gordon naively imagined a common Jewish–Arab economic interest. While insisting on the principle of Hebrew labor, Gordon sought to balance the rights of Jews and Arabs on the principle of an Arab–Jewish reconciliation that has yet to materialize.

#### RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

In its claims regarding the Jews and Judaism, religious Zionism was no less revolutionary than socialist Zionism. Religious Zionism roots itself in those passages in Bible and Talmud filled with messianic expectation and hyperbolic praise of the land of Israel and its virtues. According to one rabbinic source, dwelling there is equal to all the other mitzvot. Another forbids emigrating from there, except to Babylonia. (The Babylonian rabbis upheld the sanctity of Babylonia on account of their own academies.) And therein stands the tension at the root of religious Zionism. The ultra-Orthodox opposition to Zionism was typically based upon a tripartite deal imagined by the rabbis binding God, Israel, and the nations. There would be no mass immigration to the land of Israel prior to the messianic age, Israel would not rebel against the nations, and the nations would not oppress the Jews too much (B. Ketubot 111a). By embracing Zionism, religious Jews defied pious

deferential, replacing a more passive orientation regarding Israel with an increasingly activist approach to messianic redemption that may yet come to threaten the entire Zionist project, both morally and physically.

The activist, mystical approach to messianic redemption characteristic of right-wing religious settlement in the West Bank after the Six-Day War of 1967 was first advanced by Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), the most influential ideologue of religious Zionism from the second Aliyah. Kook left Latvia for Palestine in 1904 at age thirty-nine, where he served as the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the Yishuv (the Zionist settlement in Palestine) from 1921 until his death. Redemption and holiness were the central themes in Kook’s writings. Kook believed that the Jewish people have a special sensitivity to the divine splendor and have a special messianic task. This sensitivity gets blunted in exile by the overemphasis on study and punctilious ritual observance. The spiritual root needs to be cultivated, purged, and refined. Zionism is an integral part of this preparation. Kook believed that renewing the bond between the people and their land augured an important stage in humanity’s advance to universal harmony. Rejecting the idea that there was any fundamental distinction between religious and secular Jews, he was impressed by the ethical idealism of the young socialist pioneers. In building the Jewish national home, they were unwittingly helping to realize God’s plan to redeem the Jewish people.

While in mainstream religious Zionism, the state and its institutions reflect “the beginning of the flowering of redemption,” the practical upshot immediately following the establishment of the state was far more prosaic. In the status quo arranged with David Ben-Gurion in the 1950s, the National Religious Party, the flagship religious Zionist political party, restricted its interest in coalitional politics to more or less limited goals, which have been far-reaching in their impact upon the public face of official Judaism in Israel. These include the monopolization of the rabbinate by orthodox Judaism by securing control over personal status issues (marriage, divorce, burial); restrictions on the sale of nonkosher food; the prohibition of transportation, commerce, and public activities on Shabbat and holidays; the formation of local religious councils; the establishment of a publicly funded religious educational system alongside the secular state schools; and military deferments for students in ultra-Orthodox religious academies. After 1967, the goals of religious Zionism were to exceed these relatively narrow, four cubits of halakhah. Starting in the early 1970s and accelerating in the 1980s, perceived religious imperatives, increasingly messianic in character, regarding the settlement of territories in the West Bank and Gaza began to drive state policy. The Oslo peace process and the 2003 unilateral disengagement from Gaza have since exacerbated conflict between

the most radical sectors of the religious Zionist community and the majority public, which had long chafed under the now eroding status quo.

While saturated by messianism, the religious forms of Zionism that took shape in Israel during the 1970s and 1980s tended to move away from overt forms of mystical speculation epitomized by Kook. Meir Kahane presented the most bare-knuckled form of religious Zionism in response to questions about sharing land with non-Jews in a Jewish state. He sought their voluntary emigration or expulsion by force from both the West Bank and Israel. A non-Jewish minority with equal rights has no rightful place in the land of Israel. The vision of inter-Jewish politics was no less radical. Kahane despised the culture and politics of liberal and left-wing Jews in Israel and in the United States, where he was born. Uncompromising forms of Zionism—Judaism-halakhah fuse together and stand in polar opposition to the secular state, democracy, liberalism, socialism, and humanism. Kahane based his claims upon a picture of authentic Torah Judaism and Zionist history (“We came here to build a Jewish, not a western country”).<sup>33</sup> With an engrained and static image of the enemy (Nazi-Arab-liberal), Kahane’s “concept of the political” is clearly fascist.

In contrast to the “Kahanism” that has increasingly seeped into mainstream religious Zionism, Yeshayah Leibowitz occupied a fringe position on the left. Leibowitz feared the subordination of religion to a secular state and to secular social interests and opposed the occupation of Palestinian territories and political messianism on religious grounds. He was a social gadfly who argued that all states, including Jewish states ancient and modern, are secular institutions with no intrinsic purpose. Political nation-states meet “needs” based upon biological necessity, not “values” based upon choice and commitment. A follower of Kant, Leibowitz argued that the purpose of religion was religion purely for its own sake, the mitzvot serve no external social or psychological end, and the establishment of the State of Israel has no theological “significance” (it provides no index regarding divine sanction or providence). Since halakhah developed under exilic condition at a time when the Jewish people did not exercise power in the spheres of statehood, politics, security, diplomacy, and so on, one cannot establish a modern state upon it. As a religious Zionist, he therefore called for radical halakhic innovation in order to allow religious Jews to participate in the full range of government functions and national duties, while arguing for the radical separation between synagogue and state.

#### REVISIONIST ZIONISM

The right-wing Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940) represented a rude awakening to liberal and socialist pieties, and a radical rejection of religious Zionist speculation. Born in Odessa, Jabotinsky was a journalist when he joined the Zionist

movement after the 1903 Kishinev pogrom. An organizer of self-defense organizations in Russia and the Zion Mule Corps under the British forces of General Allenby during World War I, Jabotinsky’s approach to Zionism was consistently militarist. In 1925, he established the Alliance of Revisionist Zionists, which broke away from the mainstream Zionist Congress in 1931 over the issue of statism. While infused by a principled liberal republicanism, Jabotinsky’s writings place such an emphasis on hierarchy and social uniformity as to slip into fascism. In his programmatic statement for the right-wing Zionist youth movement, “The Idea of Betar” (1934), Jabotinsky opposed the synthesis of Zionism and socialism, pitting Jewish workers against Jewish capitalists. Instead, he defined “discipline” as a “fundamental law of monism,” “the subordination of a mass to one leader.” “We all have one will, we build together the same structure, we, therefore, listen to the call of that architect, is accurate in his planning, we pave stones and hammer in nails as instructed. The leader, the conductor, the architect may either be an individual or a body – a committee, for instance.”<sup>34</sup>

As a militant, Jabotinsky understood Arab opposition to Zionism. Against the wishful thinking of the socialists, who tended to blame this opposition on the semi-feudal leadership of Arab Palestine, he recognized legitimate Arab national claims and understood that all native peoples resist colonization. In his view, the state of emergency suffered by the Jews in Europe trumped that natural right. It being impossible to pursue peaceful ends by peaceful means, a collision between Jews and Arabs in Palestine was thus inevitable. The choice was stark. In the famous essay “The Iron Wall: We and the Arabs” (1923), Jabotinsky argued,

*Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population – behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach. That is our Arab policy; not what it should be, but what it actually is, whether we admit it or not.*

He envisioned an Arab minority enjoying constitutional protections of full equal rights and cultural autonomy, once a Jewish majority was successfully forced upon the local Arab population.<sup>35</sup> In this Jabotinsky remained liberal. But until such a time, Zionism was to take shape as a garrison social formation. To him belongs the conceptual legacy of the security barrier now snaking through Palestinian territories in the West Bank, erected after the second intifada that began in 2000 following the collapse of negotiations between Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak at Camp David.

#### POST-ZIONISM

As an institutional apparatus and entrenched interest, Zionism is no longer the naive, revolutionary movement it once was. Eschewing ideological coherence, the



tensions and contradictions between ethnic-Jewish components and universal-humanistic components that may not have been obvious in the early part of the twentieth century have come to the fore with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and have been exacerbated by the massive settlement project in the occupied West Bank since the rise of the Likud under Menachem Begin in 1977. If secular political Zionism was the ruling ideological ethos between 1948 and 1967, right-wing religious nationalism has set much of the territorial agenda shaping Israeli society and culture after 1967. These tensions were there from the start before the occupation, formally enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, which defines the State of Israel as a Jewish state while promising to "uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed, or sex."<sup>56</sup> In order to guarantee this latter principle at the expense of the former, the Jewish Israeli advocates of what has come to be called post-Zionism contend that Israel must be restructured as a "democratic state of all its citizens" at the expense of its formal Jewish character.

Mainstream Jewish Israeli thought has tried to hold onto both horns of the dilemma by either blending or overlooking the tension between Jewish particularism and democratic universalism. In contrast, post-Zionism represents a minority, oppositional ideological discourse with deep roots in Israeli academia. Representing a broader loosening up in Israeli discourse, post-Zionism enjoyed its heyday during the Oslo peace process in the late 1990s. Its opposition to the ideological foundations of Zionism is based on systematic, critical reflection about the narrative, values, and institutions of Zionism and the State of Israel – in other words, about ideological expression, history, society, and culture. It is spearheaded by the work of so-called new historians and by sociologists and writers for the journal *Tzoria u-vikoret* ("Theory and Criticism"). In addition to problematizing received truths about the history of Zionism and Israeli society, the major theoretical contribution of post-Zionism has been to introduce antiessentialism into discussions of Israeli and Jewish identity, embracing the Foucauldian thesis that subjectivity does not simply exist in isolation from historical process and systems of power. Post-Zionism builds upon but is never quite true to the theory that Israeli identity cannot be reduced to a single essence, a single trait or group of traits.

For English-language readers, much of the theoretical legwork has been accomplished by Laurence Silberstein in *The Postzionism Debates*. Making use of postmodern and postcolonial discourse theory, Silberstein's analysis pays particular attention to binary oppositions, hierarchies, and relations of power. With Foucault, Silberstein notes that discourse does not reflect upon preexisting subjects ("subject positions," "subjectivities") and objects as much as it creates them in opposition to an Other

that it negates.<sup>57</sup> Zionist binaries include homeland/exile, *sabra/galiut* Jew, nation/religion, collective/individual, creativity/stagnation, Israeli/Arab. Like all discourse, Zionist discourse then proceeds to "privilege" the first term of the binary. In creating a new national narrative for the Jewish people, it thereby excludes Palestinianians, diaspora Jews, political and religious liberals, communists, and Bundists.

Notwithstanding the analytic clarity brought to the study of Zionism, the end effect of much post-Zionist scholarship tends to flatten and homogenize its object, beholden to the conceptual binaries it seeks to undermine. In its critique, post-Zionism tends to underplay the problem of antisemitism and reduce Zionism to the conflict between Jews and Palestinians at its moment of origin, and therefore in late nineteenth-century habits of colonial thought and practice. Writing from within the social sciences, critics like Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled are methodologically explicit in looking at Zionism from the outside, as pure body. Without apparent affect, their focus is on institutions, actions, and results – not intentions, ideas, or ideology.<sup>58</sup> In the attempt to grasp the movement of forces driving the clash between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, their view from above does not account for the motivating forces that propelled the foundation of modern Israel. Parts of that story are thereby complicated, at the cost of the simplification of other parts.

A return full circle to Herzl's *Altneuland* would show how a simple binary opposition between Zionism and liberalism might already deconstruct itself in classical Zionist discourse. Herzl saw Arab society as backward and static, subject to the economic enticements brought by Jewish immigration. No matter how prejudiced, his thought was liberal to the degree to which he believed that the success of Zionism depends upon cosmopolitan values. In his novel, Herzl opposed narrow nationalists who would claim the entire "New Society" as entirely their own. David Littwak, Herzl's prototype of the young Zionist in the novel, propounds that the New Society owes its origin not to nineteenth-century ethnic nationalism but to nineteenth-century pioneers in cooperative life in England, Germany, France, and Ireland. This New Society is envisioned at peace with its neighbors, networked to Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, and Baghdad. Opposed to religious privilege, Littwak proudly declares, "religion had been excluded from public affairs once and for all. The New Society did not care whether a man sought the eternal verities in a temple, a church or a mosque, in an art museum or philharmonic concert." It was not even a state, but rather a cooperative association composed of affiliate cooperatives; in the end, Littwak warned his fellow citizens that "all your cultivation is worthless and your fields will revert to barrenness unless you foster liberal ideas, magnanimity, and a love of mankind."<sup>59</sup> The Zionism of *Altneuland* is in this light virtually post-Zionist; it is not a Jewish state, but a state of the Jews.<sup>60</sup>

Virtually post-Zionist, but not really. That Herzl was a complex product of his own time, not ours, is evidenced by the consideration given to the idea of population transfer. "We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us," Herzl wrote in a diary entry from June 12, 1895.

We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and circumspectly ... It goes without saying that we shall respectfully tolerate persons of other faiths and protect their property, their honor, and their freedom with the harshest means of coercion ... Should there be many such immovable owners in individual areas [who would not sell their property to us], we shall simply leave them there and develop our commerce in the direction of other areas which belong to us.<sup>31</sup>

Complex and morally ambiguous, Herzl's scheme is easier to situate historically than it is to characterize politically. It does not appear to be a blanket call to expel by force all the local inhabitants of the territory in question. (At this point it was not at all clear if these were to be indigenous Arabs in Palestine or indigenous Indians in South America.) Herzl understood the need to protect the property, honor, and freedom of people of other faiths. Respecting the wish of those who refused to leave, it is unclear if the plan was to supplant local landowners or to win them over to "our side." The main force was directed against the weaker social strata. Not an edifying thought, it indicates the latent political violence of liberal order at a time when the idea and practice of population transfer did not bear the same legal and moral onus they bear today. That the League of Nations oversaw forced population transfer first in the Balkans in 1916, and then an exchange of some two million people between Greece and Turkey in 1923, against the wishes of the respective local communities, suggests a radical metamorphosis in our own contemporary liberal political culture that clearly dates transfer discourse.

The psychological *Sitz im Leben* of Herzl's transfer idea further complicates any attempt to interpret it. As remarked upon by Derek Penslar, a brooding mood of extreme psychic distress marks Herzl's diary entries written during the summer of 1895.<sup>32</sup> Fearing for his sanity, Herzl presented a series of plans, visions, and dreams, recognized by their own author as disconnected, fragmentary ideas marked by abrupt transitions.<sup>33</sup> Along with the population transfer "plan," schemes were envisioned to secure financing from rich Jews for festivals and art venues. He could see "[a]ll officials in uniform, trim, with military bearing, but not ludicrously so." How could we win over the clergy, including the wonder rabbi of Sadagora? There were costumes of the high priests, the gratitude of the German kaiser, festivals and other spectacles, the coronation of Herzl's son Hans as doge — dressed in "the garb

of shame of a medieval Jew, the pointed Jew's hat and the yellow badge," duels with sabers, a white flag with seven gold stars representing the seven-hour workday — and so on.<sup>34</sup>

The diary entries from the summer of 1895, especially the transfer scheme, cast Zionism as psychologically and politically complex. But moral realism — the assumption that every errant sentiment or statement must always assume a determinate and determining "meaning" as its referent — may not be the best approach with which to judge this type of expression. Beyond good and evil, the fantasy and aggressive impulse in Zionism suggest characteristics more flawed and more *human* than the heroic, innocent image appearing in official Zionist propaganda. Despite what a later generation of scholars and critics might, from a position of historical hindsight, understand to be political and moral failures, these are the shortcomings that define the political imagination and political activity as such, especially at points of origin in moments of inspiration.

Zionist ideology today subsists largely as a historical relic, supplanted by the larger, more vibrant Israeli culture that was its principal achievement. In the United States and Europe, and even in Israel, Zionism no longer has the power that it once possessed to motivate and organize Jewish society and culture on a daily basis. As rhetoric, official Zionist discourse today tends more toward cliché than to concrete substance. The great social and symbolic engines of socialist Zionism (the *histradut*, the *kibbutz*, the pioneering ethos) are a shadow of their former selves. Kook and the followers of his son, Zvi Yehuda, the most preeminent champion of settling territories occupied by Israel after 1967, failed to resolve the tensions between religious Israeli Jews and those Israeli Jews who never shared their messianism and who have always resented religious coercion. The form of statism, *mamlakhiyut*, propounded by Ben-Gurion has given way to less ideological and more individualistic forms of Israeli and Jewish identity, while the culture as a whole shifts toward a more secular ethos.<sup>35</sup> As Arnold Eisen notes, there might be little value added anymore in the word "Zionist" (apart from its polemical use-value). Jewish identity as such is already imperative and vague enough without adding any other adjective.<sup>36</sup>

Like any place, Israel remains an open question. The relation of the individual Jew to the Jewish state is no longer as obvious as it once appeared. Already in the early 1980s, Amos Oz observed in his political travelogue *In the Land of Israel* the sectarian character of contemporary Israel, which comprised a dominant Ashkenazi secular elite (in politics, economics, military, press and academe); a national-religious elite and settler community; Sephardic Jews caught between national patriotism and bitterness toward that secular elite whose members sought to strip them of their parental culture, sent them to isolated development towns at

the periphery of the country, and relegated them to "dirty work"; ultra-Orthodox haredim for whom Enlightenment, assimilation, Zionism, and the Holocaust never happened and for whom it is the state that is supposed to perform the "dirty work"; Arab Israelis (Israeli Palestinians) left out by the very definition of Israel as a "Jewish state"; and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Add to this mosaic from the 1980s more recent components: Ethiopian Jews with their own Jewish culture; immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union with attenuated ties to the local Israeli culture and, for many, to Jewish culture and to Judaism itself; foreign workers from Africa and Asia with few to no formal rights; and the potential disaffection on the part of radical nationalist religious youth in the wake of disengagement from Gaza and possible future withdrawals from the West Bank. Nostalgic for his childhood Jerusalem and the old Zionism from the British Mandate when overarching devotion to the cause unified different ideological streams in a single neighborhood, Oz can only hope that a God in whom he does not believe will have mercy.<sup>37</sup>

#### PALESTINE

Over and under the entire Zionist edifice hangs "the question of Palestine" and the problem of violence. In her book on land and power, historian Anita Shapira follows the emerging tension in prestate Zionist politics among (1) socialist/humanist principles, which during the Arab uprising between 1936 and 1939 informed an official policy of restraint, as opposed to indiscriminate acts of counterterror favored by the revisionists; (2) pragmatic considerations, according to which force was one tool of policy with which to advance Zionist interests — along with settlement activity and securing international opinion; and (3) an overriding, absolute sense of justice on the part of the pioneers of the second Aliyah who denied the existence of a competing Arab national claim, and on the part of youth born in the Yishuv who saw themselves as the sole masters of the land. Shapira observes the fundamental blindness, the complete inability to see the Arabs of Palestine and their rights to the land. She notes too the self-preoccupation with ideological, practical, and political principles and rifts that were internal to Jewish politics, with establishing and expanding the Yishuv, and with the worsening situation in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>38</sup> Liberal Israeli Jews in the 1970s and 1980s began to speak about Israelis and Palestinians as a clash between "right and right." But for the Palestinians and their supporters, the Zionist claim to any part of Palestine has no moral foundation whatsoever, regardless of Jewish suffering in Europe. In stark opposition to Zionism, the moral basis of the Palestinian cause stands out as the natural right of

an indigenous people to its own country. Herzl himself anticipated in *The Jewish State* the "pressure of the native populace" to stop Jewish immigration, as did Ahad Ha'am, who in his report from the land of Israel informed his readers that, Zionist propaganda to the contrary, there was no empty land in Palestine. However, the claim to autochthonous, natural right is two edged. Because of their basic and immediate appeal, claims to such right are likely to blind one to other (contractual) systems of right and the morality of alternative claims. Indeed, the rejection of Zionism, based on unalloyed natural right, implies historical and contemporary assertions, many of them dubious, about Zionism, the direct object of its opposition, as well as seriously flawed claims about the Jews and Judaism writ large.

"*There is no room for the Jews in Palestine*," argued George Antonius in *The Arab Awakening* (1938; italics added). In this classic study of the origins of modern Arab nationalism, Antonius captured the pan-Arab nature of Arab nationalism prior to World War I in the midst of its splintering into discrete national forms under the British and French Mandates. Writing against the partition plan presented by the Peel Commission, which would have earmarked one fifth of Palestine for Jewish sovereignty, Antonius based the Arab right to the entirety of Palestine on the natural rights of possession and self-preservation. Willing to concede limited immigration and the creation of a spiritual home envisaged by the cultural Zionists, Antonius argued that relief to the broader problem of European antisemitism must be sought elsewhere. In his view, "the logic of facts is inexorable, that it shows that no room can be made in Palestine for a second nation except by dislodging or exterminating the nation in possession."<sup>39</sup> By 1938, however, five years after the rise of Hitler to power, open immigration was understood by most Zionists as a nonnegotiable priority. For the Jews of Europe, with no place else to go, the claim that "no room can be made in Palestine" had its own inexorable logic, completely unintended and unforeseen by Antonius.

*The Jews are not a people. Judaism is just a religion, with no historical or religious connection to Palestine.* Principled opposition to Zionism is based explicitly or implicitly on a theory of Jewish identity. In its resolutions regarding Palestinian national identity and the movement led by the Palestine Liberation Organization, article 20 of the Palestinian National Charter sharply defined its own other in sharp relief to itself. "Claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood. Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; they are citizens of the states to which they belong."<sup>40</sup> This uncompromising assertion about Jewish "religion" and about the nonrelation between the Jews and Palestine would impose a total theory about

## RIGHT

Reduced to its most basic form, Zionism is an ideological formation based upon the theory that *the Jews are a people with a right to constitute itself in its own national home – in the Land of Israel*. Mixing elements drawn from all the competing strands of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European political culture (liberalism, nationalism, colonialism, and socialism, and, at the margin, racialism and fascism), Zionism demonstrates the constructive and destructive creativity that constitutes the formation of a people and its culture on a new, modern basis. With the passage of time, what once seemed simply self-evident proves in actuality unstable. Every phrase presumed by the basic definition of Zionism – for example, “people,” “land of Israel,” “right” – is now correctly seen as ambiguous. That such empirical-theoretical data are not self-evident does not, however, make ideological formulations about them meaningless, arbitrary, or make-believe. Once it is presumed that no single point, person, place, or concept constitutes a theologically or naturally predetermined essence, each key term comes into view as a complicated and carefully crafted artifice. Combining real and imaginary elements, its emergence is conditioned by the formative force of history, politics, and power.

What is a “people,” and did it ever make sense to (re)constitute the Jews as such? That “the Jews” are not a “nation” defined by a single land occupied over time or by a single vernacular language and law does not mean that they are not a people. It just makes them abnormal, the very abnormality that classical Zionist theory sought to annul. But if the Jews are not a people, then what are they? Also a product of the nineteenth century, the notion that Judaism is a “religion” is even more tenuously constructed than the idea of a Jewish “people.” Hard to identify in the abstract, the Jews are not exactly a nation but not just a creed. From a Zionist perspective, a national home was the primary place to sort this out, providing greater space and demographic base for nonreligious forms of Jewish identity than are possible in the modern diaspora and the models of “community” upon which it depends. In contrast, more recent critics of Zionism who reject the construct of “peoplehood” have proposed no better rubric with which to convey and create a broad sense of Jewish social identity beyond “religion.”

Where is “*the land of Israel*,” and what is its relation to the State of Israel and to Palestine? Both real and imagined, Israel and Palestine are superimposed one on top of another, subject to the ebb and flow of Israelite, Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Ottoman, European, and Zionist conquest. Does it stop at the Jordan River or at the Euphrates? Clearly, the State of Israel within the Green Line (the armistice lines

Jewish identity that does great violence to the historical record, no matter how one might come to read it.

*The Jews are a permanent minority*. In “My Right of Return,” his interview with Israeli journalist Ari Shavit, Edward Said opined in opposition to Zionism. “I don’t find the idea of a Jewish state terribly interesting. The Jews I know – the more interesting Jews I know – are not defined by their Jewishness. I think to confine Jews to their Jewishness is problematic.” (The precise point underlying political Zionism was to turn the Jews into a normal people “defined” but not “confined” by Jewishness.) On the status of the Jews in the binational state he tirelessly advocated, Said told Shavit: “But the Jews are a minority everywhere. They are a minority in America. They can certainly be a minority in Israel.” Regarding the fate of that minority in Arab Palestine, Said conceded, “I worry about that. The history of minorities in the Middle East has not been as bad as in Europe, but I wonder what would happen. It worries me a great deal. The question of what is going to be the fate of the Jews is very difficult for me. I really don’t know. It worries me.” In addressing this concern, Said, the critic of imperialism, looks to “the larger unit” and recalls another empire. “Yes. I believe it is viable. A Jewish minority can survive the way other minorities in the Arab world survived. I hate to say it, but in a funny sort of way, it worked rather well under the Ottoman Empire, with its millet system. What they had then seems a lot more humane than what we have now.”<sup>41</sup>

Mimicking the master–slave dialectic in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the future of Zionism may ironically depend upon some form of agreement with those who have the greatest stake in resisting the disaster it forced upon them, and which they were unable to contain. Agreement was perhaps impossible neither with those historical actors in the 1930s who were unconcerned about the extreme nature of Jewish distress in Europe and saw no reason to make room for it in a corner of Arab Palestine, nor with those pan-Arab nationalist ideologues in the 1960s who rewrote Jewish identity and the nature of Judaism on their own terms, nor with the wistful fantasies of binationalism that in Said’s case ironically hearken back to the Ottomans. In contrast, Rashid Khalidi provides an alternative paradigm that is critical of Zionism, while challenging the propensity to see it simply as a “colonial-settler movement” and “therefore as necessarily illegitimate, both in terms of its origins and aims.” Khalidi argues that as Israelis come to recognize the existence of the Palestinian people, the Palestinians can recognize that of “the Israeli people” and consider Zionism “a legitimate national movement.”<sup>42</sup> In the vicious circle that is Israel/Palestine, the types of identity able to make room for their other necessarily depend upon the type of identity first advanced by that other.

of 1949) is not the entire land of Israel, but the state has left undefined the border between itself and Palestine. Israel/Palestine is one distinct geographical unit for both those on the radical right who once sought a greater land of Israel and who now want to hold on to as much territory as possible, and for those on the radical left who support the creation of a "bi-national state composed of all its citizens" (which is itself a work of imagination and an ideological construct). The former seek to extend Jewish hegemony throughout the entire land of Israel, whereas the latter seek to undermine Jewish sovereignty throughout all of historical Palestine, which itself is hard to separate from "southern Syria." Both "Palestine" and "the land of Israel" are imaginary and therefore contested constructs. In refusing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither extreme seems to see that names and borders are fluid lines drawn and redrawn by divergent political facts and purposes.

"Right" constitutes the most slippery Zionist datum of all. Without any recourse to divine right, most secular forms of classical Zionism are unlike the Palestinian-Arab claim to Palestine. The Palestinian-Arab claim builds upon a religious and cultural notion of divine right (Palestine as *Waqf*, an inalienable Muslim trust) and upon natural rights of possession and self-preservation. Autochthonous, these claims proved static *vis-à-vis* the historical flux impelling the movement of populations. In contrast, secular Jewish claims to the land of Israel were carried precisely by that very force of historical change. Setting religious motives to the side, these claims were modern, not ancient. At its origin at the turn of the twentieth century, the sole basis of Zionism in natural right was (1) political need in the face of European antisemitism. From this position in natural right follows a completely contingent set of rights involving (2) historical-cultural-religious ties, (3) geographical-historical circumstance, (4) labor, and (5) pragmatics. Secular claims to a Jewish right to Palestine are largely contractual, which made them both unstable and dynamic.

(1) Even a non-Zionist and critic of Zionism such as Daniel Boyarin rejects political Zionism "except insofar as it represented an emergency and temporary rescue operation."<sup>13</sup> As a historical form, Zionism enjoys no firm claim to moral right except on the basis of political need, assuming what social-contract theorists going back to Spinoza and Hobbes would recognize as a group's natural right to self-preservation. Cultural questions such as those pertaining to the urgency of the cultural problem in Europe after the rupture of ghetto Judaism, or to the failure of Emancipation to stem assimilation, are corollary to the material crises and political dangers facing the Jews between 1880 and 1948. If anything, the history of Jewish immigration to Palestine shows that large numbers of people move from one country to another country (especially to a less economically developed country) only

because of duress. With immigration to the United States effectively closed in 1924, Jews began moving *en masse* to Palestine from Poland and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Without these mass immigrations, the Zionist settlement would have either developed or foundered as a small Jewish colony in Arab Palestine.

(2) The practical question of place is raised once one presumes in the abstract the right to collective self-preservation and political self-determination in the face of dire threat. No matter how "constructed" and imaginary, there is no other place in the world with which the Jews have as significant a historical, cultural connection. Prior to the advent of Zionism, the land of Israel (the name Palestine is not indigenous to Judaism) did not serve as an active Jewish political space for most Jewish people. It was, however, the memory and dream space of Judaism *par excellence*. The land of Israel, Jerusalem, and the (memory of the) Temple are central to Hebrew scripture, Jewish liturgy, and Jewish messianic hope, despite the adjuration in the Babylonian Talmud not to go up collectively to the land of Israel before the coming of the Messiah. Once the die was cast to establish a sovereign national presence, anywhere else would have violated the historical sense of place and spatial orientation articulated in diverse, contradictory ways in Jewish religious-cultural traditions. In contrast to Palestine, the Jews would have settled Uganda or Argentina with just as much need but with no historical or cultural right.

(3) For the Jews, the right to settle in Palestine and transform it into a Jewish space owed itself to the dumb luck of historical-geographical circumstance. As observed by Antonius and Khalidi, up until the 1920s, the Arabs of Palestine rarely saw themselves or were seen by others as constituting a discrete national entity. Identity formed around the local village, which in turn formed part of larger Ottoman, Arab, or Syrian political frameworks. At the start of the century, was it unconscionable for one to think that the Jews might find a legitimately agreed-upon place of their own within a part of this larger territorial unit? Given Jewish minority status in Palestine, Gavison concedes that there was no right to create a Jewish state there in 1900. She asserts instead a right to try to create conditions that would then justify the creation of such a state.<sup>14</sup> Zionists came to Palestine and could refer to themselves as Palestinian Jews because Palestine was an open territorial identity, because they could do so under Ottoman and then British auspices, and because no local national force effectively impeded their way. The 1936-39 Arab Revolt led the British to cap Jewish immigration in the period just prior to the outbreak of World War II and in its immediate aftermath, but by this time, the Yishuv was impossible to uproot.

(4) Labor formed an additional, contractual component to the Jewish claim to Palestine. Up until 1948, the Jewish claim to a part of Palestine was based on the

legal purchase of lands and on the labor put into those lands. While Herzl and Jabotinsky made free use of the terms “colony” and “colonization” and sought to align Zionism with imperial interests, Zionism was not a form of colonialism in the narrow sense. The Jewish national project was never meant to extend the empire of an already extant great power, or to seize access to raw materials and exploit indigenous labor. In the form of state-building institutions, agricultural settlements, and para-governmental agencies, Jewish labor was a proud creation and a central plank of the Zionist movement and of the early state. In spirit, its founders’ intent was to build up a land and to rebuild a people. Indeed, the expropriation of lands in the West Bank and Gaza, and the exploitation of cheap Palestinian labor from 1967 until the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, did more to undermine the moral legitimacy of the Jewish state than did the social and political exclusions tarnishing the principles and practice of Hebrew labor in the heyday of Labor Zionism.

(5) A pragmatic basis of right is the willingness to come to agreements with other people. If the first moral trump card of the Zionist movement was the basic right to self-preservation, its final trump card has been the real and perceived willingness to secure international agreements and to accept partition arrangements at key junctures in the history of the conflict (1936, 1947, and 2000). No right is absolute or simply natural. In this respect, Zionism enjoys no moral right to the degree that the State of Israel simply dominates its neighbors and occupies territory beyond internationally agreed-upon lines, to the degree that the state does not integrate into the Middle East, its cultures, and its future. Like any social group, Zionism secures both a political and moral right to its own border and to its own free self-definition only to the degree that the state founded on its basis seeks to make a genuine, viable space for others both outside and inside the state, to make do with minimal political needs, while forfeiting ideologically and religiously inspired surplus goods and privileges, the demand for which necessarily comes at the expense of another people.<sup>45</sup>

What constitutes minimal need? The degree to which the majority civic culture in Israel is Jewish might one day make its formal definition as a “Jewish state” not undemocratic *per se*, only practically redundant. One way or the other, the Supreme Court will most likely be the official organ that determines how much of the classical Zionist and early state institutional apparatus is actually preserved and how much dismantled (for example, the unequal distribution of state budgets, the exclusive earmarking of state lands to the Jewish people via the Jewish Agency, state support for religious councils and educational institutions, the law of return, the use of state symbols, and the monopoly and control enjoyed by an orthodox rabbinat). One day, the state may look more like the one proposed by Gavison in her support

of a weak Jewish sovereignty, seen simply as a consequence of majority status with cultural and political implications that are yet to be determined.<sup>46</sup>

Does political sovereignty constitute such a minimal need? In his 2003 article against Zionism and against the two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, historian Tony Judt argued that the modern nation–state is obsolete. With his eye on Europe, he posited “a world where nations and peoples increasingly intermingle and intermarry at will; where cultural and national impediments to communication have all but collapsed; where more and more of us have multiple elective identities and would feel falsely constrained if we had to answer to just one of them; in such a world Israel is truly an anachronism.”<sup>47</sup> Two years after these words were penned, a proposed European constitution was rejected in French and Dutch referenda amid growing concerns about national sovereignty. Add to this Muslim and African immigrant communities that Europe has proved unwilling and unable to assimilate, and the still unsettled question about the inclusion of Turkey into the European Union, and there is enough to suggest that perhaps the nation–state and “Christian Europe” are not the “dead letter” critics claim them to be. While events more recent than Judt’s article do not necessarily refute the long-term future of Europe or his prognosis for Israel/Palestine, they suggest how a theory always awaits articulation in practice – and then rearticulation.

Much of the current theorizing against sovereignty touches upon the “political theology” of ultraconservative political theorist Carl Schmitt, whose thought emerged in Germany in the decade leading up to the Nazi period. For Schmitt, political sovereignty is the power of the sovereign, whose power is presented as being as absolute as God’s omnipotence in Protestant theism. Sovereign power is based on the ability to declare a state of exception, which it must do always in relation to an enemy for it to be political.<sup>48</sup> Schmitt now enjoys a curious vogue among left-leaning theorists today because he allows them to conflate even liberal forms of sovereignty with fascist conceptions. Jacques Derrida, for instance, does this in order to invoke a “certain unconditional renunciation of sovereignty,”<sup>49</sup> the end of the state, a force without power, and the coming of the other. The danger observed is that all claims to sovereignty either slide or risk sliding into fascism.

Which leaves our discussion where? Perhaps the critics of sovereignty highlight Schmitt and ignore the limited, conditional forms of sovereignty in liberal democratic theory either because, like Schmitt himself, they do not trust liberal democracy or because a more transcendental attempt to condition sovereignty on a program of radical democracy is at work in these deliberations. My own view in this chapter is aligned against the utopian hope that a national majority would agree to transform itself into a minority in a binational entity. One might point instead to

more pressing, political tasks: the need to fix internationally and regionally accepted borders, and to establish conditions, rules, and limits to the fair exercise of power. As 'ad Ghanem is of course right to insist that what he considers the "merely" procedural aspects of Israeli democracy (separation of powers, free elections, free press, and so on) have yet to translate into the more basic, constitutional reality of democracy as equal citizenship.<sup>30</sup> Like any democratic project, the State of Israel, insofar as it remains democratic, is caught between multiple principles and impulses: national, ethnic, religious, and democratic. Never self-identical, they are sometimes complementary and sometimes in conflict.

Apart from the question of right and no matter its future constitution, Israeli society by dint of sheer demography remains a unique laboratory for the proliferation of modern and contemporary Jewish subjectivities and new Jewish expression. To make use of comments made by Gilles Deleuze about the foundational act of creating art, Zionism began with "the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house." Such acts generate "the emergence of pure sensory qualities, of sensibilia that cease to be merely functional and become expressive features, making possible a transformation of functions."<sup>31</sup> The effect is often violent, unpleasent, and disorienting. Rather than stabilize and simplify "the Jewish condition" as originally intended, Zionism has had opposite, volatilizing results. For Jewish philosophy, it creates what Deleuze called a "plane of immanence," a prephilosophical foundation for the territorialization, deterritorialization, and re-territorialization of figures and concepts upon which to build up worlds of Jewish life and thought.<sup>32</sup>

"Religion" and "secularism" constitute two examples of concepts volatilized by Zionism. As found in a 1993 sociological study of Israeli Jewish belief and practice, Jewish identity in Israel is empirically more complex than the simplistic contrast between a secular majority and religious minority. In their study, the authors found relatively small populations of strictly observant Jews and antireligious secularists, a smattering of Reform and Conservative (largely Anglo) Jews, and a large moderate center observing some to many traditional mitzvot (e.g., Friday night candle lighting with or without the traditional blessing over wine, and widespread observance of Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, Passover, and life-cycle events, accompanied by sparse weekly synagogue attendance).<sup>33</sup> Which Israeli Jews observe Jewish practice because they believe that God commands them? Which do so as part of a national/ethnic culture? Which do so for reasons that are vaguely "spiritual"? With Buber we have already seen earlier that "the Jews" represent a hybrid national and spiritual formation. This means that there is no way to solve this riddle for the vast majority in the middle. Insofar as it projects culture and cultural subjectivities out onto a large social screen, Israel more than the diaspora allows one to see how Judaism and Jewish identity look past the narrow choice between religion and secular culture.

This has nothing to do with that old Zionist talisman, the negation of the diaspora. Zionism is itself "originally" a diaspora discourse. As origin, the diaspora in Zionist discourse is more than simply a historical-geographical place to be left behind. As observed by Elliot Wolfson in a completely different context, origin is an ongoing determining force or ground "from and by which something arises and springs forth" and "from which something is what it is and as it is."<sup>34</sup> For a constitutional model of a democratic state, and for models of Judaism and Jewish culture that look less toward the state, those who care about Israeli democracy might have to look outside to American liberal democracy — where church and state are formally separated but where civic culture is simultaneously Christian, post-Christian, multiethnic, and multireligious. Without overlooking the immense differences dividing national life and religion in Israel and the United States, it may nevertheless be the case that in the future Israel might one day have to "return" to the diaspora and diaspora concepts in order to restructure itself.

While Israeli identity formations remain fundamentally complex and dynamic, discourse for and against Zionism has tended to harden into reified theoretical oppositions: Israel or Palestine, Israel or diaspora, Jew or Arab, Zionism or liberal democracy, collective or individual identity, secularism or religion, nationalism or internationalism, differentiation or integration. The choices demanded are almost always false because they depend upon an either/or positional logic instead of a logic of passage.<sup>35</sup> Phenomena are unruly. Ideological formations mutate. Temporal passage and spatial pressure force a multitude to move between one position and its other, as both fold into and out of each other. This may not end well. Insofar as movement across contradictions constitutes phenomena, no single such position can ever stand for long in any absolute way. As for the particular positionings of a Jewish "polity" and Jewish "culture" in "Israel," they are dominated by overlapping and competing "national," "ethnic," and "religious" claims and realities in which "sovereign right" is made possible and justified by the very limits constraining its exercise. At stake is whether those formations remain open or closed to the drawing and redrawing of political, moral, and affective lines.

## NOTES

- 1 See Mann 2006a, pp. 1–6.
- 2 Scholem 1971, pp. 4–17. See Hertzberg 1959, pp. 16–20; Almog et al. 1998; Luz 2003.
- 3 Hertzberg 1959, p. 183.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 5 See Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Berkowitz 1993; Mann 2006a; Zerubavel 1994.
- 6 Arendt 1958, pp. 46–47, 177–78.
- 7 Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz 1995, pp. 417–19.
- 8 See Almog et al. 1998.

- 9 Gavison 1999, p. 46.  
 10 Leibowitz 1992, p. 214.  
 11 Hertzberg 1959, p. 209.  
 12 *Ibid.*, p. 182.  
 13 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995, pp. 547f.  
 14 See Shamir 2000.  
 15 Hertzberg 1959, pp. 247–77. For “This Is Not the Way” and “Truth from the Land of Israel,” see Ahad Ha’am 1960, pp. 38–54; Ahad Ha’am 1962, pp. 34–43; Ahad Ha’am 2000.  
 16 Hertzberg 1959, pp. 292–302.  
 17 *Ibid.*, p. 312.  
 18 Alter 1975, p. 275.  
 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 283, 285.  
 20 Hertzberg 1959, pp. 360–66.  
 21 See Shafir and Peled 2002 and Sternhell 1999.  
 22 Hertzberg 1959, pp. 372–74.  
 23 Kahane 1974, p. 171.  
 24 Jabotinsky 1959, p. 320.  
 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 251–60. See also Rabinovich and Reinharz 2008, pp. 41–44.  
 26 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995, pp. 629f.  
 27 Silberstein 1999, pp. 5f. and 15ff.  
 28 Shafir and Peled 2002, p. 33.  
 29 Herzl 1997, pp. 259, 284, 153.  
 30 See Mann 2006a, p. 15.  
 31 Herzl 1960, pp. 88–90.  
 32 Penslar 2005.  
 33 Herzl 1960, pp. 1:25, 39.  
 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 1:33, 34, 40, 43, 57, 58, 101.  
 35 See Smooha 1997; Smooha 2002; Zipperstein and Frerichs 2000.  
 36 Eisen 1998a, p. 263.  
 37 *Oz* 1983, p. 48.  
 38 Shapira 1992.  
 39 Antonius 1946, p. 412.  
 40 Kadi 1969, p. 140.  
 41 Said 2001, p. 455.  
 42 Khalidi 1997, pp. 204, 264 n. 50.  
 43 Boyarin 1994, p. 249. *Italics added.*  
 44 Gavison 1999, p. 55.  
 45 See Buber 1983, pp. 111–26.  
 46 Gavison 1999, p. 61.  
 47 Judt 2003.  
 48 Schmitt 2005.  
 49 Derrida 2005, p. xiv.  
 50 See Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel 2008; Ghanem and Susser 2007.  
 51 Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 183.  
 52 *Ibid.*, pp. 46f.  
 53 Liebman and Katz 1997.  
 54 Wolfson 2006a, p. 120.  
 55 On the distinction between position and passage, see Massumi 2002, pp. 6ff.

PART V

ISSUES IN MODERN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY