

WHY PEOPLE HATE: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RACISM, SEXISM, AND ANTI-SEMITISM by Lawrence Friedman

I. INTRODUCTION: I shall focus on intellectuals-scholars who were decidedly influenced, if in differing ways, by developments since the late 19th century when concepts of hate came to be contoured decisively by scientific racism with its attendant notions of hierarchy and abstract if dualistic “modernity”. My approach shall be Eriksonian and Frommian – the interplay between inner psychic qualities resident within all humans and external conditions of time and place. Within the Eriksonian configurational approach, which approximates Fromm’s notion of “social character,” I shall be especially attentive to the Universalist vs. the Particularist Debate among intellectuals who, since the 1930s, pondered the nature of hate. My narrative commences with the universalist response to fascism and Naziism by these intellectuals until the early 1960s and particularist hegemony since. The universalists tended to be heavily psychological while the particularists were heavily historical and quasi empirical. My premise through the narrative is that in dealing with hatred and bigotry, one always must deal with the particular but to move to the general and universal. Hannah Arendt’s concept of the banality of evil was perhaps the most sophisticated effort to treat the general and the particular as coequals. With Erikson and Fromm, she is the “cornerstone” of this project.

II. CLASSIC PSYCHOLOGICAL-UNIVERSALIST EXPLANATIONS

- A. FREUD especially CIVILIZATION & ITS DISCONTENTS (ethnic and nationalist hatreds of WWI) -- Imperfect harnessing of drives; projection of death wish into Savage/Civilization framework, Ex, Friedman, THE WHITE SAVAGE (ex. Birth of a Nation – the KKK as forces of civilization as they kill and threaten blacks. Ex. Southern Rape Complex). Problems: Freudian drive theory has become heavily suspect among psychoanalysts for many decades, especially the concept of a death wish. The concept of projection explains too much and is largely a late 19th century construct.
- B. ISOLATION/ALIENATION - NEGATIVE IDENTIFICATION (Durkheim, Fromm, 1844 Marx). Ex. Fromm, ESCAPE FROM FREEDOM & Adorno et. al, THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY. Appeal for clear answers in a mythic community negatively defined in terms of others (not Jewish, not female, not black, not Gypsie, etc.). Habermas’ discussion of the abstraction of the concrete relationships and communities to create systems that, ironically, end up defining our subjective, social, and physical realities. Our daily existence becomes systematized and subsequently alienating. This overlaps decidedly with Fromm’s discussion of how sado-masochism appeals to the alienated. (Problem: not all who hate are alienated or invoke negative identification).

- C. PSEUDOSPECIATION – UNIVERSAL SPECIESHOOD (Erikson, Fromm, Lorenz, etc). “Family of Man” universal sense of humanity (Ghandi at Ahmedabad, Jesus at Galilea; vs. human propensity to accent artificial differences of religion, race, gender, etc.) Need to see that commonalities of humankind are more basic than differences. A fundamental legacy of the Enlightenment and Natural Rights theory. Problems: (1) Most of us mix the two and with changing emphases. (2) Western civilization bias and cosmopolitan intellectual bias. For example, was Fromm’s ESCAPE FROM FREEDOM really about western notions of freedom and authority? (3) The theory developed historically as a response to 19th century racist hierarchical science and Nazi racist theory.
- D. VIOLENCE AS EMOTIONALLY CURATIVE AND HEALING (Fanon). Enhancement of the damaged self – self pride and strength. Same message as F. Douglass, THE HEROIC SLAVE and gaining currency today within Muslim fundamentalism. Problems: 1. Violence may make the oppressed more like the oppressors. 2. Violence requires a simplistic scapegoat. 3. Heavily based on specific situation in French occupied Algeria
- E. PATRIARCHY AS DOMINATIONAL / MATRIARCHY AS RELATIONAL. J.J. Bachofen, G. Zilboorg, CP Gilman, C. Gilligan thesis of matriarchy as original condition and then male subordination of women and others to reestablish his domination. Patriarchy as assaulting/ matriarchy as birthing and healing. To diminish hatreds and bigotries, men need to find the woman in themselves a la Gandhi and Jesus. Problems: 1. A gender essentialist perspective and its attendant difficulties. 2. Is this really a call for a Jungian animus/animae human balancing act?
- F. AMBIVALENCE/BIFORMITY (“Dad, I hate you. Love, Beth”) Is hatred the other side of appreciation/love? Do humans always carry divided messages? (Ex. Myrdal, AMERICAN DILEMMA, Kammen, PEOPLE OF PARADOX. A framework that can handle intellectual contradictions. Erikson life cycle opposites – eg. Integrity v. Despair). Benefits of the argument – gives clear hope of tilting the ambivalence; embraces conflicting evidence. Problem – hate is not always conflicted or ambivalent (ex Hitler on Jews in MEIN KAMPF). I MAY GROUND THIS SECTION IN THE REFORMULATION OF PHILANTHROPY DURING HOLOCAUST LIKE CONDITIONS – HOW ONE MAY BE A RESCUER ONE HOUR AND AN EXTERMINATIONIST THE NEXT—Eichmann himself (ie ambivalent, conflicted layers).

Summary: In different degrees, these frameworks are hard to ground in specific evidence or represent very selective use of confirmatory evidence. All require leaps of faith and several carry a heavily Western/Enlightenment perspective in the guise of a universalist perspective.

III. HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS – CENTERING ON TIME AND PLACE

A. W.E.B. DuBois, *SOULS OF BLACK FOLK* – “the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line.” Line drawing based on race and ethnicity central to a 20th century of U.S. and international bigotries ranging from lynching to racial imperialist expansionism and warfare. The color line induces a doubleness in the victim – in but not of the region or county. Easily extends into anti-Semitism but less easily into sexism (though Chopin, *THE AWAKENING*, sees line drawing and doubleness in gender context). Problems – 1. Du Bois’ heavily US context – less applicable to certain other parts of the world (eg parts of Latin America). 2. Different reasons for line drawing in different places and times. 3. Line drawing and a sense of doubleness in the victim may, in some ways, also be a universalist explanation.

B. *HERRENVOLK DEMOCRACY* (Fredrickson), *FREEDOM AS FINITE* (Morgan). The notion that freedom is limited and by giving or enhancing it for some groups one needs to take it away from others. Examples: Dutch South Africa and colonial Virginia, anti-woman suffrage argument in U.S., and *MEIN KAMPF* anti-Semitism. A view of the world held by certain dominant groups in certain settings that can explain all sorts of hatreds. Hierarchical, zero-sum game. Problem: what causes perspective of limited freedom/democracy? Is it an offshoot of desire to limit human competitiveness and give certain groups an advantage? When one feels fulfilled and “full”, will one be less willing to impose the perspective of freedom as limited on others? (i.e. is this a universalist issue?) Case study – the split among American woman suffragettes between gender equality and racial equality.

C. Tocqueville, *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA* --- open market Jacksonian prior capitalism and its acute competitiveness; need of white males in this competition to have unlimited upward mobility chances yet blunt the downward slide by women, racial and ethnic minorities. Problems – are bigotries and hatreds less pronounced in non-capitalist order? Is competitiveness really a universalist explanatin for hatred?

D. John Higham, *STRANGERS IN THE LAND*. Nativist anti-immigrant cycles are economic based and profit linked. Problems: 1. Do economic downturns and upturns effect different people in different ways? 2. Are economic elites principally responsible for nativism? 3. Is the issue more about power and control of others than about profits? 4. Why does discrimination against women in the workplace persist irrespective of the economic cycle and sometimes irrespective of anti-immigrant feelings?

E. Daniel Goldhagen, *HITLER’S WILLING EXECUTIONERS* – German culture historically anti-Semitic. Prompts theory of national character being central to

hatreds and their absence. Goldhagen's perspective had deep resonance in Germany and among American Jews. Problems: Is notion of national character a product of 1930s-1950s culture & personality movement and less central as the globe gets smaller? Were Nazi Germany and even Stalinist Russia monoliths? What about philanthropy and rescue spirit even in Germany? (i.e. do conditions of rapid hatred and violence evoke opposite reactions?)

- F. G.J. Barker-Benfield, *HORRORS OF THE HALF KNOWN LIFE* - sexual surgery as aggressiveness against women's birthing and passionate qualities . Can overlap with aggression against blacks (lynching) plus bigotry against SE European immigrants and Catholics and Jews. Problem – bigotries by different groups and for different reasons despite chronological US overlaps? Was turn of 20th century a violent era generally and is violence necessarily hatred?
- G. Michael Rogin, Richard Slotkin, and other theorists of the 1970s on Native American extermination. (Freudian projection and reaction formation, Kleinian perspectives on rage, etc. – ie universalist theories)

Problem: the classic historical treatments both speak to psychological universals and require more specific evidence and qualification. They prompt the issue of particularist-universalist interplay.

IV. MERGER POSSIBILITIES – LINKING HATREDS BY UNIVERSALIST PSYCHOLOGY AND PARTICULARIST HISTORY

A. Richard King – lynching of blacks (id) vs killing Jews (superego – thou shall not). Trying to explain a particular – why so many more Jews were killed during the Nazi era than blacks during the 1892-1919 U.S. lynching era. A very problematic but interesting framework.

B. Fromm, *ESCAPE FROM FREEDOM* (1941) & *THE ANATOMY OF HUMAN DESTRUCTIVENESS* (1973)– quest for certainty and clarity over independence – with Nazi and Stalinist examples. Historically grounded yet universalist in alienation/sado masochist perspective. Fromm on biophilia and necrophilia and notion of social character (both universalist and particularist)

C. Erikson on the configurational (psychosocial) of *CHILDHOOD AND SOCIETY* and Erikson of “The Galilean Sayings” (Yale Review, 1981) on Eye and I and the Quaker inner light of God. Ghandi at Ahmedabad. Helpful in explaining both hatred and ways to bypass hatred.

D. H. Arendt. (1) *ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM* : Classes into masses, radical loss of self interest, the charismatic leader: hatreds have become deeply marked in modernized, militarized societies and mass exterminations always possible if people lack a sense of their own selves, self interests, and social location. (2) *EICHMANN IN*

JERUSALEM -- the banality of evil as worse than hatred because it is so commonplace in most of our everyday lives. Banality addresses everyday personal life and helps explain why bigoted hatred can be one moment and banality another – how we may shift back and forth and sometimes combine the two.

V. EPILOGUE : HATRED IN THE POST SEPTEMBER 11 WORLD

- A. Muslim Fundamentalism vs. Bush's "War against Terrorism" – a mutual dependency?
- B. Jews and Arabs in the Middle East
- C. Civil liberties vs. "public safety"