

Marxism's Other Jewish Questions

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That mainstream Marxism has a staggering track record of tolerating, excusing, and all too often itself propagating problematic attitudes toward Jews that gravitate toward, and in some cases themselves constitute, antisemitism is well known.¹ My intention in this chapter is not to reiterate this basic fact but to take stock of some of the implications of this insight and indicate some of the directions in which I would suggest scholars might look next in order to develop a deeper and more systematic understanding of why this might be the case.

I should begin with two clarifications. Firstly, there are, broadly speaking, two obvious motivations for focusing on the problematic attitudes specifically of Marxists or the left more generally. One might do so in order to discredit not only the historical track record of large parts of the left but the entire project of emancipatory politics as such, or one might do so precisely in order to recover and help reconstruct this project. If I spend a depressingly large part of my time engaged in the rather uncharitable and often unpalatable business of documenting and analyzing the shortcomings of those on the left, I do so as somebody who still thinks of himself as a Marxist (though, as with most Marxists today, my own particular brand of Marxism is unlikely to be acknowledged as such

¹ See Edmund Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1962); Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews* (London, Canada: Associated University Presses, 1982); Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and "the Jewish Question" after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Lars Fischer, *The Socialist Response to Antisemitism in Imperial Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Lars Fischer, "The Social Democratic Response to Antisemitism in Imperial Germany: The Case of the Handlungsgehilfen," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, LIV (2009), pp. 151–170.

by more than a handful of others). The need to know as precisely as possible what went wrong in the past is born not of a desire to disavow the left but to facilitate its meaningful reconstruction in a manner that might allow it not to repeat past mistakes and consequently to thrive on forms of (revolutionary) politics that truly are emancipatory.

Second, nothing in my research to date indicates that Marxists are prone to problematic attitudes toward Jews because they are Marxists. To be sure, Marxists have at various junctures developed variations of their own on well-established anti-Jewish tropes and their susceptibility to antisemitism can partly be explained in terms of ideological orientations and political conventions that are characteristic predominantly of a Marxist mind-set. Even so, there is no doubt in my mind that Marxists have subscribed to peculiar ideas about Jews not because they were Marxists, but because, to put it bluntly, they were bad Marxists, or not Marxist enough, not because of but despite their Marxism.

The question that underpins all my relevant research is fundamentally this: why did numerous Marxists with proven track records of recognizing other fetishes as fetishes fail to recognize that antisemitism is one, too, and a particularly pernicious one, at that? Why did their myth-busting abilities, frequently displayed to good effect elsewhere, falter in the face of antisemitism? Ultimately, I am more interested in the tragedy rather than the scandal that lies in the ineptitude that Marxists have more often than not displayed in their responses to antisemitism and to what they themselves have regularly acknowledged as a real existing Jewish Question.

To be very clear about this: by the standards widely accepted today, the number of Europeans prior to 1914 who were not antisemites is depressingly small indeed. Marxists were quite unexceptional in subscribing to peculiar ideas about Jews. They would have had good reasons not to do so, though, and yet did not see or take this opportunity. From a Marxist viewpoint the foibles of a bad Marxist are, of course, infinitely more irksome than the shortcomings of a non-Marxist.

One of the most startling findings of my research on German Socialists prior to 1914 was the extent to which they referred to, and indeed criticized, antisemites without actually being concerned with the antisemites' attitudes toward Jews. This may sound like a contradiction in terms. Surely it is their attitudes toward Jews that make them antisemites? How can one criticize them without taking issue with their attitudes toward Jews? Yet this seems odd only from our current perspective.

The period from the 1870s until 1945, roughly, was the age of self-avowed antisemitism. Self-avowed antisemites have become rather rare beasts; we generally suspect or accuse people of antisemitism, but they seldom identify themselves as such. Between 1870 and 1945, the label “antisemitic” was primarily used to denote a range of organizations (and the individuals within them) that readily and proudly professed their antisemitism. Yet these were not just one-issue enterprises. An antisemite, therefore, was not so much somebody who said nasty things about, or did nasty things to, Jews but somebody who belonged to the antisemitic camp; something was “antisemitic” not because it necessarily reflected or expressed a negative attitude toward Jews but because it was done or said by an antisemite. “Antisemitic lies,” to give an example, are not specifically lies about Jews but lies told by antisemites, no matter what they were lying about. The Social Democrats did indeed oppose organized political and especially party-political antisemitism, sometimes with considerable vigor; yet all too often this opposition took issue with a whole range of concerns, just not with the antisemites’ attitudes toward Jews.

A second startling insight concerned the widespread rejection of so-called philosemitism among Socialists. The pioneers of the antisemitic movement in the 1870s promptly denounced their opponents as “philosemites.” This was a smart and highly successful move as a result of which the entire subsequent discourse ultimately took place on the antisemites’ terms. This juxtaposition of antisemitism and philosemitism implied that one could only be either the Jews’ foe or their friend; only “friends” of the Jews could have a reason to oppose antisemitism. That one might not care much about the Jews one way or the other and still find antisemitism problematic was simply not considered a serious option. Philosemitism, then, was a dirty word, and it increasingly came to be seen as a counterproblem that needed to be opposed at least as vigorously as antisemitism itself.

As such, this is hardly news. Yet scholars have generally assumed that this rejection of “philosemitism” was principally a predilection of the more temperamental Francophone Socialists and that in the German party, which was, after all, the Second International’s model party, this sort of nonsense was believed only by one man, namely, the notorious Franz Mehring, who had duly been criticized for doing so. Yet this turns out to be wishful thinking. Indeed, my research began as a case study on Mehring, guided by Amos Funkenstein’s contention that “from the extreme case we may learn something about seemingly more reasonable

attempts in the same direction.”² Yet by the time I was finished, Mehring had gone from being an extreme case to being remarkably representative of his peers.

What much of the scholarship to date, including my own, has in common is that it focuses predominantly on those instances in which antisemitism, so-called philosemitism, or “the Jews” are explicitly the object of conversation. We have certainly moved beyond what I generally call “in/felicitious phrase hunting,” that is, the attempt to put various individuals neatly into the antisemitic or non-antisemitic pot on the basis of a handful of either critical or favorable remarks they made about Jews. Historians working in the field of Jewish/non-Jewish relations have become much more aware of the conflicted nature of many people’s attitudes toward Jews and the extent to which mutually contradictory ideas about Jews often existed within one and the same head. What we have not really begun to explore, though, is the question of how these attitudes tie in with deep-seated Marxist political and organizational assumptions and conventions, on the one hand, and a range of what I would call Other Jewish Questions, on the other.

To begin with the former, it is worth bearing in mind that Marxists rarely sat down and sought to formulate dispassionate analyses. Virtually all the statements on antisemitism at our disposal are direct interventions into political debates and controversies. As Donald Sassoon pointed out at my viva, logical consistency is rarely a prerequisite when it comes to political point scoring – quite the opposite. On the descriptive plane this is doubtless true. Yet German Socialists, in the very process of scoring points against the antisemites, ultimately did more to cement than question the fundamental assumptions underlying the antisemites’ case. This seems to me to be a potent warning against a particular style of politicking. This issue is obviously no preserve of the Marxists – but then what is the point of being a Marxist if one is going to be just as stupid or reckless as the non-Marxists? I defy anyone to name a single instance in which the attempt to oppose antisemites by claiming that they, the antisemites, themselves are in fact the “true Jews,” to take just one staple argument from the arsenal of this sort of crude anti-antisemitism, has done more good than harm.

Then there is that most wretched of notions that my enemy’s enemy is my friend (or, as a variation on this theme, that my enemy’s friend must

² Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 307.

be my enemy). Lest I be misunderstood, I hasten to add that I obviously am not suggesting that one will ever be able to do without the question of *cui bono?* in developing serious forms of Marxist politics. Yet neither do we have cause to believe that answering the question of *cui bono?* in as simplistic and shortsighted a manner as possible makes for good Marxist politics. Those who benefit in the short and the long term are not always the same; Marxists too are liable to the law of unintended consequences, etc. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of this problem is Rosa Luxemburg's stirring and heart-wrenching final editorial for the *Rote Fahne*, "Order Prevails in Berlin." In it she makes entirely the right argument and yet, as it turns out, was entirely wrong in her assessment of the consequences of the January uprising.

Put slightly more systematically, the more undialectical assumptions about one's friends and foes by association are surely not least a reflection of the perennial question of what Marxists should do when their political opponents and/or the powers that be, on specific issues, do the right thing for (inevitably) the wrong reasons. The Liberals base their defense of Jews against crude or violent antisemitism, to the extent that they mount such a defense, on assumptions about society that represent no less of a fetish than does antisemitism; the powers that be oppose antisemitism, if and when they do so, to enforce social cohesion and quell public disorder. In these instances, both the Liberals and the state are acting for the wrong reasons, yet, in pragmatic terms, they are doing the right thing. Are their actions nevertheless legitimate objects of critique? They most certainly are. Yet such criticism must surely remain proportionate to a concomitant critique of antisemitism, something that certainly cannot be said of the amount of emotive energy that so many, including the Socialists, invested in their critique of "philosemitism."

In the case of the Liberals, this problem was no doubt aggravated further by the fact that Marxists have to straddle the paradox that Liberalism was a subversive force in its origins but then went on to help secure a new form of class domination. Strictly speaking, it had gone on to play the only role that it objectively could play, given that, in the Marxist scheme of things, the working class was the first destined to replace the existing form of class domination not simply by another but by a form of sociation that would do equal justice to the interests of mankind as a whole and not just those of one class.

Historically, Liberalism's betrayal and/or limitations, depending on the perspective one took, played a crucial role in establishing the legitimacy of Socialist politics in the first place. Were it not for the failings of

Liberalism to keep its various initial promises, there would be no need for Socialism (placing Socialism and Liberalism in a relationship not dissimilar to the equally emotive one between Christianity and Judaism). Yet stressing that one's political opponents were ultimately not responsible for their actions because they were simply doing what they were objectively destined to do was only sometimes an effective means of attacking them politically; suggesting that they had betrayed their own legacy tended to work rather better. There is a certain parallel here, of course, to the decision of the Communist International around 1930 to declare Social Democracy a more serious threat than fascism, given that the legitimacy of Communism also depended heavily on the track record of Social Democracy's failings.

I would further contend that Marxism has tended toward an often deeply inhumane sense of triumphalism, for instance, in its dealings with its own political prisoners and victims of political repression. I do not doubt for a moment that many Marxists have felt, and probably were motivated by, a deep sense of what we might call the structural suffering of the oppressed classes by the capitalist order. But this was ultimately concern for the class in itself. In the realm of the class for itself, actual suffering, rather than heroic endurance, and the fact that repression can damage its victims, sometimes irrevocably, have generally tended to be taboos and in very many cases still are. Anyone familiar, for instance, with the tone of most of the activism in support of the prisoners from the Red Army Faction in Germany from the 1970s onward will surely be only too familiar with this problem.

This deep-seated pattern of perception and interpretation is hardly suited to sensitize Marxists to the very real effects of verbal rather than physical violence, especially when its victims do not have the right class profile; and it helps explain not least the triumphalist Marxist account of the National Socialist camp system, including the death camps, from which the Jews, at least qua Jews, have more or less disappeared simply because they will not conform conceptually to anything that is viable within the established Marxist mind-set.

Similarly, we might look at the way in which Marxists have dealt with the issue of exile. I have done a little bit of work on this in the imperial German context. Here the triumphalist and, we might say, ultracosmopolitanist account of exile was repeatedly undercut by a profound sense of alienation between those who were in Germany and those who were in exile. This sense of alienation, I would argue, has quite fundamental things to say about notions prevalent within the party as to what

constituted true belonging and what the consequences were of being torn from the one place where one genuinely belonged. These are issues that map in complex ways on to prevalent juxtapositions of Jew and non-Jew, and vice versa.

Insofar as the political–practical and the conceptual intersect when it comes to exile, this already places us squarely in Other Jewish Questions territory. This is a term coined by Jay Geller, who has been kind enough to suggest that I helped deliver this particular baby although we have since discovered that our understanding of this term partly differs. Geller's Other Jewish Question refers to the way in which those identified – whether by themselves or others – as Jewish negotiate what is generally called “The Jewish Question.”³ I take a slightly different approach here in that I refer to the so-called Jewish Question as the Non-Jewish Question. As the Weimar era publicist Moritz Heimann put it, “a ‘Jewish Question’ is only what a Jew stranded on the loneliest, most remote island still acknowledges as such.”⁴ My own emphasis in focusing on the Other Jewish Question is mainly on all those instances in which attitudes toward “the Jews” are implicitly expressed and woven into the deep structure of prevalent ideas and sets of ideas more generally.

A central question that merits close examination in this context is the extent to which Marxists may or may not have subscribed to the conceptual juxtaposition given its classic formulation by Ferdinand Tönnies as the contrast between community and society – community, to put it bluntly, being the sphere of authenticity and belonging where one's own sort feels warm and fuzzy, society being the sphere of artifice, abstraction, and alienation. I want to use the rest of this chapter to discuss this issue, since, to my mind, the significance of this juxtaposition can hardly be overrated.

I was initially alerted to the idea that there might be a worthwhile and significant line of inquiry here at an extremely important conference in Manchester in November 2008, organized by Marcel Stoetzler, Antisemitism and the Emergence of Sociological Theory.⁵ Modern antisemitism and the discipline of sociology were, of course, born roughly at the same time, and the discourses on which they drew and into which they sought

³ Jay Geller, *The Other Jewish Question* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

⁴ See Wolfgang Adam, “Bibliothek als Organismus,” *Magdeburger Wissenschaftsjournal*, 2 (2004), pp. 55–65, here p. 60.

⁵ See *Patterns of Prejudice*, XLIV, 2 (2010); Marcel Stoetzler, ed., *Antisemitism and the Constitution of Sociology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

to intervene were partly coextensive. The conference was a crucial stepping stone in the already mentioned shift from in/felicitous phrase hunting toward a much more subtle analysis of the – often rather ambivalent – ways in which notions regarding “the Jew(s)” are woven into the deep structure of (in this case, sociological) thought.

Acting as respondent for a panel at this conference, which included a paper by Robert Fine on the early Marx, whose infamous double essay “Zur Judenfrage” (1844) I had discussed at some length in my book, I was struck while listening to Fine’s paper by what seemed to me to be similarities between Marx’s juxtaposition of civil society and human species being, on the one hand, and Ferdinand Tönnies’s juxtaposition of community and society, on the other.⁶ Needless to say, Tönnies did not invent this paradigm but rather lent it its classic formulation, so there is no reason why the early Marx could not have subscribed to a similar distinction some four decades earlier.

Now, I would argue that if for some bizarre reason a decree went out that henceforth later modern historians may use only one conceptual paradigm to try to explain what made people tick in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, the community/society paradigm would be our best bet. Not, I hasten to add, because I subscribe to the paradigm myself but because it has been so widely accepted by others and reflects so many widely held assumptions absolutely fundamental to the mechanisms that have governed processes of inclusion and exclusion in later modern European history. Not least, many standard sociology textbooks to this day present the juxtaposition of community and society as a value-free fact ostensibly as unquestionable as the statement that the earth is round.

Let me summarize the gist of the argument by first quoting Tönnies himself and then indicating its implications with the help of a table compiled by Rick Tilman. Here, then, is Tönnies himself in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*:

The theory of the society construes a group of people who, as in the community, live peacefully alongside one another yet are in essence not united but separated from one another. While they remain united in the latter despite everything that separates them, in the former they remain separated from one another despite everything that unites them. Consequently, no actions transpire in the society that can be derived from an a priori and necessarily existing unity, and that therefore express the will and spirit of this unity despite being performed by the individual,

⁶ Robert Fine, “Rereading Marx on the ‘Jewish Question’: Marx as a Critic of Antisemitism?” in Stoetzler, ed., *Antisemitism and the Constitution of Sociology*, pp. 137–159.

and that are performed in the interest of those connected to the individual as much as in his own interest. Instead, everyone is on his own here and in a condition of tension with everybody else. The various spheres of activity and power are sharply demarcated so that everybody denies contact and admittance to others as though any such aspiration constituted a hostile act.⁷

This is a starkly typological and undialectical characterization, of course, that ultimately offers no transparent criteria as to why community ultimately remains community, even when substantial elements identified with the essence of society transpire within it, and why, conversely, society can never become community, even when various features associated with community can be found within it.

Now, lest you be confused, Tönnies insisted that this juxtaposition was an absolutely value-free one. "It has . . . repeatedly been suggested," he wrote,

that, though no reflection of the author's intentions, the usage of this pair of concepts (community and society) by his students is characterized by a clear juxtaposition of good and bad (society = bad, community = good). Here is my response: an evaluation or assessment of this kind is no more the concern of objective scholarship than it is of concern to the biologist if one bases on his description of a youthful, growing and blossoming organism, on the one hand, and an ageing and decaying one, on the other, a strong preference for the youthful one.⁸

I find it a little difficult to believe that this statement was not made cheek-in-tongue. In any case, though, whether intended as such or not, the problematic implications of this juxtaposition are surely evident enough. Rick Tilman has summarized the qualities associated with this juxtaposition very effectively⁹: kinship, neighborhood, and friendship in the community are contrasted to anonymity of relationships in society. Community is characterized by barter, society by monetary exchange.

⁷ Quoted in Rick Tilman, "Ferdinand Tönnies, Thorstein Veblen and Karl Marx: From Community to Society and Back?" *European Journal of Economic Thought*, XI, 4 (2004), pp. 579–606, here p. 586; translation substantially amended. Hereafter Tilman, "Ferdinand Tönnies."

⁸ Quoted in Sibylle Tönnies, "Gemeinschaft oder Gesellschaft – ein Werturteil?" in *Ankunft bei Tönnies*, ed. Lars Clausen and Franz Urban Pappi (Kiel: Mühlau, 1981), pp. 172–181, here p. 172.

⁹ Tilman, "Ferdinand Tönnies," p. 585: table 3 key concepts in social relationships in Ferdinand Tönnies. I am quoting the contents of Tilman's table more or less word for word but have refrained from the use of inverted commas since the paragraph would otherwise become impenetrably busy.

Custom, tradition, inertia, and habit in the community are contrasted to contract, innovation, progress, and novelty in society. Customary law reigns supreme in the community, legislative law in society. Man is a social animal in the community, whereas society is characterized by atomistic individualism. Community is governed by value absolutism and the unity of ends and means, whereas value relativism and the separation of ends and means characterize society. Land and the means of production are owned communally in the community but privately in society, and power of labor in the community is replaced by the power of machines in society. Where idealism and transcendentalism hold sway in the community, materialism and nominalism are the features of society. Common altruism, mutual understanding, and solidarity are the principles underpinning the community, while the pursuit of individual self interest, the rational calculation of personal gain, egoism, narcissism, the will to power, and insensitivity to common needs and the public interest are the hallmarks of society. Sentiment, the unity of mind and heart, and conscience, finally, characterize the community, as opposed to interest, calculation, and consciousness in society.

I would have thought that it is pretty clear where, from the perspective of the non-Jewish majority, the Jews fit into this scheme of things. If Jews have a rightful claim to integration it exists in the sphere of society rather than community. Nor does it take a lot of guessing how secure the Jews' status is likely to be if community turns on society as its alienated alter ego. Indeed, as anyone who has read the likes of Sombart will realize, over time the very fact that their status in modern European society is predicated on the laws not of community but of society becomes an indictment in its own right: Jews' attempts to create new composite identities in order to integrate into the majority society are identified not only as a danger to the majority community but also as a betrayal of the Jews' own community. The Jewish community may be a rather wretched one, but sticking with it nevertheless beats betraying one's community, evidently the worst sin of all, and instead relying on the (false) promise(s) of society. The odds, then, are that where someone stands on the community/society paradigm will almost inevitably have an impact on his or her approach to matters (supposedly) Jewish (and/or vice versa).

Needless to say, I am by no means the first person to have picked up on similarities between the young Marx's ideas about civil society and human species being, on the one hand, and the community/society paradigm, on the other. Eugene Kamenka, for instance, stated in 1965 that

the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, in part consciously influenced by Marx, strikingly developed Marx's contrast between the commercial, divisive society of capitalism and the unalienated society of communism into a sociological category, the contrast between the commercial, divisive *Gesellschaft* and the organic fellowship of the *Gemeinschaft*.¹⁰

Kamenka went on to comment that “even in the formulation of a critical program” this approach raised “problems that must be faced squarely. The work of Tönnies, in elaborating the concept of *Gemeinschaft*, runs together the brotherhood of a working team of equals and the paternalism of a feudal community in which everyone knows and accepts his place.” Moreover, “a great part of the heritage of democratic socialism, and of the socialist concept of freedom, rests on the ‘open’ society created by capitalist development: the *Gesellschaft* that freed men from the bonds of religious and feudal authority.”¹¹

In Tönnies's own mind there was certainly no doubt that this affinity existed. In his preface to the first edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, he generously acknowledged his main sources of inspiration. “It is by no means my intention,” he wrote, “to conceal the fact that my discussion has benefited profoundly from the various stimulating, instructive, and corroborating impulses it received from three distinguished authors, each of whose work differs considerably from that of the other two.” Turning specifically to the economic underpinning of his argument, he expressed his appreciation for the man who was, to his mind, “the most remarkable and profound social philosopher” in this field: Karl Marx. “The insight,” he then elaborated,

that I for my part formulate as follows: that the natural underlying constitution of civilization that is lost (to us) is communistic while its contemporary and evolving counterpart is socialistic, this notion, I would suggest, is not alien to genuine historians where they understand themselves most acutely, yet only the discoverer of the capitalist mode of production [i.e. Marx] could reveal it and formulate it with clarity.¹²

¹⁰ Eugene Kamenka, “Marxian Humanism and the Crisis in Socialist Ethics,” in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Erich Fromm (New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 107–117, here p. 113.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.

¹² Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag (R. Reisland), 1887), pp. xxviii–xxix. Niall Bond, one of the scholars currently on the most intimate footing with Tönnies, suggests that this made Tönnies one of “the earliest academics to make Marx unapologetically citeable as a source in established academia.” Niall Bond, *Understanding Ferdinand Tönnies' 'Community and Society'* (Münster: Lit, 2013), pp. 255–256.

This is neither the only occasion on which Tönnies acknowledged Marx's influence nor just any old bit of Marx that caught Tönnies's imagination. As Stanley Moore points out, in Tönnies's *Marx: Leben und Lehre* (1921) it was specifically "the comparison Marx draws between feudalism and capitalism in *On the Jewish Question*" that Tönnies "connects with his own comparison between community and society."¹³ Fritz Pappenheim, too, notes that in the Marx book Tönnies "does not hesitate to acknowledge the agreement between his theory of *Gesellschaft* and the description of the relationship between individual and society which Marx presents in his famous essays on the Jewish question."¹⁴

In Tönnies's defense it should be said that in these instances cited by Moore and Pappenheim, Tönnies's point of reference was the first part of "Zur Judenfrage." He expressly cited the "deep, thought-provoking statement" with which "the first essay 'On the Jewish Question' closes," characterizing the essay as "a thorough criticism of the egoism of civil society." As is well known, the first part of "Zur Judenfrage" is largely inoffensive as far as matters (supposedly) Jewish go, and it is indeed a key text that makes an indispensable contribution to the evolution of social theory – one I regularly give my students to read, not because of its relevance to Jewish/non-Jewish relations but because of its ingenuity in identifying core distinctions between modern and premodern society. That said, it is worth noting in passing that Tönnies also suggested in his discussion of the first part of "Zur Judenfrage" that it is characterized by "brilliant antitheses" that "still pleased the young writer," that is, the young Marx, and "mark the peculiar sharpness of his Jewish mentality."¹⁵

Yet while Tönnies's engagement of "Zur Judenfrage" may start with the first part, it does not end there. One of Tönnies's core disagreements with Marx concerned the relative significance of the spheres of production and circulation. For Marx the sphere of production was decisive, not least because the sphere of circulation only facilitated the distribution of surplus value already extracted from labor rather than that process of extraction itself that, for Marx, lay at the heart of capitalism. Tönnies placed much greater emphasis on the sphere of circulation, by which he

¹³ Stanley Moore, *Marx versus Markets* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. 11.

¹⁴ Fritz Pappenheim, *The Alienation of Modern Man* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959), p. 78. Hereafter Pappenheim, *Alienation*.

¹⁵ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Karl Marx: His Life and Teachings* (n.p.: Michigan State University Press, 1974), p. 14.

meant primarily trade (rather than something as abstract and thus sinister as the stock exchange). For Tönnies, “the essence of capitalism – if we may correct Marx’s presentation – is the essence of trade.” As he saw it, “Marx must admit that capital profit does not alone and foremost originate in the sphere of production but also, and earlier, in the sphere of circulation. He reconciles himself with this fact, which does not fit into his system, by mentioning it only vaguely.”¹⁶

Now, just as Marx’s serious interest in the Jews effectively evaporated once he had identified the sphere of production as the heart piece of capitalism, Tönnies’s fixation on the sphere of circulation drew him to the obnoxious second part of “Zur Judenfrage.” Then again, insofar as he considered the primacy of the sphere of circulation not a transitory stage toward, but the very essence of, modern capitalism, he needed what he considered the crucial emphases in the second part of “Zur Judenfrage” to originate not with Marx with his Jewish–Hegelian predilections, but with Engels – the man who could play a crucial role in the procreation of Marxism because he carried with him news of the real world, where capitalism had already firmly taken hold.

Tönnies cited Engels’s contribution to the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, his “Outline of a Critique of National Economics,” quoting its first sentence: “National economics is a natural outgrowth of the expansion of trade, and it replaced the simple unscientific huckster [*Schacher*] with an elaborate system of permissible fraud and a complete science of self-enrichment or profit making.” Rather remarkably, for Tönnies the emphasis here lay precisely on that which, according to Engels, has been superseded. “The word huckster [*Schacher*],” Tönnies explained, “was a favourite expression of the young merchant [i.e. Engels]. As it often happens, his rebellion against society originated in a rebellion against his own family, against his strict father. He used every opportunity to manifest his dislike of the huckster [*Schacher*].” And here, for Tönnies, lay the connection to the second part of “Zur Judenfrage.” He continued: “And now it is remarkable that this Jewish–German word reappears in the second essay by Marx entitled ‘On the Jewish Question’ . . . I believe that this view developed under the immediate impression of Engels’ manuscripts, perhaps also from the letters accompanying and following the manuscripts.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 150–151. ¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 18–19.

Now, the fact that Tönnies felt an affinity between him and Marx regarding the community/society paradigm does not necessarily mean he was right, of course. Perhaps the best-known Marxian proof text in this context is from the correspondence between Marx and his coeditor Arnold Ruge published in the first and only issue of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, in which Marx's "Zur Judenfrage" also appeared. "One would first have to arouse again the human sense of self and freedom in the hearts of these people," Marx wrote here. "Only this feeling," he continued, "which vanished from the world with the Greeks, and under Christianity disappeared into the blue mist of the heavens, can again transform society into a community of human beings united for their highest aims, into a democratic state."¹⁸ This is obviously a striking passage. Yet it is no forgone conclusion that Marx intended the same conceptual implications as Tönnies when he juxtaposed community and society in this way. "Is Marx's contrast between community and society," Stanley Moore rightly asked in *Marx versus Markets* (1993), "connected by anything more than verbal coincidence with the contrast elaborated by Tönnies forty years later?"¹⁹

The modern scholar who perhaps made the most far-reaching claims about the affinity between Marx and Tönnies regarding the community/society paradigm was Fritz Pappenheim. Pappenheim (1902–1964) was a refugee from Nazi Germany who emigrated to the United States in 1941 and taught at the historically black Talladega College in Alabama from 1945 until 1952, when he was denied tenure for his "anticapitalist" views. He went on to write a classic work on alienation in which he states unambiguously that "there is indeed a considerable affinity between Marx's theory of capitalist economy and Tönnies' concept of *Gesellschaft*."²⁰

Yet Pappenheim's claim was far from uncontroversial, not least because Marx referred rather more frequently to *Gemeinwesen* than to *Gemeinschaft*. These are obviously not unrelated terms/concepts, but even so, does this not make it even more likely that we really are looking at a mere "verbal coincidence" here? Kenneth Megill, for one, certainly thought so.²¹ Mary Mahowald, responding to Megill, set out "to offer an interpretive clarification . . . differing from both Tönnies' and Megill's."

¹⁸ MEW 1: 338–339. ¹⁹ Moore, *Marx versus Markets*, p. 11.

²⁰ Pappenheim, *Alienation*, p. 77.

²¹ Kenneth A. Megill, "The Community in Marx's Philosophy," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXX, 3 (1970), pp. 382–393.

She argued that Marx used the (frequently occurring) term *Gemeinwesen* when making descriptive statements about real existing communities and the (rather less frequently occurring) term *Gemeinschaft* when making normative statements about what communities should be.²² Alongside the already cited passage from the 1843 correspondence with Ruge, Mahowald's core proof text for this line of argument was an extremely well known passage from the *Deutsche Ideologie*:

Only in the community [with others has each] individual the means of comprehensively fulfilling his potential; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible. In the previous substitutes for the community, in the state, etc. personal freedom existed only for the individuals who developed on the ruling class's terms, and only insofar as they were individuals of this class. The ostensible community in which individuals have hitherto united always took on a life of its own, independently of them. At the same time it represented the unification of one class against another. Hence, for the subordinated class this community was not only illusory but in fact a new fetter. In the real community the individuals in and through their association obtain their freedom.²³

So far, so good. Yet one only needs to continue reading the very same paragraph to see Mahowald's seemingly ingenious argument instantly fall apart. The text continues as follows:

It follows from the entire development so far that the communal [*gemeinschaftliche*] relationship that individuals of one class entered into and that was conditioned by their communal [*gemeinschaftlichen*] interests *vis-à-vis* a third party was only ever a community [*Gemeinschaft*] to which these individuals belonged as types of individuals, insofar as they lived according to the existential conditions of their class; a relationship of which they partook not as individuals but as members of a class.²⁴

The paragraph concludes by reiterating that individuals can attain their freedom only in a "genuine community," which clearly presupposes that community need not be "genuine."

I would like to return to Pappenheim for a moment. He does something I would suggest is rather typical. On his account, "Marx described these trends toward social atomization especially, though not exclusively, in his early writings – *On the Jewish Question* [etc.]."²⁵ He then goes on to ask, "What are the forces that shape this real existence of modern man?" and begins his answer by pointing out that "Marx

²² Mary B. Mahowald, "Marx's 'Gemeinschaft': Another Interpretation," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXXIII, 4 (1973), pp. 472–488, here p. 472, 481.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 482; *MEW* 3: 74. ²⁴ *MEW* 3: 74. ²⁵ Pappenheim, *Alienation*, p. 81

describes the existence of contemporary man as largely shaped by the rise and dominant influence of commodity exchange.”²⁶ He then proceeds to explain that “both *Capital* and *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* open with chapters which are entitled ‘Commodities.’”²⁷ In other words, he cites “Zur Judenfrage” and other early writings when stressing the affinities between Marx and Tönnies (and Marx’s attendant sensitivity to issues of alienation, etc.), but when it comes to explaining the actual substance of what Marx supposedly meant by all this, Pappenheim automatically relies on the notion of commodification as developed much later.

Similarly, David Leopold suggests a strong continuity between notions of atomization and alienation in “Zur Judenfrage” and the concept of fetishism that begins to emerge in texts that were written admittedly not much later but that nevertheless arguably belong to a distinct new phase in Marx’s work. In the context of “Zur Judenfrage” Leopold suggests that “in an adumbration of his later concept of fetishism . . . Marx describes the individual in civil society as becoming increasingly powerless, increasingly the ‘plaything of alien powers.’”²⁸ Focusing on the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of the summer of 1844, Leopold summarizes Marx’s stance as follows: “In the modern social world, Marx claims, the product of the worker’s labour confronts him ‘as an alien object that has power over him’. This represents an early invocation of the idea of fetishism,” he suggests, and then reiterates that this is a phenomenon “already treated in the early writings as a distinguishing feature of the modern social world.”²⁹

A rather more plausible reading, I would suggest, is that the Marx of the summer of 1844 was beginning to discern the outlines of the idea of fetishism while the Marx of “Zur Judenfrage” had done no such thing. What by the summer of 1844 was beginning to become a process in which labor and commodities were mediated in a complex way and matters were not what they seemed was in “Zur Judenfrage” still a straightforward process that was exactly what it seemed: “in civil society . . . [man] acts as a private individual, regards other men as a means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers.”

²⁶ Ibid., p. 84. ²⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁸ David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 137.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 230.

I strongly suspect that the community/society paradigm resonated strongly with many Marxists who in this respect as in various others found the pre-Marxist Marx much more amenable than the Marxist one and/or misunderstood Marx's actual intentions. How dramatically this was the case in the later appropriation of "Zur Judenfrage," for example, I have demonstrated in detail in my book.

My interest in the community/society paradigm is also motivated by a second major concern, namely, the need for a fundamental reexamination of the nexus between modern antisemitism and racism. The intimate connection between modern antisemitism and racialized thinking has long been considered a truism. Yet along with other scholars working in this field, I have become increasingly perplexed by the considerable overlap between forms of anti-Jewish stereotyping that are intimately connected with racialized thought and those that clearly are not in any genuinely substantive manner predicated on such thought.

If prevalent antisemitic notions could but did not need to be based on racialized conceptions, then what exactly is the significance of racism for modern antisemitism? What this might suggest is that what we really need to identify is a more fundamental set of notions regarding belonging and exclusion that underlay both racialized thought and antisemitism. The community/society paradigm seems a rather obvious first place to look for such an overarching set of notions.

The short discussion here has, I hope, demonstrated the potential of a close reexamination of notions of belonging and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion predicated on the community/society paradigm as a promising line of inquiry likely to render new insights into the functioning of antisemitism and racism as well as the nexus between them. I would suggest that it also offers an indication of the extent to which a thorough understanding of the ways in which assumptions about "the Jews" are woven into the deep structure of social and political thought can tell us a great deal not only about the dynamics governing relations between Jews and non-Jews but also about that social and political thought more generally.

