

POST-COLONIAL ANTI-SEMITISM?

MICHA BRUMLIK

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BDS MOVEMENT AND OTHER CONTROVERSIES



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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

On 25 May 2020, George Floyd, an African American man, was brutally murdered by an American police officer in Minnesota. The officer knelt on Floyd's neck for almost ten minutes, while Floyd lay face down on the street, leading to his death by suffocation. The outrage over Floyd's murder gave new momentum to Black Lives Matter, attracting worldwide attention for the movement. Victims of everyday police brutality spoke out, while friends and relatives took to the streets in protest. This not only led to renewed condemnation of everyday racism, but the racial profiling that it causes was also denounced, and the powers that be in the police force, judicial system and state administration faced heavy criticism for their persistent failure to act and/or for turning a blind eye.

Indeed, this crime also served to shine a spotlight on the postcolonial movement, on the activists from the "decolonize the city" movement and similar organisations, as well as other progressive actors, on the history and background of racism and the continuing effects of these inhumane structures and attitudes. Spectacular campaigns such as the toppling of monuments dedicated to "colonial heroes" or those involved in the slave trade attracted massive public attention in the UK, Belgium, the US, Germany and many other countries around the world. A connection was highlighted between racism today and inadequate or non-existent attempts to confront the legacy of colonialism and the slave trade. The monument to the white colonial officer and surveyor who is alleged to be the "founder" of Windhoek in Namibia was as much a target of the Black Lives Matter campaign as the renaming of streets and squares in Berlin and scores of other cities around the world.

The postcolonial movement, which joins forces with many antiracism initiatives on a day-to-day basis, has long called for the truth to be told and for a critical examination across all areas. This includes returning the cultural artefacts that were stolen by the erstwhile colonial rulers, establishing historical justice and providing material compensation for the colonial atrocities such as those committed in Namibia and the Congo, as well as creating more awareness for the postcolonial consequences of European policy in Africa. What remains contested is the extent to which the conflict in Israel/Palestine can be classified as a final example of settler colonialism.

Of course, the Black Lives Matter campaign is not without its tribulations either, as evidenced by some of the individual statements made in support of the movement. One example is a comment made by British actress Maxine Peake, a supporter of former Leader of the British Labour Party Jeremy

Corbyn, during an interview with *The Independent* newspaper in 2020,¹ in which she claimed that Israel was partly responsible for the brutality of the American police. Peake was later compelled to retract the allegation.

Here, the question of whether Israeli security forces, government or private, are actually teaching repressive measures outside their own country and the occupied territories is neither here nor there; as it happens, Maxine Peake's allegation was proven to be inaccurate.²

The more important issue is why people like Maxine Peake, staunch anti-racists who, for whatever reason, always seem to be on the left of political spectrum, from the word "go", or not far into their arguments, end up placing the blame on Israel. The USA's long and sad history of police brutality and institutional racism, a history that goes back way further than the founding of Israel in 1948, has certainly never needed any help from Israel. The State of Israel and British Jews are no more to blame for the long history of British colonialism and its repercussions, which are still felt today, than they are for the continued existence of racism in the UK.

Why is it that certain individuals on the political left are always so quick to one-sidedly point the finger at Israel when it comes to international problems of injustice or oppression? It is one thing to show solidarity towards the Palestinians, who do in fact suffer under Israel's system of oppression, but this can by no means serve as justification for believing that Israel is to blame for everything or to behave indifferently towards Jews confronted with far-from-latent antisemitism.

The consequences of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories have been a contentious topic in Germany for decades now. Over the last few years, the debate has become increasingly intense and unforgiving. One of the reasons behind this is the BDS campaign,³ which has called for a

1 <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/maxine-peake-interview-labour-corbyn-keir-starmer-black-lives-matter-a9583206.html>. "Systemic racism is a global issue", she adds. "The tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd's neck, that was learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services."

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jun/25/long-baileys-sacking-sparks-renewed-focus-on-us-and-israeli-police-links>

2 See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jun/25/long-baileys-sacking-sparks-renewed-focus-on-us-and-israeli-police-links>

3 BDS, which stands for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions, is a campaign founded in 2005 that sought to weaken Israel's position by non-violent means. For a more detailed account of the BDS movement, see Chapter 2 of this publication.

boycott against Israel. At the same time — at least in some parts of the world, including Germany — a rise in antisemitism has been observed or rather antisemitism is being manifested in more overt and brutal ways. One example of this was the Halle synagogue shooting on 9 October 2019, where, by fortunate coincidence, the attacker was stopped from entering the synagogue, thus preventing a mass murder, although he then killed two passers-by.

There are victims of antisemitic violence in neighbouring countries, too, for instance the terrorist attack in Toulouse in March 2012, the mass shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 April 2014, the siege of a Jewish supermarket on 9 January 2015 and the murder of Sarah Halimi on 4 April 2017 in Paris.

With the May 2019 German Bundestag resolution condemning the entire BDS campaign as antisemitic, the debate has once again become more heated. Cameroonian scholar and philosopher Achille Mbembe, a lecturer in Johannesburg, has been addressing this set of issues from an African, postcolonial perspective for some time and has repeatedly raised the issue in international public discourse. Several of Mbembe's critics have zeroed in on the support for the BDS campaign he is accused of. However, this focus, indeed at times even fixation on the BDS among advocates and opponents alike is perhaps not the most important point in these debates.

Against this background, in summer 2021, the German professor of education Micha Brumlik published a book entitled *Postkolonialer Antisemitismus? Achille Mbembe, die palästinensische BDS-Bewegung und andere Aufreger* ("Postcolonial Antisemitism? Achille Mbembe, the Palestinian BDS Movement and Other Controversies"), in which he addresses some of these discussions in a well-informed, in-depth and highly nuanced manner. In his book, Micha Brumlik achieves something that many heated debates fail to do, comparing, in the most positive sense of the word, the Holocaust and other genocides, for instance; but he does so in as systematic and objective a manner as is possible when dealing with such a horrifying subject, thus transcending the all too frequently confessional undertones of these debates.

To this day, and with good reason, the mass murder of around six million European Jews continues to shape left-wing views in Germany. As a left-wing institution in Germany, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation cannot and indeed does not want to be guided by exclusively German or European perspectives on the issue. Instead, the RLS sees itself as an organisation

that operates on an equal footing with its partners around the world, exchanging knowledge, experiences and information.

However, much as the RLS is mindful of the perspectives of left-leaning progressive actors from other continents and regions around the world and seeks to communicate these views through its work in Germany and Europe, there are still certain German and European experiences that have to be taken into account and communicated if partnership on an “equal footing” is a genuine objective. Murderous antisemitism, its causes, consequences and reasoning, are a quintessentially, albeit not exclusively, German experience. The resulting perspective is not necessarily one RLS partners from other regions share, but they should at least acknowledge it. Even today, antisemitism is a very real, ever-increasing problem. As a result, the RLS not only has the responsibility to oppose antisemitism everywhere, but may also insist that we take a more nuanced and sensitive view on everyone living in Israel and Palestine, as well as when it comes to the related developments, policies and discourses.

Through its international offices, the RLS works in many different regions around the world with a whole range of initiatives, movements, organisations and institutions, including those centred on issues of antidiscrimination, politics of memory and the related historical and current responsibility that Germany bears, particularly as regards the country’s colonial history and its relationship with Israel/Palestine. It was for this reason that we decided to commission the English translation of some of the most important chapters of Micha Brumlik’s book. As 2022 began to unfold, events only served to reaffirm this decision.

On 1 February 2022, the human rights organisation Amnesty International published a report entitled “Israel’s Apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime against Humanity”. Referring to international law, the report classifies the Israeli government’s policy towards Palestinians as Apartheid. What is more, and this sparked particularly strong criticism, the report makes this assertion not only with regard to the occupied territories but also mainland Israel. Notwithstanding Israel itself, the accusation sparked a particularly passionate, at times heated debate in Germany about the legitimacy of equating Israel’s policy with South Africa’s racist regime (up until 1994) — despite the fact that many Jewish or Israeli scholars themselves consider such an accusation legitimate, based on UN conventions. On the other hand, the question as to whether Amnesty is applying double standards has been raised, not least by the current head

of the RLS Israel office and former member of Amnesty International staff, Markus Bickel: “Admittedly, the accusation that Amnesty is applying double standards with regard to Israel is underscored by the organisation’s social media campaign, which, even for weeks after the report was released, continued to post the slogan ‘End Israel’s Apartheid’ in capital letters on Twitter, for example — and received praise from the wrong quarters.”⁴

On 22 February 2022, shortly before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Kenya’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Martin Kimani, held a quite remarkable and widely acclaimed speech before the UN Security Council in which he underlined the crucial importance of the inviolability of borders. Referring to eastern Ukraine and the revision of existing national borders enforced by the military, he described the situation at the end of the colonial era in Africa:

At independence, had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic, racial, or religious homogeneity, we would still be waging bloody wars these many decades later. Instead, we agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited, but we would still pursue continental political, economic, and legal integration. Rather than form nations that looked ever backwards into history with a dangerous nostalgia, we chose to look forward to a greatness none of our many nations and peoples had ever known. We chose to follow the rules of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations charter, not because our borders satisfied us, but because we wanted something greater, forged in peace.⁵

The war against Ukraine — a country in which both Jews and non-Jews, as citizens of the former USSR, were impacted by the mass murder and extreme exploitation at the hands of Nazi Germany more than any other nation, with the exception of the then-Soviet Belarus and Poland — also reminds us that both antisemitism and anti-Slavic racism were widespread in Europe at the time.⁶ Another incident that springs to mind in this context is the controversy surrounding statements made by black US actress Whoopi Goldberg in early 2022, who argued that antisemitism and

4 <https://www.inkota.de/news/beifall-von-der-falschen-seite> <https://www.inkota.de/news/beifall-von-der-falschen-seite>

5 <https://taz.de/UN-Rede-zu-Russland-Ukraine-Konflikt/!5833849>/See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FNj2LUeN5g>

6 See, for example, <https://geschichtedergewalt.ch/rassismus-gegen-weisse-fuer-eine-os-terweiterung-der-deutschen-rassismusbefragung/>

the Holocaust should not be seen as racism, as the atrocities were committed between whites: “Let’s be truthful, the Holocaust isn’t about race, it’s not. It’s about man’s inhumanity to man, that’s what it’s about. These are two groups of white people.”⁷

Goldberg subsequently apologised for her comments. However, her words point to a more fundamental question: Is the focus on racism towards blacks in the context of antisemitism, anti-Slavic racism or even the Armenian genocide in 1915/1916 fitting and indeed sufficient when it comes to describing systematic discrimination on the grounds of cultural/religious, ethnic or national affiliation and classifying it both historically and politically? Should we not, in this context, be having a debate along the lines of the “singularity of the Holocaust”?

One of the partners of the RLS, the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, headed by Tali Nates, has for years sought to establish links between the depiction of and lessons learned from the Holocaust and other genocides, specifically the 1994 genocide in Rwanda — and in doing so demonstrated both conviction and a high degree of sensitivity to the subject matter.⁸ Indeed, in 2022, Tali Nates received the Goethe Medal for special services to international cultural exchange for her work.⁹

In June 2022, a piece of artwork exhibited at the recently opened *documenta fifteen* incited public outcry and heated debate. Already at the official opening, the German President had expressed his concerns with regard to how artists from Israel might have been treated by the curators. Even before the opening of the widely acclaimed art exhibition, the Indonesian curators collective *ruangrupa* had faced critical questions: Does the *ruangrupa* sympathise with the BDS movement? Should the decision not to invite Israeli artists, yet include those from Palestine, not in itself be seen as an expression, at the very least, of the anti-Israel stance of the curators collective?

ruangrupa, which, being a collective from an Islamic country, already saw themselves as being under special scrutiny, rejected such claims. Not

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/feb/02/whoopi-goldberg-suspended-from-the-view-after-saying-holocaust-isnt-about-race>; see also: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/02/whoopi-goldberg-holocaust-americans-research>

8 <https://www.jhbholocaust.co.za/>, see also: https://www.selma-stern-zentrum.de/news/2022_06_16_Selma-Stern-Lecture.html

9 <https://www.goethe.de/de/uun/prs/p21/22957161.html>

long after the opening, however, the collective had to remove a piece from the exhibition — a large-format picture that used flagrant antisemitic imagery. The fact that the picture had not sparked any kind of debate when it was part of an Australian exhibition a few years earlier, on the one hand, demonstrates the singularity of the German situation, in which there is and indeed has to be a high level of sensitivity around this issue; on the other hand, it may also point to a surprising indifference among the Australian public at that time.

For some of the artists exhibiting their work in *documenta*, who are primarily from the Global South, their take on this situation leaves no room for doubt. This was censorship, an example of neo-colonialism, a sign of just how unwilling the affluent Western world is to critically reflect on perspectives from the Global South. Conversely, we could also ask ourselves whether the term “Global South” in fact suggests a greatly overstated unanimity of interests and positions across very different regions, countries and societies — as a homogenous entity which claims to speak for this part of the world in its entirety. On the other hand, we must also ask ourselves whether the antisemitism expressed by the aforementioned exhibit piece is in fact less problematic if it stems from the perspective of a different region.

Micha Brumlik could never have predicted those three incidents when, just a year earlier, he finished the manuscript for his book. However, they clearly show once again that the debate around “postcolonial antisemitism (?)” continues unabated, and an informed, nuanced and sensitive approach is much needed: Can Israel really be called an Apartheid country because of its treatment of the Palestinians? Should Israel’s right to exist not be recognised fundamentally and unconditionally — is this not the minimum requirement for Realpolitik, for a peaceful future? Is Kenya’s Kimani not absolutely right to refer to postcolonial Africa, even if his original intention was to call for peace to be preserved in Ukraine? Does the broad-brush condemnation of the BDS or of a highly critical view of the actions of the Israeli government not simply lead to an increased lack of dialogue and communication?

Our hope with this book was to contribute to the debate and do our part to counter the absence of dialogue. When translating the book, we chose not to include the original Preface (“A Second Debate among Historians?”) or Chapter 3 of the German edition (“The Jewish Museum in Berlin and its Exhibition ‘Welcome to Jerusalem’”) in the English version. These two chapters discuss predominantly German contexts, and as such, would, we believe, have contributed little to the international discourse on the subject.

The author himself wrote a new postscript on the discussion surrounding the Amnesty International report. Some of the chapters translated into English are also slightly abridged compared to the original German version.

In the chapter that follows, Micha Brumlik examines the history of the origins of the BDS movement and its impact to date, concentrating particularly on how the campaign is handled in Germany. The focus is on the background and implementation of the Bundestag resolution of May 2019, which classified the entire BDS campaign as antisemitic — something Brumlik, with good reason, rejects. In particular, he points out that the political demands made by the BDS are all covered by UN resolutions and that the organisation expresses an explicit commitment to non-violent forms of resistance.

In Chapter 3, which provides a detailed description of the various positions of Achille Mbembe, Brumlik concentrates less on the issue of possible support for the BDS and more on the disproportionality Mbembe and other harsh critics of Israel create, when for example in 2015, Mbembe characterises Israel's occupation of Palestine as the "biggest moral scandal of our times, one of the most dehumanizing ordeals of the century we have just entered, and the biggest act of cowardice of the last half-century."

Here, while Mbembe may not be comparing the situation in Israel and the occupied territories with National Socialism explicitly, his description nonetheless remains massively overstated for the period from 2000 to 2015 or 1965 to 2015, if we think of the millions of people killed, displaced or fleeing in Syria, of the victims of the wars and violence in Iraq since 1980 or Afghanistan since 1979. We could also cite other social and political disasters caused by genocide, wars of aggression and civil wars and by extreme dictatorships such as the ones in Rwanda, Cambodia, Sudan, Congo or Yemen.

However, it must be made clear — and this is something Brumlik explicitly underscores — that as a postcolonial scholar, Mbembe "examines the systematic foundations of universalist, Western thought — starting with the question of whether and if so how this universalism brought about racism in both theory and practice."

In an open letter expressing solidarity with Achille Mbembe in May 2020, Micha Brumlik and other scholars emphasised that "history as a scientific discipline cannot do without analytical comparisons. Without comparative analysis, it would be fundamentally impossible to gain knowledge in historical studies, as in most other academic disciplines. To accuse our

colleagues of trivializing the Shoah or even equating the genocide of European Jews with the racist regime of Apartheid South Africa calls into question a fundamental basis of science, and is therefore wrong. Historical comparisons which serve to highlight differences and similarities between events, discourses, and processes, are necessary and legitimate.”¹⁰

In an excursus at the end of Chapter 4, on the term *genocide* and its significance and meaning in historical science, the author picks up this thread again, specifically to ensure that other crimes against humanity in connection with mass exterminations, such as in Armenia (1915/16), Cambodia (1975-79), Rwanda (1994) and Namibia (1904-07) are each assigned and maintain an important role in research, the politics of memory and public remembrance.

For the RLS, informative and progressive politics of memory and remembrance work in particular are fundamental to its focus on peace and emancipation and an inherent part of the struggle for democracy and against any form of discrimination and exploitation. As such, this important discourse is crucial, and it is in the context surrounding the painful and difficult question of comparing, not equating, the Holocaust with other genocides and crimes against humanity, that one of the major strengths of Micha Brumlik’s book can be identified.

In order to avoid “hierarchies of crimes” or “competitive victimhood” in academic, social and political analysis, it is vital that these events not be set up in opposition to one another. With his concept of *multidirectional memory*, which Brumlik discusses in his Epilogue, Michael Rothberg creates a possible framework for analysis that ensures, for instance, that the suffering the Jews endured due to their persecution and threat of extermination under the Nazi dictatorship as well as the resulting ever-stronger desire for a Jewish state are not weighed against the suffering of hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians, who were pushed aside for the State of Israel to be founded.

Of course, this presents a significant challenge for political practice, which cannot be overcome without mutual understanding of the displacement suffered, the injustice experienced and the consequences of this. Something similar applies to the abandonment of “colonial amnesia”, the achievement of mutual understanding in the postcolonial con-

10 www.rosalux.de/en/postcolonial_debate

text. Charlotte Wiedemann also makes a thought-provoking contribution to these debates with her recent book *Den Schmerz der Anderen begreifen. Holocaust und Weltgedächtnis* ("Understanding the Pain of Others: Holocaust and World Memory").

Neither the AI report nor the BDS campaign were the first to place the aforementioned discussion around the classification of Israel as an Apartheid state and/or as a settler colony on the agenda. In Chapter 5, "Zionism and Postcolonial Critique", Brumlik provides a detailed account of Zionism's various strands of argumentation, the myths and interpretations of history behind them, and, ultimately, also the founding of the State of Israel. Drawing on postcolonial critique, he once again highlights the contradictory nature of the situation: On the one hand, there is the occupation of a territory inhabited by Palestinians; on the other, the founding of a Jewish nation-state in the face of persecution and displacement. To this end, to sum up, the author quotes Israeli historians Alon Confino and Amos Goldberg: "It does, however, make Zionism's duality clear: it is both a national movement designed to provide a sovereign haven for Jews fleeing anti-semitism, and where Holocaust survivors could rebuild their lives; *and* it is a settler-colonial project that has created a hierarchical relationship between Jews and Palestinians based on segregation and discrimination."

In this respect, we see this partial translation of Micha Brumlik's book *Postkolonialer Antisemitismus?* as facilitating dialogue and communication, a process that can be painful for both sides. A vital part of having the capacity for dialogue would be to acknowledge and accept that contradictions and quandaries exist and have to be dealt with. At the peak of the Black Lives Matter protests in summer 2020, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (Labour) was quoted as having said the following:

Pressed on Sky News about where to draw the line, given Winston Churchill held some racist views, Khan said the cases of Churchill, Gandhi and Malcolm X showed that many great historical figures were not perfect and history should be taught "warts and all". But there were clear-cut figures such as those actively involved in the slave trade and ownership who should not be celebrated, the mayor said.¹¹

11 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/09/sadiq-khan-orders-review-of-all-london-statues-for-slavery-links>

This is one of the main goals of the RLS, along with support for initiatives that seek to tackle tensions rooted in events of the past, contradictions and experiences of injustice, both in Israel/Palestine and elsewhere in the world, the goal being to put an end to violence as a means of conflict resolution and focus on the development of constructive prospects for the future instead. With this in mind, we hope this publication will be put to productive use.

We would like to extend our thanks to the author Micha Brumlik, not only for writing an extremely informative and helpful book, but also for his willingness to support the RLS in publishing an English translation. We would also like to thank VSA: Verlag, especially Gerd Siebecke, who granted us the rights to that English translation.

And last but not least, a huge thank you goes to Carla Welch for her excellent translation.

Siegfried Schröder and Florian Weis
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

CHAPTER 2
**THE BDS MOVEMENT
AND THE STORY
BEHIND IT**

The BDS movement claims to have begun when a coalition of 170 Palestinian civil society groups followed a call to “people of conscience” around the world on 9 July 2005 — the first anniversary of the Advisory Opinion given by the International Court of Justice that found Israel’s construction of a wall in Palestinian territory of the West Bank to be illegal. When exactly the movement was founded, however, remains up for debate. There is a general consensus that it was a reaction to the Second Intifada, also known as the “Al-Aqsa Intifada”, which began on 28 September 2000, after the failure of the Oslo Accords at Camp David. All in all, the uprising lasted five years, until Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas agreed on a ceasefire at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in 2005.

This led the State of Israel to construct a barrier in the West Bank (on this, see Schäuble 2008), the issue that was one of the catalysts for the establishment of the BDS movement. At this stage, the BDS involved the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), parts of the Muslim Brotherhood in the US, and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. The BDS National Committee was formally established at the first BDS conference in Ramallah in November 2007. Referring to a number of UN resolutions, the committee used the semantics of the campaign against the former South African white minority rule, which underlines the conjecture that the BDS actually originated at the UN Conference against Racism in 2001.¹²

One of the founding members of the BDS movement was Israeli citizen Omar Barghouti. Born to Palestinian parents in Qatar in 1964, Barghouti spent his early years in Egypt before moving to the US in 1982, where he spent 11 years and completed an MA in Electronics at Columbia University. In 1993 he moved to Israel, where he married and received a second MA in Ethics at the University of Tel Aviv — which led to a petition being launched to remove him from the university, a petition that, while containing the signatures of 184,000 Israelis, was ultimately unsuccessful. In 2016, the Israeli government refused to extend Barghouti’s permit to travel freely — he was living in Ramallah by that point — on the grounds that he was campaigning against Israel. Barghouti sent an e-mail to the left-wing daily paper *Haaretz* that is known for its liberal stance and criticism of the government, drawing attention to this matter: “Refusing to renew my travel document now is therefore clearly political,” he said in

12 The following English Wikipedia entry, which can, as an exception, be referred to here, contains a whole host of references of this kind: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boycott_Disinvestment_and_Sanctions

his e-mail. "It does not just deny me my freedom of movement. It is seen by legal experts as a first step toward revoking my permanent residency, a clearly political and vindictive measure that has no legal basis."¹³

In 2017, he finally relocated to the US, where he received the Gandhi Peace Award at Yale University, only to be imprisoned for tax evasion on his return to Israel. Barghouti, a man who strongly advocates non-violent protest, opposes both a Palestinian nation-state and a two-state solution, calling instead for a single secular state for both Jews and Palestinians. One of the things that makes him and the position he takes appear antisemitic, however, is his likening of the State of Israel to the system of apartheid in South Africa, something that Mbembe did, too: "Characterising Israel's legalised system of discrimination as apartheid — as was done by Tutu, Jimmy Carter and even a former Israeli attorney general — does not equate Israel with South Africa. No two oppressive regimes are identical. Rather, it asserts that Israel's bestowal of rights and privileges according to ethnic and religious criteria fits the UN-adopted definition of apartheid."¹⁴

Barghouti's comparison of Israeli policies and practices against Palestinians with the Nazis' treatment of the Jews came under particularly strong fire: "Many of the methods of collective and individual 'punishment' meted out to Palestinian civilians at the hands of young, racist, often sadistic and ever impervious Israeli soldiers at the hundreds of checkpoints littering the occupied Palestinian territories are reminiscent of common Nazi practices against the Jews."¹⁵

But it was not only at US American universities that this movement found quite the following. In fact, years later, support also manifested itself in Germany, in the form of an admittedly rather small group who made the following statement on 20 June 2015, four years prior to the anti-BDS resolution passed by the German parliament: "Israel's apartheid and colonial policies must be stopped through boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) | Join the BDS movement, a global, non-violent intervention.

13 J. Khoury and The Associated Press [10.5.2016]: "Israel Bars BDS Founder Omar Barghouti From Travel Abroad: www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-bars-bds-founder-from-travel-abroad-1.5381908

14 O. Barghouti, *Besieging Israel's siege*, in: *The Guardian* [12.8.2010]. London

15 O. Barghouti, "The Pianist" Of Palestine, on: Zmag/Countercurrents.org [30.11.2004]; www.countercurrents.org/pa-barghouti301104.htm

This call goes out to German civil society, especially local religious communities, trade unions, professional bodies, and trade associations, as well as any groups or individuals who feel it is their duty to protect peace and human rights. In the same vein, we also support the call from Palestinian civil society in 2005 to join the international, non-violent BDS movement (<http://bds-kampagne.de>), which seeks, through boycott, divestment (by withdrawing investments), and sanctions, to press Israel to end its settler colonial policies towards Palestinians. The movement has three main demands:

1. Ending occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands and dismantling the wall
2. Recognising the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality
3. Respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties or, for those not wishing to return, that compensation be paid for loss of or damage to property (as stipulated in UN Resolution 194)

The measures taken by the Israeli government violate international law to the detriment of Palestinians, who suffer under the government's apartheid policies both in Israel and in Palestine's occupied territories."¹⁶

In what was an unprecedented act in the history of the German parliament, the Bundestag passed a resolution condemning this political stance, the organisations advocating this position and, in particular, the Palestinian-led movement the BDS itself. So, what is this resolution and how and why did it come about?

16 bds-kampagne.de/aufruf/deutschlandweiter-bds-aufruf/ The call ends with the following words: "It is our conviction that German civil society should follow the example of other European and non-European countries and become more involved in the global BDS movement. Germany maintains a privileged economic, military and scientific relationship with Israel and justifies this on the basis of its special historical responsibility. However, as long as Israel abuses this partnership to violate human rights and international law against Palestinians, Germany is complicit in these crimes. For us, a responsible approach to confronting our past means opposing a partnership which has no respect for the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. For us, this is the definitive conclusion to be drawn from German history. This commitment is further reinforced through the BDS, movement that was initiated by Palestinians and is promoted worldwide, as well as through the dedication of Jewish groups in Israel and abroad. We, the undersigned, call for more groups and individuals in German civil society to join the international BDS movement."

Motion by the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and Alliance 90/The Greens. Resolutely opposing the BDS movement: A clear signal against antisemitism. I. The German Bundestag hereby resolves: That it is unreservedly committed to its promise to condemn and combat antisemitism in all its forms and strongly supports the decision taken by the parliamentary groups of the CDU, CSU, SPD, FDP and the Greens to resolutely fight antisemitism on 17 January 2018.”

Referencing the “Working definition of the International Alliance for Holocaust Remembrance”¹⁷, the German parliament goes on to explain as follows:

For years the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has been calling for Germany and the wider international community to boycott Israel, Israeli goods and services, Israeli artists, academics, scientists, and athletes. This radical, universal call to boycott Israel brands Israeli citizens of the Jewish faith as a whole. This is unacceptable and must be unequivocally condemned. The motives and methodology of the BDS are antisemitic and the calls for a boycott against Israeli artists as well as “Do not buy this product” stickers on Israeli merchandise are reminiscent of the worst chapter of German history. These “Do not buy” stickers on Israeli products which are part of the BDS movement have inevitable associations with the Nazi slogan “Do not buy from Jews!” and similarly worded graffiti on buildings and shop windows. The German Bundestag condemns any and all antisemitic statements and verbal attacks ostensibly intended as criticism of

17 “According to the definition of the International Alliance for Holocaust memorials,” says the parliamentary resolution, “antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. Furthermore, the state of Israel, being perceived as a Jewish collective, may be the target of such attacks. There is no legitimate justification for antisemitic thinking. The crucial, absolutely necessary NO to hatred to Jews, regardless of their nationality, is part of Germany’s *raison d’état*. Antisemitism and its murderous consequences has proven to be the worst form of group-related misanthropy in the history of our country and in Europe as a whole and remains a threat today both for people of Jewish faith and for our fundamental liberal democratic order. The past few years have seen antisemitism grow and the Jewish community increasingly unsettled — and this cannot be tolerated. Those who seek to vilify other human beings on the basis of their Jewish identity, seek to restrict their freedom of movement, question the right to establish a Jewish and democratic state of Israel or Israel’s right to national defence, will meet with our firm resistance. It is Germany’s historical responsibility for Israel’s security. It is part of Germany’s *raison d’état*. We stand by a two-country solution, as underlined in multiple UN Security Council resolutions: a Jewish democratic state of Israel and a sovereign, democratic, and viable Palestinian state.”

the policies of the State of Israel but which are, in fact, an expression of hatred towards the Jewish people and their religion, and we shall resolutely oppose them.

II. The German Bundestag welcomes the fact that numerous communities have already chosen not to support the BDS movement or any groups pursuing the goals of the BDS campaign either financially or by way of providing access to local premises.

III. The German Bundestag resolves the following:

1. To reject every form of antisemitism and to resolutely oppose the BDS movement and its call for a boycott of Israeli goods or businesses and of Israeli scientists, artists, and athletes;
2. To call on the Federal Government to prohibit the use of premises and facilities under the administration of the Bundestag to be used by any organisations that express antisemitic views or question Israel's right to exist. This includes any events that are part of the BDS movement or any groups actively supporting or pursuing the goals of the BDS;
3. To support the Federal Government and the Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany in the fight against antisemitism as well as with preventative action against all forms of antisemitism and extremism;
4. To provide no financial support to any organisation that does not accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state;
5. To provide no financial support to any project that calls for a boycott on Israel or that actively support the BDS movement;
6. To urge countries, cities, and municipalities, as well as all public stakeholders to commit to this position.

Berlin, 15 May 2019

Ralph Brinkhaus and Alexander Dobrindt and the CDU/CSU parliamentary group; Andrea Nahles and the SPD parliamentary group, headed by Christian Lindner and the FDP parliamentary group; Katrin Göring-Eckardt and Dr. Anton Hofreiter and the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group"¹⁸

This motion was passed by a roll-call vote of 495 in favour to 62 against and 431 abstentions.

¹⁸ German Bundestag, Printed paper 19/10191 19th electoral term

So how did the resolution come about? What is certainly the case is that Felix Klein, a German career diplomat who was appointed Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight Against Antisemitism in 2018, played a key role from the very start.¹⁹ Klein, in conformity with the relevant offices of the Israeli government, was an early advocator of the fight against the BDS, provided “events can be reconstructed retrospectively”. On 29 November 2018, Klein was already discussing “strategies against the BDS” in Frankfurt with Tzahi Gavrieli, an employee of the Ministry for Strategic Affairs, which carries out covert security and intelligence operations. During this meeting, Felix Klein said that he would like to be of some use to the Israeli government by making “counter attacks” on the BDS (*Jüdische Stimme für einen gerechten Frieden in Nahost* (European Jews for a Just Peace, Germany) 7.7.2019). Klein also made contact with Gilad Erdan. However, Erdan, the long-standing right-hand man of Sharon and Netanyahu, had been an outspoken opponent of any two-state solution since the 1990s. At the same time, he was Israel’s US and UN ambassador and back in 2015, in his role as Minister for Strategic Affairs, had declared any criticism of Israeli settler policies a strategic threat for Israel, naming the BDS as the spearhead of global efforts against Israel (cf. Jerusalem Post, 25.5.2015). The campaign orchestrated by Erdan on the international stage sought to discredit and intimidate any and all critics of the Israeli government policy on the grounds of them being antisemitic (cf. Asseburg 2019).

In early 2019, Felix Klein was able to keep his public promise to the Israeli government representative in Frankfurt. The liberal FDP had planned to file a motion for a ban on support for the BDS movement in the Bundestag, inviting representatives from all the parliamentary groups to participate in the debate, which it had entrusted to Wertelinitiative, a Jewish NGO that seeks to promote peaceful coexistence. Felix Klein took the floor at the debate, urging for the BDS movement to be condemned as antisemitic. And while their mission to combat antisemitism by means of civil society initiatives is noteworthy, Wertelinitiative is clearly guilty of double standards — the initiative seeks to ban, close, or criminally prosecute mosques and Muslim associations that “do not unconditionally support democracy and human rights”. Incidentally, in an open letter written in March to Stefanie Carp, the artistic director of the annual music and arts festival *Ruhr Festspiele*, Lorenz Deutsch, cultural policy spokesper-

19 I would like to thank Hajo Funke for his valuable comments here; for more on this, also see part 1 — “Antisemitismus? Ein Beitrag zur Sache” (Antisemitism? A contribution to the issue) — of his new book (Funke 2021: 15ff.).

son for the *FDP* state parliamentary group in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, had called for Mbembe's invitation to deliver the keynote address at the opening of the festival to be revoked owing to his alleged antisemitism.

In March of the same year, after the Wertelinitiative briefing and Felix Klein's speech, the *FDP* parliamentary group initiated an anti-BDS resolution; this was followed by a motion submitted by the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (*AfD*) parliamentary group calling for a total ban of the BDS movement in Germany. Knowing that both of these parliamentary groups would publicly promote their motions, the parliamentary groups of the parties that made up the grand coalition government (the conservative *CDU/CSU* and social democrat *SPD*) submitted a less forceful motion, asking the parliamentary groups of the *FDP* and the Greens to back that proposal. As a matter of principle, *CDU/CSU* did not seek support for their proposal from the parliamentary group of the new-left party *Die Linke*; it goes without saying that the *AfD* was not asked to back the proposal. While *Die Linke* submitted their own proposal, the Greens were more divided, with 28 members of the parliamentary party voting for the government proposal, 19 in favour of the Greens' own proposal, and six abstaining during the relevant parliamentary group sessions. Those in favour of the proposal of the Greens argued that the State of Israel should not be allowed to define the debate, referring in addition to a local resolution by Munich City Council that strongly restricted free speech by banning the use of the city's public facilities for debate on the BDS. They argued that it was impossible to discuss the BDS without mentioning the Israeli government's annexation plans for the West Bank, which were already beginning to come to light at the time.

As Muriel Asseburg from the renowned German Institute for International and Security Affairs (*SWP*) has ascertained, the goals pursued by the BDS are in fact sanctioned under international law: "Although all three goals of the BDS movement are rooted in international law (including, in particular, UN General Assembly Resolution 194, UN Security Council Resolution 242, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Fourth Geneva Convention), they are also increasingly classified as antisemitic, i.e. illegal." (Asseburg 2020: 290)

After the vote, Barbara Unmüßig, Chair of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which is affiliated with the Greens, explained why, in her opinion, the Bundestag resolution went too far:

Most civil society groups in Palestine signed the BDS call in 2005. And many did so also because they wished to prevent a third Intifada. Instead of forcibly opposing the Israeli occupation, they have opted for peaceful and non-violent resistance. This includes women's groups we are working with in the fight for gender equality, Bedouins we are supporting in their struggle for access to water, and youth groups who we are trying to encourage to think critically. We are engaging with all these groups to confront the issue of the illegal Israeli occupation — but of course we also deal with the human rights violations by the Palestinian Authority. ... We are concerned that this condemns all our Palestinian partners, who are now being labelled antisemites. The Bundestag resolution strengthens right-wing Israeli lobby groups who will do anything to make life difficult for us. If at the end of the day this reduces the scope for dialogue with civil society groups in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, the Bundestag has done us a disservice here. Unfortunately, it would appear that some members of parliament did not consider for a moment the impact this resolution would have in the Middle East. (Unmüßig 2019; own translation)

What is interesting to see, however, is which of the key politicians of the grand coalition, both male and female, abstained in the vote or distanced themselves from the resolution afterwards, e.g. CDU foreign affairs chief Norbert Röttgen. More to the point, in the same month, more than 240 Jewish and Israeli academics wrote an open letter urging the German parliament and the German public to take heed of this resolution. The publication of a link to the letter in a tweet on the Jewish Museum of Berlin's official Twitter account ultimately led to the resignation of the museum director Peter Schäfer. The open letter contained the following words:

A call to German parties not to equate the BDS with antisemitism.

May 2019

We, Jewish and Israeli scholars, many of whom research Jewish history and anti-Semitism, express concern about the rise in anti-Semitism around the world, including in Germany. We view all forms of racism and bigotry as a threat that must be fought and encourage the German government and parliament to do so. At the same time, we wish to sound alarm about a parallel trend: the growing tendency of labeling supporters of Palestinian human rights as anti-Semitic. This trend is now escalating in Germany. ... But BDS as such is not anti-Semitic. We therefore defend the right of any individual or organization to support

it. ... We also call on all German parties not to exclude NGOs that endorse BDS from German funding. As also confirmed by the European Union, statements and actions in the context of BDS are protected by freedom of expression and freedom of association, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.²⁰

The debate took on new momentum within academic circles when, some time later, a number of — once again and in particular — Jewish and Israeli academics took a stand against the call to bar philosopher and scholar of postcolonialism Achille Mbembe from giving the opening speech at the *Ruhrtriennale* festival, even calling for the resignation of antisemitism commissioner Felix Klein, who had supported the request to uninvite Mbembe. Others — journalist Harry Nutt for example — opposed the notion of responding to one demand for someone to step down by calling for another person's resignation.²¹

In any case, speaking on the radio channel *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* on 21 April 2020, Felix Klein said:

In his writings, he (Mbembe) refers multiple times to Israel as a project, the Israeli project to be exact. Israel is a state that is recognised under international law; it has also survived many wars, wars which, had they been lost, would have threatened the very existence of the country. It is important to choose one's words carefully here. And this is the least we can expect from a philosopher from Africa who, in writing an academic text, has more than enough space and opportunity to express himself clearly. It is a good thing that we are having this debate about what criticism of the actions of the State of Israel is acceptable and when that criticism oversteps the mark, the point at which it becomes antisemitic. According to the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, such criticism becomes antisemitic when Israel is delegitimised, when it is demonised or if double standards are applied to any judgement of the actions of the Israeli government in comparison to the actions of other countries. For me, this definition is authoritative, and if I apply these criteria to Mr Mbembe's writings, I come to the following conclusion: There is a serious

20 "A Call to German Parties Not to Equate BDS with Antisemitism", May 2019, available at: de.scribd.com/document/410142758/Statement-by-Jewish-and-Israeli-Scholar

21 "Es ist wenig sinnvoll, den Kasus Mbembe durch einen Kasus Klein zu ersetzen" (Replacing the Mbembe affair with a Klein affair makes no sense), *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 9/10 May 2020, 35

lack of clarity here where in fact very clear lines should be drawn, as this is the only way to see what is permissible and where statements become problematic.²²

One of the most notable reactions came from Israeli sociologist Eva Illouz, who commented in the *ZEIT* newspaper on 7 May 2020: “The double standards are alarming,” she said, and went on to criticise how Felix Klein had dealt with the situation, saying it was “detrimental” to the fight against antisemitism. Commenting on the issue itself, her words were loud and clear:

The BDS movement wants to see an end to Israeli occupation and the right of return for Palestinians — more than half the Israelis want occupation to end, albeit without the right of return ... it goes without saying that I cannot support the right to return, but the demand in itself is not antisemitic. It is legitimate, just as it is legitimate to oppose it. I am sure that there are antisemites among the BDS. But you will find antisemites among social democrats, too. Illouz and other critics of Klein were in turn themselves attacked by Alan Posener, commentator for *DIE WELT*, on his blog *starke-meinungen.de*. Posener’s polemic (Posener 2020) was directed in particular at the chief correspondent of *Deutschlandfunk* Stefan Detjen, who had criticised Klein in no uncertain terms. On the other side of the coin, it was the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) that then spoke out against Mbembe, with the paper’s features editor Jürgen Kaube writing that Mbembe had falsely denied any affiliation with the BDS movement, reproaching him in particular — and rightly so — for declaring that “the occupation of Palestine is the greatest moral scandal of our time”. (Kaube 2020b).

But this was not the first statement of this kind by the FAZ features editor, who had made serious allegations about Mbembe in the past, saying that the latter had referred to the “occupation of Palestinian territories” as an “entirely unilateral use of force”, while completely disregarding the attacks on Israel by Arab states. Kaube went on to say that he found the Israeli violence far more dramatic than the violent acts of the Boers in South Africa under apartheid. “This, according to Mbembe, seems to do no less than assert that Israel’s policy towards Palestine should be understood

22 Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 21 April 2020: The matter of Achille Mbembe. Serious accusations and controversy over a number of text passages. René Aguigah in a discussion with Felix Klein and Andrea Gerke.

from the perspective of the Holocaust and indeed Old Testament sources” (Kaube 2020a, own translation). But even more balanced voices such as that of political scientist Claus Leggewie, for instance, accused Mbembe of having incited unfortunate, in fact catastrophic competitive victimhood (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15.5.2020). In the foreword to *Apartheid Israel*, a collection of essays published in 2015, Mbembe had indeed written: “The occupation of Palestine is the biggest moral scandal of our times, one of the most dehumanizing ordeals of the century we have just entered, and the biggest act of cowardice of the last half-century.”²³

This statement, while being very much disputable, does in fact explain what Mbembe means by “our times”, i.e. the period from 2000 to 2015 or the period from 1965 to 2015 — which does not include Nazi Germany, although it could imply his disregard of the genocides in Rwanda in 1994 (see Harding 1998) or the death and destruction that Khmer Rouge inflicted on their own people in Cambodia (see Kiernan 1996), which were far worse than the actions of Israel’s occupation regime in the West Bank both in terms of quantity and magnitude — to mention but a few of the better known examples. Frankfurt-based peace researcher Gert Krell argued along similar lines: In a revised version of a previously published essay, Krell stops short of accusing him of antisemitism and in fact defends him against Felix Klein, although he does criticise Mbembe very harshly, stating that it takes some degree of goodwill to be able to say that Mbembe has not yet crossed the line to the demonisation of Israel. This is particularly so if you consider the fact that he essentially does not single out Israel but in fact criticises it just as harshly and relentlessly as he does all other Western democracies. Of course, Mbembe does make comments about Israel that depict its actions as particularly evil — bearing in mind Mbembe does have a tendency to speak in superlatives. However, while Israel’s occupation can be called a huge scandal, it cannot be referred to in terms of the cruellest acts of torture of the century — a century that has barely begun — or the greatest act of cowardice in the last half century. There are a number of more fitting candidates here, such as the aforementioned genocide in Rwanda, the Iran–Iraq war, the Gulf War, the ongoing civil war in Syria with the involvement of Russia and Iran, the Chinese re-education camps that targeted the Uyghurs, or the jihadist Islamic State.²⁴

23 Mbembe, “Foreword”, in: Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (eds.), *Apartheid Israel – The Politics of an Analogy*, Chicago: Haymarket Books (2015), 8

24 This is the line of argument that Krell took in a revised, as yet unpublished version of the text (Krell 2021). First published in: Benz (ed.) 2020: 299–320.

In any case, on 12 May Mbembe responded to the accusations made against him in a sermon-like “Letter to the Germans” (*taz*, 12.5.2020: 11), unleashing, especially in the *taz* paper, a fierce debate about the problems inherent in postcolonial critique — Charlotte Wiedemann, for example, calls for a shift away from the Eurocentric view of historical events (*taz*, 13.5.2020: 12), while Ingo Elbe sees postcolonial studies as part of the problem — emphasising that, after all, “the huge number of prominent scholars in the field [of postcolonial studies], from Edward Said ... to Etienne Balibar, don’t seem to have any real problems coming up with theoretical definitions and political analyses of antisemitism, the Holocaust, and Israel” (*taz*, 14.5.2020: 15).

In a more recent introduction to postcolonial theory, which is essentially also an introduction to the work of key theoreticians, “postcolonialism” is defined as “a form of resistance to colonial rule and its consequences” which seeks to expose the fault lines and contradictions in decolonisation processes (Mar Castro Varela/Dhawan 2015: 16). In line with this is a sociological extension of the approach which explores the potential of postcolonial critique as a political project at the same time (Ha 2010: 259–280). In actual fact, the biggest majority of postcolonial theoreticians, not least at US American universities, believe that the establishment of the state of Israel was only possible under colonial conditions.

I would like to continue with my attempt to provide an overview of what “postcolonial” theory actually means and analyse the coherence of what are clearly very different theoretical approaches, especially with a view to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For me, truly manifest antisemitism — and I will permit myself this early observation before moving on to my overview — can only be found in the work of one theoretician, lecturer and researcher at Rutgers University, Jasbir Puar, who accuses the state of Israel, in light of its relative tolerance towards same-sex relationships, of “homonationalism” — i.e. ultimately the reactionary use of progressive thinking for the purpose of undermining traditional Muslim societies (Puar 2007).

In the political centre of Germany, Berlin, it was after all Kirsten Kappert-Gonther, the member of the Greens serving on the Bundestag Committee on Foreign Affairs, that noted that the merits of postcolonial discourse are not diminished provided the following is borne in mind: “Critical analysis of the colonial legacy as well as overcoming coloniality do not have to take recourse to Israel. The recurring polemic attempts to delegitimise or demonise Israel as a ‘settler colony’ or ‘racist apartheid

state' are historically inaccurate and must be vehemently opposed. The State of Israel was established in 1948 as a homeland for an ethnic and religious group which had endured systematic repression and persecution in Europe over centuries — during the Holocaust even wholesale destruction. The Jewish people had inhabited Palestine for a long time; 'Eretz Israel' (Land of Israel) is the ancient homeland of the Jews, from which they were driven time and again. There has never been an Arab state in Palestine. By equating the two, actually existing settler colonies of colonial powers are relativised, for instance those created in Namibia ('German South-West Africa') and South Africa that sought to suppress and exploit the people there" (*taz*, 9.6.2020: 12, own translation).

In 2018 and 2019, the discussion surrounding Israel or rather Israel-related antisemitism had evidently become the focus of public debate on Germany's political culture — a debate that is clearly being conducted on a confusing number of fronts, a fact that was seen in the dispute over the Jerusalem exhibition in the Jewish Museum of Berlin.

CHAPTER 3
**ACHILLE MBEMBE,
THE ATTACKS ON HIM
AND HIS WORK**

But what is all the to-do about Achille Mbembe, the philosopher accused of sympathising with the BDS, and his stance on the Palestine question, his philosophy, as well as postcolonial theory and its position on Zionism in general? More importantly, who is this African philosopher against whom unprecedented accusations of antisemitism have been made?

Achille Mbembe, born in Malambe, Cameroon in 1957, is Professor for Social and Economic Research at the University of Witwaterstrand in South Africa. Originally born into the Bassa tribe, he had a Dominican Catholic upbringing. In 1978, on finishing boarding school, he took up studies in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, during which time he became actively involved in the Christian youth organisation *Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne* and their publication *Au Large* — whose activism motivated a series of strikes, which went on until 1982, in protest against the regime of then President Ahmadou Ahidjo and his successor Paul Biya. Mbembe was also involved in a literacy campaign for the rural population in the north of Cameroon.

His studies ultimately took him to France where he completed a PhD in history at the University of Sorbonne in Paris in 1989 and a DEA in political science at the *Institut d'études politiques*, also in Paris. After brief stints as Assistant Professor of History at Columbia University, New York from 1989 to 1991 and Senior Research Fellow at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C. in 1991/92, he held a position as Associate Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania until 1996, during which time he also had spells as a visiting professor at Yale and Berkeley. Mbembe then went on to become Executive Director of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal.

Well renowned for his work and activities, he received a host of different awards and accolades, especially in Germany. In 2015, for instance, he won the German literary award *Geschwister-Scholl-Preis* for his book *Critique of Black Reason* (published in English in 2017). In 2017, he joined the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, winning the *Ernst-Bloch-Preis* in Ludwigshafen in 2018. In the same year, he received the esteemed Gerda Henkel Prize for history of the humanities. This successful run of accolades culminated in the Albertus Magnus Professorship at Cologne University in 2019 followed by an invitation to hold the opening speech at the 2020 Ruhrtriennale festival of the arts.

At that point, three of his works originally published in French had been

translated into German by the renowned publishing house Suhrkamp Verlag: the *Critique of Black Reason* in 2014, the *Out of the Dark Night. Essays on Decolonization* in 2016, and *Necropolitics* in 2017. How can this author possibly be accused of Israel-related antisemitism?

Felix Klein, Federal Government Antisemitism Commissioner, who played a key role in pushing the BDS resolution through German parliament, was and continues to be certain that he is. "Of course", said Klein in an interview in the *ZEIT*,

I have immersed myself in his work, and came across his essay *The Society of Enmity*, for example. There, you can find all the features of Israel-focused anti-Semitism: Israel is demonized, a double standard is established, and the legitimacy of the country as a whole is called into question. In 2015, Mr. Mbembe wrote a foreword for the book *Apartheid Israel*, in which he argued that Israel is worse than the apartheid regime of South Africa. Revenues from the book went to a BDS group. For me, the matter is unfortunately clear-cut. And I am surprised that there are readers of this composition who apparently ignore that.²⁵ (*Die ZEIT*, no. 22, 20.5.2020)

Klein's response shows that he has not actually read the text — but more on this later. For now, let us discuss other accusations, e.g. that Mbembe had a hand in an Israeli academic being uninvited from a conference, and furthermore that he has close ties with the BDS, has even donated money to this organisation, and that he made antisemitic statements in his book *Necropolitics*. The Israeli scientist that he was said to have been involved in getting uninvited is Shifra Saguy, who was doing research in Göttingen at the time. In May 2020 in response to the question from the *WELT* why she, an Israeli national, had been uninvited from a conference about the Middle East conflict at Mbembe's behest, Saguy replied as follows:

In 2018 I was invited to Stellenbosch along with my students and colleagues — Germans Israelis, and Palestinians. There was a great deal of fuss about our taking part, including letters of protest. The organiser was afraid that the conference would be overshadowed by protests and demonstrations. She didn't uninvite us per se, but our panel just disappeared from the conference programme. We were told it would

25 *Die ZEIT*, no. 22, 20.5.2020; available at https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2020-05/felix-klein-holocaust-achille-mbembe-protests-english?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

be better to present somewhere else. It was evident that we were not wanted there so we decided not to go. It was very frustrating and I was very angry. (*Die WELT*, 14 May 2020, own translation)

As far as I can see, this is not sufficient evidence of Mbembe's active involvement in Saguy's conference invite having been retracted. As to the accusation that his book *Necropolitics* was antisemitic, the statement in question reads as follows: "In fact, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories can be seen to serve as a laboratory for a number of techniques of control, surveillance and separation, which today are being increasingly implemented in other places on the planet. These range from the regular sealing off of entire areas to limitations on the number of Palestinians who can enter Israel and the occupied territories, from the regular imposition of curfews within Palestinian enclaves and controls on movement to the objective imprisonment of entire towns."²⁶

To support these assertions, Mbembe cites Israeli authors — and only Israeli authors (!) — in the footnotes for the statement. In this case, Eyal Weizman and his book *Hollow Land. Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, as well as an essay by Amira Hass entitled "Israel's Closure Policy. An Ineffective Strategy of Containment and Oppression" in the *Journal of Palestinian Studies* (31, no. 3 (2002): 5–20). To further substantiate his claims, passages from *Necropolitics* are cited that state that such measures "in some respects are reminiscent of the infamous model of apartheid with its huge reservoirs of cheap labour, the Bantustans". Mbembe goes on to say that such measures "are worse than the measures applied by the South African apartheid regime from 1948 to 1980, which are primitive by comparison". He goes on to say that all of this is evidence of a "fanatical policy of destruction aimed at transforming the life of Palestinians into a heap of ruins or a pile of garbage destined for cleansing. In South Africa, the mounds of ruins never did reach such a scale." (Mbembe 2017a: 86)

To back up what are undoubtedly serious accusations, Mbembe cites yet another Israeli author, Ariella Azoulay, and her book *Civil Imagination. A Political Ontology of Photography*, published in New York in 2015. At that time, Azoulay, born in Tel Aviv in 1962, was Professor of Modern Culture and Media at the Department of Comparative Literature at Brown University, beginning her academic teaching career in 1999 at

26 <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/the-society-of-enmity>

the religious Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv. Against this background, Mbembe stresses time and again — and this was something he was criticised particularly strongly for — that in the African apartheid regime “the dialectic of proximity, distance and control could never reach the paroxysmic levels seen in Palestine”. (ibid.) Moreover, in the context of world history, Mbembe considers the African apartheid regime and the Holocaust of European Jews in Germany in one and the same light: “The apartheid system in South Africa and the destruction of Jews in Europe — the latter, though, in an extreme fashion and within a quite different setting — constituted two emblematic manifestations of this fantasy of separation.” (ibid.: 89)

Given, however, that elsewhere Mbembe declares the Israeli occupation regime in the West Bank to be worse than apartheid, the question does indeed arise as to whether, in saying so, he is not also expressing the view that the Israeli regime is a manifestation of a fantasy of separation akin to that pursued by the Nazis, in doing so saying that the motives behind the Israeli occupation policy and national socialist, destructive racism fuelled policy are tantamount to one and the same thing. And if this were the case — would this not be a clear case of Israel-related antisemitism?

To understand Mbembe’s supposition, it is necessary to engage with the postcolonial perspective, which is a whole different kettle of fish. But before we do so, let us first examine what has been said — and not only by Felix Klein — to be a BDS-affiliated collection of essays: *Apartheid Israel. The Politics of an Analogy* (Soskel/Jacobs 2015), for which Mbembe wrote what was a relatively short preface. Here, it does indeed state that Mbembe, in view of the occupation of Palestine, is willing to bet that: “It is worse than the South African Bantustans ... To be sure, it is not apartheid, South African style. It is far more lethal. It looks like high-tech Jim Crow-cum-apartheid. The refusal of citizenship to those who are not like us.” This is followed by the sentence that none of Mbembe’s critics are willing to acknowledge: “Israel is entitled to live in peace. But Israel will be safeguarded only by peace in a confederal arrangement that recognizes reciprocal residency, if not citizenship.” (Mbembe 2015: VIII)

These are not words one would expect from an outright antisemite — these words in fact contain no more and no less than an acknowledgement of Israel’s right to exist. At best one might question whether the way in which Mbembe compares Israel’s regime of occupation in the West Bank to South African apartheid could be seen as a kind of demonisa-

tion of Israel. Before we can attempt to get to the bottom of these accusations, we have to understand not only the issue at hand, but also and, more importantly, the theoretical background that Mbembe statements are based on. The pertinence of his statements, however, cannot be fully understood without taking a close look at his theoretical works to date. The English versions of these works make up a total of four books: *On the Postcolony. Studies on the History and Society of Culture* (2001), *Necropolitics* (2019), *Critique of Black Reason* (2017), and *Out of the Dark Night. Essays on Decolonization* (2021).

If we stick to the order of publication of the French language originals, *Out of the Dark Night* is in fact the first in the series. Referring time and again to Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) –the first radical critic of French colonialism, in particular – and his opus magnum *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 1966), this book is about how we understand the world, about an understanding of the world that is no longer a limited European view, no longer merely theoretically universalistic, but truly cosmopolitan: “... about belonging to the world, about inhabiting the world, creating the world, or also about the conditions under which we create the world and make ourselves the inheritors of this world.” All of this — explains Mbembe — “forms the core of anticolonial thinking and our understanding of the concept of decolonialization (Mbembe 2017a: 86)

Drawing on French lyricist Paul Valéry (1871–1945) as well as the founder of phenomenology, philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), both of whom argued that there was a connection between reason and universality thus making Europe a philosophical task, Mbembe sees three distinct versions of this European universalism: The first is the discrepancy (within Europe) between the very political and cultural spaces that are open to this universal vocation and those that withdraw into their singularity; the second is the two versions of the principle of rationality, one of which, according to Mbembe, is merely another name for “totalitarianism”. “The third,” Mbembe goes on to explain is the “perversion of the universal vocation of Europe into imperial, colonial or neo-colonial domination.” (ibid.) The third version thus contributes to the radical division of Europe from non-white peoples: “Here, alterity is understood in the sense of based on spiritual, geographical, and racial *borders* (ibid.)

Referring to philosopher Jacques Derrida and his reflections on what “Europe” means, Mbembe attempts to define the concept of Europe without Eurocentrism, a Europe that, on the one hand, has brought forth philosophy, enlightenment, revolution, and human rights; on the other hand,

however “would delve into its memory, from its unique memory, from its most luminous memories ... but also from its darkest memories, the most guilty, the most repentant (genocides, the Holocaust, colonialism, Nazi, fascist, and Stalinian totalitarianism) ... and would find in its two memories the best and the worst, the political strength...” (ibid.: 93).

Mbembe’s harsh postcolonial critique of Israel and the Israeli occupation regime in the West Bank naturally raises the question as to his personal relationship with the State of Israel — something that was also discussed in the German press in May 2020. According to the reports, Mbembe had only been to Israel once in 1992, when the then 35-year-old academic was invited by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to attend a conference on African civil societies — before taking up a position at the University of Pennsylvania. Shortly afterwards, he wrote about his time in Israel in an article entitled *Israel, les Juifs et nous* (Israel, the Jews, and us) that was published in the Cameroon daily newspaper *Le Messager* in April 1992 (see Thomas Weber, *Opfer werden zu Verfolgern* (When victims become persecutors), *FAZ*, 9 May 2020). Those of you thinking that this article culminates in a postcolonial critique of the State of Israel, however, would be wrong. Ultimately, Mbembe compares the Jews that survived the Holocaust with black Africans that survived the colonial era, accusing them — in any case in relation to the governments of their states — of having learned nothing from their experience with oppression and humiliation; just as little as the Jews who, in their post-Holocaust State of Israel, also implemented a system of government that pursues a policy of repression — at least in relation to the Palestinians and Palestine.

In 2020, it was this perspective that the aforementioned Jewish and Israeli philosopher Omri Boehm, who lives and teaches in New York, had also intended to represent in his book *Israel – eine Utopie* (Israel – A Utopia) by highlighting time and again that Israel’s state ideology was a form of “Holocaust messianism” that systematically dismissed the sufferings of others (Boehm 2020: 71). Furthermore, Mbembe’s subsequent analysis focuses on the form and content of a (philosophical) consciousness that developed in colonised populations in particular — in his case Africa’s — an analysis that turns its attention to what is generally called racism. “A real human face come into view. The work of racism consists in relegating it to the background or covering it with a veil” (Mbembe 2017b: 32). What this means is that “[r]acism consists, most of all, in substituting what *is* with something else, with another reality” (ibid.). What this means is that “racism is a site of reality and truth – the truth of appearances” (ibid.). Referring to Michel Foucault and his concept of pow-

er, Mbembe then notes that “[o]nce the State functions in the biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous functions of the State” (ibid.: 33). From these fundamental assumptions, he sums up in an attempt to articulate what the (philosophical) connotations of the term, the name “Africa” are and have always been: “... nothing more than a way of posing the political question of the desiccation of life — a manner of examining the harshness, dryness, and roughness of life or the visible but opaque and blind forms that death has assumed within the commerce of living” (ibid.: 53). It thus follows that a philosophical critique of modernity will remain incomplete if we fail to grasp that the coming of modernity coincided with the emergence of race “and that the latter’s slow transformation into the privileged matrix for techniques of domination, yesterday as today” (ibid.: 55).

In one of his last books *Necropolitics* (2019), in which, complementing Michel Foucault’s theory of “biopolitics”, Mbembe puts forward a thought-provoking theory of death as a form of governmentality, which is used to exercise control over populations, the role of Israel/Palestine is very prominent, too. In the book, Mbembe argues that Israeli occupation in the West Bank functions like a test laboratory for control and surveillance technology that would be well-equipped to tackle the future challenges elsewhere on the planet. “Such practices variously recall the reviled model of apartheid, with its Bantustans, vast reservoirs of cheap labor, its white zones, its multiple jurisdictions and wanton violence.” (Mbembe 2019: 44)

Referring to Fanon, Mbembe then attempts, using the example of this occupation policy, to expound on the key features of what he calls necropolitics. According to Mbembe’s definition, necropolitics or necropower is the dynamics of territorial fragmentation — a strategy which Mbembe seeks to explain by drawing on studies by Israeli scholar Eyal Weizman, who describes these fragmentation strategies (as) a form of “vertical sovereignty” (Weizman 2002). Mbembe argues, drawing on Weizman’s studies, that the case of Palestine is testimony to the distinctiveness of late-modern colonial occupation:

[D]isciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical. The combination of the three grants the colonial power absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory. The state of siege is itself a military institution. It allows for a modality of killing that does not distinguish between the external and the internal enemy. Entire populations are the target of the sovereign. Besieged villages and towns are sealed off

and isolated from the world. Daily life is militarized. Local military commanders have the discretionary freedom to decide whom to shot and when. Movement between the territorial cells requires formal permits. Local civil institutions are systematically destroyed. The besieged population is deprived of their means of income. Invisible killing is added to outright executions. (Mbembe 2019: 82)

Those who are familiar with the ideological history of the twentieth century will recognise all this as the main characteristics of Carl Schmitt's theory of the "state of exception". Over and above this, Mbembe referred not only to Eyal Weizman but also to the ground-breaking work of US American social scientist Wendy Brown, who in her book *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* repeatedly refers to the case of Israeli occupation in the West Bank (see Brown 2010).

In all of this, it is clear that Mbembe is not only criticising Israeli occupation. In fact, this alleged antisemite firmly believes that even modern antisemitism derives from the transatlantic slave trade — in support of this theory, he cites a French study by Pierre Pluchon that was published in 1984: *Nègres et Juifs au XVIII siècle. Le racisme au siècle des Lumières* (Negros and Jews in the Eighteenth Century. Racism in the Age of Enlightenment) (Pluchon 1984) — but more on this later. In any case, the crux of Mbembe's line of argumentation is his attempt to situate the term "Africa" as well as the term "Negro" in the context of European expansion since the fifteenth century. To do so, he draws, for example, on Friedrich Schelling's *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* (Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology, published in English for the first time in 2008), according to which the term "race" is used primarily to describe people of non-European origin (Mbembe 2014; in reference to Schelling 1856: 98).

In actual fact the term "race" dates back to antiquity, gaining in importance in multi-religious Medieval Spain in particular (Hannaford 1996). In any case, the worldview and history of the very interpretative frame that we call "racism" has certainly been well documented for a long time (Ward/Lott 2002). But what must not be forgotten, of course, is that it was not only Great Britain, the USA, and France that engaged in the enslavement of the blacks. In truth, Muslim societies were also very much involved in this practice — a fact that is largely unknown today, but is worth examining in more depth. Indeed, the transatlantic slave trade would not have been possible without Arab Muslim slave traders in Africa (N'Diaye 2010).

In his methodical considerations, Mbembe mentions Hegel in particular — albeit not directly — noting that the term “Negro” is invariably associated with a relationship of subordination: “There is, ultimately, only a ‘Black Man’ in relation to a ‘master’”. (Mbembe 2014: 280). The criticism of this idea brings Mbembe to another form of recognition which is postulated in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic: Allowing oneself to be affected by others — or to be defenselessly exposed to another existence — constitutes the first step toward that form of recognition that will not be contained in the master-slave paradigm, in the dialectic of powerlessness and omnipotence, or in that of combat, victory, and defeat. On the contrary, the kind of relation that arises from it is a relation of care. So, recognising and accepting vulnerability — or even admitting that to live is always to live exposed, including to death — is the point of departure of every ethical elaboration whose aim,” — and here, Mbembe refers once again to Frantz Fanon — “in the last instance, is humanity.” (Mbembe 2019: 175-176).

It may not appear so on the surface, but in all of this, Mbembe is not entirely uncritical of Fanon. In his book *Postkolonie. Zur politischen Vorstellungskraft im gegenwärtigen Afrika*, published in 2000 in French — and published in English in 2001 as *On the Postcolony. Studies on the History and Society of Culture* –, Mbembe clearly distances himself from Fanon, who actually penned the following words: “For the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist” (Fanon 2007). Mbembe leaves no doubt as to the fact that any politics of life that is dependent on the killing of the settler will inevitably lead to problems — some of which cannot be resolved. In relation to this, Mbembe notes: “in order to exit the Fanonian cul-de-sac — the dead-end of the generalised circulation and exchange of death as the condition for becoming human — it is important to examine in what way disposing-of-death-itself could be, in fact, the core of a veritable politics of freedom” (Mbembe 2016b: 21, own translation). All of Achille Mbembe’s thoughts are entirely in line with the tradition of African philosophy, an academic field that, despite the books published about it in Germany, remains largely unknown. For example, Mbembe penned an article entitled *Afropolitanism* for a volume on postcolonial positions in African political philosophy that was published in 2015 (in: Dübgen/Skupien 2015: 330–337). One of the main motivations for this highly informative collection was the transformation of the universalism and cosmopolitanism proclaimed by the European Enlightenment, the call “to transcend cosmopolitanism in pursuit of the existential promise to attain village civilisation in the unfolding complex pluriversality of *be-ing*.” (Ramosé 2014: 34)

However, it is not only in this essay on *Afropolitanism* that Mbembe places importance on the distinction between *African* and *Black*, in doing so touching upon approaches that, in the form of “Afro-American” philosophy, have been attempting, since the early twentieth century, to expound, on the one hand, the complex constellation of liberation and, on the other, class and race structures (Harris 1983). Another work that shows that “Black” philosophy and African philosophy are by no means one and the same thing is the *Philosophy from Africa* anthology published in 1991 (Coetzee/Roux 1991), which is more than just a critique of *ethnophilosophy*, more than just attempts to interpret the oral histories and traditions of tribal societies in the same way that classical philosophy came close to the essence of the words of Presocratic thinkers, for example — rather, it was also about the role that normative universals play in this thinking (Coetzee 1991). Philosophers in Anglo-Saxon countries explored this far earlier.

In *Contract & Domination* (Pateman/Mills 2007) and, most importantly, *Black Rights/White Wrongs. The Critique of Racial Liberalism* which was published in 2017 (Mills 2017), Charles W. Mills, for example, looks at the universalism of the enlightenment from a deliberately “black” perspective in a work in which he accuses Kant of structural racism and undertakes to provide evidence of systematic, hidden “white” bias in John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice*. In actual fact, even very recently, there have been attempts to decolonise universalism (Khader 2019).

Against this background, therefore, even human rights — especially in the positive form achieved through the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights — are not immune to criticism. Now, of course, criticism of human rights is no longer expressed directly by pointing to the civic foundation these rights are built upon, but against the background of globalisation and, thus, colonisation, too, with reference to their relative nature; or more to the point with reference to the fact that human rights not infrequently prevent the emergence of new, decolonial forms of co-existence. This criticism did not only come from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Spivak 2009, also see Ehrmann 2009). In fact, at present, it is often heard in Latin America, in particular, where individual states, such as Bolivia, try at regional level to develop a new positive legal regime drawn from customary sources. In the face of human rights-based criticism of such new, traditional and, thus, particularistic legal regimes, from a “postcolonial” perspective such new regimes have been justified, as seen in the case of

literary scholar Walter D. Mignolo.²⁷ Applying a strong, theory of justice based approach, Mignolo points out that since all those engaging in political discourses are human beings, it follows that there cannot be separate authorities determining what rights human beings should have — or that these different authorities are rooted in contexts that are anything but free of particularistic interests or even of domination. Mignolo — and not just him — thus calls for “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo 2012). Mbembe, too, has examined the systematic foundations of Western universalistic thinking — and has raised the question of whether — and if so, when and how — this universalism led to racism, both in theory and practice.

Towards the provisional end of the debate, Mbembe finally tries to communicate to the German audience what point he was actually making. In his “Letter to the Germans”, he asks — with a view to Christianity, in the spirit of which he was raised — what it might mean to live in the myths and traditions of others. Invoking the Holocaust, he puts the following question to the Jewish and German people: “Today, we must ask ourselves whether the suffering of a nation is its suffering alone — such that only that nation can refer to this suffering. Is it possible to share the entirety of remembrance with the world, and if so, under what conditions? In the early 2000s, I came across these very questions in South Africa, likewise questions relating to forgiveness, reparation, and reconciliation. These questions occupy my mind till this day.” (*taz*, 12.5.2020: 11, own translation)

This shines a spotlight on the philosophy of enlightenment and idealism, which, according to postcolonial thinking, is not free from structural racism and its consequences either. Western societies and their political decision-makers feel obligated to uphold human rights and have invoked them time and again in the case of Kuwait and against the Iraqi invasion, in the Kosovo War, and since the intervention in Afghanistan. To what ex-

27 “In de-colonial thinking, peace, a peaceful world, a peaceful society, requires two main conditions: 1) To de-link from capitalist economy, organized societies, nationally and internationally; 2) To accept [...] that indeed the vast majority of marginal human beings are human as well as the privileged economic and political elites, nationally and internationally. If these two conditions are fulfilled, no one in particular will speak for the human because the human will just be taken for granted. And in such societies, there will be no need for rights, because there will be no perpetrators violating human and the life rights, in which case the victim is the life of the planet. That is to say, the life of all, including the species described as humanity. The concept of human, as it has been articulated in Western discourse since the sixteenth century — from Francisco de Vitoria to John Locke to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — went hand in hand with Frances Bacon’s conceptualization of Nature as something that has to be controlled and dominated by man.” (Mignolo 2009)

tent do we see the experiences and legacy of mass destruction and extermination that was the Holocaust — a period that was heralded in the burnt offerings of the fires of 9 November 1938 and ended in the gas chambers and crematoriums of Auschwitz and Treblinka — as part and parcel of our Western civilisation, as the defining experience that legitimises our way of life and our political action.

It may well be that we have forgotten that this type of industrial mass murder had its beginnings earlier, in Europe's colonies, in the countries of the Global South. The question of how we can meaningfully reflect on the singular human rights violation that was the Holocaust in a way that does not imply disregarding the sufferings of one group over those of another is something that, long before the Mbembe affair, US American historian Michael Rothberg — professor of literature and Holocaust studies at UCLA — had examined in a work that went largely unnoticed in Germany for far too long (Rothberg 2009). During the German debate surrounding Achille Mbembe, Rothberg commented on the matter in an online magazine published by the Goethe Institute, writing:

My theory of multidirectional memory suggests that ... memory does not obey the logic of the zero-sum game. Rather, all memory cultures develop dialogically — through borrowing, appropriation, juxtaposition, and echoing of other histories and other traditions of memory ... Part of what we see in the Mbembe affair is the well-known fact that, as Holocaust memory became globalized, it came to serve as a platform for the articulation of other memories of violence — especially those touching on slavery and colonialism. (Rothberg 2020b)²⁸

Over the past 20 years, Rothberg's attempts at linking the Holocaust to the history of colonialism and slavery has been explored further by other scholars, most notably two historians: one from Germany and one from the US. Jürgen Zimmerer's book *From Windhuk to Auschwitz. On the relationship between colonialism and the Holocaust*, published in German in 2011 and due to appear in English translation in 2023, (Zimmerer, forthcoming in 2023), for example, contains the sum of his most relevant research on this topic, while Dirk A. Moses penned his initial thoughts on this topic (Moses 2002) in as early as 2002, which he would then go on to explore in more depth in a collection of essays on the same issue published some years later (Moses 2008). Lastly, Dirk Moses even went as

28 I would like to thank Gottfried Kössler for referring me to this text.

far as to adopt the term “redemptive antisemitism”, a concept originally coined by Saul Friedländer, to explain the Holocaust (Moses 2010).

What must not be ignored here, however, is the fact that, in recent times, this theory has also been the subject of criticism that is as scrupulous as it is harsh: Steffen Klävers’ paper *Decolonizing Auschwitz? Komparativ-postkoloniale Ansätze in der Holocaustforschung* (*Decolonizing Auschwitz? Comparative Postcolonial Approaches to Holocaust Research*, Klävers 2019) not only presents these theories authoritatively, but also brings a number of reasoned objections. For instance, there is no real evidence to suggest that the Nurnberg Laws were derived from the ban on mixed marriages in the German colonies, the difference between colonial racism and antisemitism is not given sufficient consideration, and, more importantly, the connection between millenarianism and Nazi antisemitism is not examined properly either (ibid.: 131). That said — and Klävers provides evidence of this, too — colonial experiences did influence National Socialist antisemitism including the Nazis’ policy of extermination, be it the delusional idea prevalent among some antisemitic ideologists that Germans were colonised by the Jews or that the Jews are just as alien and abhorrent as some natives are perceived in the colonies (ibid.: 100f.). This important work by Klävers is rounded off with a critical examination of forms of post-colonial criticism of the State of Israel — Achille Mbembe’s for instance — from which he draws the following conclusion: “With the Holocaust being one of the reasons for the establishment of the State of Israel as a place where Jews worldwide would be safe from extermination, it follows that by normalising the specifics of the Holocaust we are perhaps also normalising the special function of the State of Israel and, by extension, delegitimising its establishment in the first place.” (ibid.: 226, own translation)

While I fully acknowledge Klävers’ critical observations, I am also of the conviction that a necessary condition for the National Socialists’ extermination antisemitism was the “racialisation” of the Jews in the late nineteenth century. At this time, the Founders’ Crisis had led to the emergence of all sorts of groups and parties in the Third Reich who believed their main purpose to be to campaign against the Jews. The more modern groups broke with classical religious anti-Judaism, building their campaigns — presumably in the belief that their views were based on science — on the foundation of race and linguistics.

In 1879, with the aim of stopping people from regarding the issue of the Jews from a “confessional perspective”, journalist Wilhelm Marr coined the term antisemitism. Renowned historian and member of the Nation-

al Liberal Party, Heinrich von Treitschke, also took up the issue, linking it with the fear of immigration and in so doing triggering what was known as the *Berlin Antisemitism Debate*. In what has become an infamous essay published in 1879 in the journal *Preußische Jahrbücher* (Prussian Yearbooks), Treitschke wrote: “ However, year after year, out of the inexhaustible Polish cradle there streams over our eastern border a host of hustling, pants-peddling youths, whose children and children’s children will someday command Germany’s stock exchanges and newspapers. The immigration grows visibly, and the question becomes more and more grave: how can we amalgamate this alien people?” What Treitschke then demands of “our Israelite fellow citizens” is simple: “They should become Germans. They should feel themselves, modestly and properly, Germans — and this without prejudicing their faith and their ancient, holy memories, which we all hold in reverence. For we do not want to see millennia of Germanic morality followed by an era of German-Jewish hybrid culture”.

Middle-class intellectual Heinrich von Treitschke, however, knew that, while it was not wise to associate with brawling antisemites, their anger could very well be used as an opportunity to break a supposed taboo and create a collective “us”:

[this noisy agitation of the moment, though brutal and hateful, is nonetheless] a natural reaction of Germanic racial feeling against an alien element that has assumed all too large a space in our life. [The agitation] has inadvertently performed a useful service: it has lifted the ban on a quiet untruth. An evil that everyone felt but no one wanted to touch upon is now openly discussed. Let’s not deceive ourselves: ... Among the circles of highly educated men who reject any idea of church intolerance or national arrogance there rings with one voice: *the Jews are our misfortune!*²⁹

Not least owing to the hatred of Jews in Germany prevalent at this time, propagated very much by middle-class intellectuals, much of postcolonial criticism of racism was levelled at Germany’s great intellectual minds such as Kant (see Bernasconi 2002 and Bonetto 2006) and Hegel — philosophers whose views on the race question will be looked at in the next chapter.

29 https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=2627

The following genealogy of the Holocaust is discussed against the background of this problem. This genealogy is focused on a topic which at first glance appears to be unexpected, but which is in fact an issue that was much discussed in the Black Lives Matter debate. Here, I am referring to the philosophy of German idealism and, by extension, Western “universalism”. With hindsight, it becomes clear that the much-lauded universalism of at least one area of the philosophy of German idealism — especially with regard to Kant and Hegel’s views on the Jews, but most certainly not in relation to blacks — *cannot* in fact be considered universalistic. This is particularly evident in the views on blacks expressed by Kant and Hegel. Not even Karl Marx is above the accusation of disregarding the black resistance against enslavement and humiliation, as supported by solid evidence provided by Berlin-based professor of cultural theory Iris Därmann. In the relevant chapter of her book *‘Schwarze’ und ‘weiße’ Sklaverei in Karl Marx’ Kritik des Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieges und der politischen Ökonomie* (‘Black’ and ‘White’ Slavery in Karl Marx’ Criticism of the American Civil War and the Political Economy, Därmann 2020: 157–181), Därmann accuses Marx, and with conviction at that, of failing to deal with the black resistance against American slavery with any degree of conviction. In fact Marx urges his readers to replace one suffering — that endured by blacks — with the “white slavery” suffered by wage workers. But let us return now to the racism by what would at first glance appear to be universalistic thinkers such as Kant and Hegel. To show that these great minds, irrespective of their openness, may very well have been adherents of racism, I will begin by taking a closer look at Kant’s relevant views before turning to Hegel, a man who — in relation to the Jews and Judaism — at least advocated for emancipation and equal rights.

CHAPTER 4
**THE TRANSATLANTIC
SLAVE TRADE, THE
EVOLUTION OF MODERN
RACISM, AND THE
GENEALOGY OF MASS
EXTERMINATION**

WOLFGANG REINHARD'S VIEW ON THE COLONISED

It was in fact modern historian Wolfgang Reinhard who, in his book *The Submission of the World*, described the state of Israel as the West's last settler colony — albeit initially followed by a question mark (Reinhard 2016: 1244–1252). The book is a monumental work which applies to European expansion as a whole: *The Submission of the World. The Global History of European Expansion 1415–2015*. For the years to come, this work would go on to remain unparalleled and for decades, an unrivalled reference work. In this over 1,630-page-long book, which is essential reference material for anyone looking to comment on the issue of colonialism, Reinhard presents, in a self-assured, authorial style, historical facts and contexts in the most compelling manner. Especially in light of current developments, in his first chapter alone, Reinhard's words cannot help but capture our attention:

Now more than ever, Europe cannot be defined territorially. Rather, it can only be seen as a process, as a mental, albeit undeniably real construct, with different affiliations. From the very start, Europe was indistinguishable from the process of its own expansion. (ibid.: 17)

In this process, the expanses of the oceans — the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean — have played a crucial role from the outset. Reinhard shows that the beginning of this expansion was an event based on different, quite unrelated factors: the demand for sugar and spices, the development of nautical equipment, and the study of the climate, especially the winds, as well as the design and construction of sailing vessels, which simply did not exist in the ancient world. It was only the interplay between these factors, beginning in the early fifteenth century — a time when not Spanish but in fact Portuguese ships sailed along the African coast to the Indian Ocean — that made the very conquests, along with all the atrocities they entailed, possible that come to mind today when we speak of “colonialism”.

This included the armed violence and the infectious diseases brought from Europe that killed millions of Indians in the Viceroyalty of Spain in South America. But it also encompassed the history of the North Atlantic, which in postcolonial historiography was referred to as the “Black Atlantic”, because it was this very ocean that made the enslavement of millions of black Africans possible. Reinhard draws on studies that estimate that 12.6 million people were transported across the Atlantic, 3.6

million across the Sahara, 2.3 million across the Indian Ocean, and another 18.5 million slaves abducted within Africa, in other words a total of 37 million people between 1500 and 1900. Without mentioning Adorno or Horkheimer, he refers pointedly to the “dialectic of enlightenment” that prevailed during the colonial era in particular: “Paradoxically, the enslavement of African plantation workers can even be considered a fruit of Europeans’ culturally unique desire for freedom and not only because this desire for freedom stood in the way of their own enslavement. In fact, the unrestricted individual disposition of property was far more a part of European freedom.” (ibid.: 455)

One fundamental cause of the slave trade observed by Reinhard is the fact that this culture of freedom and ownership was not yet tantamount to a culture of equality. Consequently, he managed to prove that it was not racism that was the cause of the slave trade, but in fact the reverse, the slave trade caused racism — because the early, isolated protests about these inhumane practices would then go on to be countered by a supposed “case” against them. In contrast to other accounts, in this context, Reinhard does not overlook the Islamic world either, nor the fact that the capture and sale of slaves, both male and female, was an accepted, almost “normal” practice for many tribal cultures in West Africa. For all this, it has only been in the last few years that we have become aware that the third revolution, the one which inspired political modernity, came after the North American Revolution and the 1789 French Revolution, and was in fact the revolution of the slaves in Haiti in 1793. When anyone talks about “Europe” today, they tend to be referring to Western Europe — but if we adhere to the political geography of the continent as a whole, we cannot ignore that Russia, too, a country which over centuries invaded and conquered Siberia and the Caucasus region, was an expanding colonial power. Even the USA, which only came into existence thanks to an anticolonial revolution, was a colonial power in the classical sense of the word — proven by its expansion from the east coast westwards, as can be seen in the “American frontier” and what were often genocidal Indian Wars, but, more importantly, the classical colonial war against the Republic of the Philippines, which had been liberated by the Spaniards and was not granted full independence until 1946.

Reinhard’s further thoughts on European conquest and settlement on the African continent are impressive in terms of the documentation supporting them and the precision with which he records boundaries, natural resources, and the invention of “tribes”. His observations are nevertheless unsettling because the genocidal crimes committed by the German

Empire in southwest Africa in 1903 are in fact alluded to very cautiously: "Although this pertained primarily to so-called collateral damage of brutal warfare and suppression, there is certainly evidence of the genocidal intentions of the German leadership, at least at times." (ibid.: 941f)

Reinhard was similarly guarded in his references to what we now undeniably know to be genocide against the Congolese, which at the time was something akin to a private colony for King Leopold II of Belgium. Ultimately, for Reinhard, the focus was on the era of the World Wars, the "oriental question" and the resulting decline of the Ottoman Empire, the Second World War in the Far East, as well as the Indian independence that followed — accounts and analyses that supersede entire comprehensive monographs. In this context, observations about Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel stand out that leave the author, even in the Table of Contents, struggling to articulate clearly: "Israel: The West's Last Settler Colony?" (Reinhard 2016: 1,319) The question mark indicates that the author would rather readers draw their own conclusions about this assumption. Despite being a historian, when it comes to the solution of the Israel/Palestine conflict, he pleads for what he sees as a mistakenly neglected "culture of amnesia". "What would it be like", Reinhard asks, "if young Arabs were to leave the Nakba ... and young Jews the Shoah ... behind in the past, and instead aspire to a shared future where their pasts are intertwined?"

This leads Reinhard to his closing systematic considerations which, with his detailed account of all (!!!) the relevant developments, culminate in a critique of the postcolonial mindset in all its naive, purely moralistic form. Reinhard concludes by asserting that, for both theoretical and empirical reasons, it is impossible to make any verifiable statements about "whether European colonialism was good or bad for the world as a whole, or only a part of it". And he even goes as far as to say — well aware that he might be accused of cynicism as a result — that even when it came to the transatlantic slave trade "from the unsentimental perspective of economic and social history, positive aspects [could be] ascertained". And that is not all: contrary to the naive view of this history as one of victims and perpetrators, he insists that this perspective in particular is racist, and that the oppressed people are thus denied the opportunity to be protagonists of their own history. Yet, there is still more: "The colonised people were individuals who were capable of action and as such were not passive objects of history and helpless victims of the colonial rulers." It can be claimed with good reason "that Western colonial rule is based on collaboration among the colonised people and no other way is possible".

Anyone for whom this argument is reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's controversial polemic against the *Judenräte* of the National Socialist system is probably not entirely wrong. The collaboration described above corresponds to the appropriation of the classifications, values, and principles of Western thinking by the colonised peoples or at least their ruling classes: "New economic opportunities were seized, women found new roles [...], it was even possible for a successful anticolonial movement and a critical postcolonial school of thought to emerge." (ibid.: 1,319)

Such statements — had they been throwaway comments — would deservedly and without hesitation need to be labelled Eurocentric, or even outright racist. However, the author drawing these conclusions in fact presented comprehensive and detailed arguments; the transition of colonial history from the communicative to the cultural memory, observed by the author himself, will have to prove itself against this. In any event, it is vital that we reflexively "overcome" the problematic European legacy, as it is only possible to react appropriately to history and its misuse with a thorough understanding that is superior to that of the "politicians of history".

IMMANUEL KANT: A RACIAL THEORIST?

Like very few incidents before, the murder of the black American George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25 May 2020 was the catalyst for a change in mentality when it comes to racism. Floyd, who was blatantly intentionally strangled to death by a white police officer, was the trigger for the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA, which was recognised for major street demonstrations and become increasingly popular in other western countries such as Germany and France. Moreover, in Germany, the incident led left-wing liberal journalists and writers, in particular, to begin to take a more critical look at their own philosophical tradition of universalism.

Frank Pergande, for example, a writer for the Sunday newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, accused Immanuel Kant on 21.6.2020 of cultivating "vile racial theories". That very same day, a writer for the Berlin *Tagesspiegel* daily newspaper called for a "critique of white rationality". As early as 1947, the emigre philosophers Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer had already identified — with specific reference to Kant — a "dialectic of enlightenment", — albeit, it must be said, in reference to antisemitism, rather than racism towards black people (Adorno/Horkheimer 1971: 151–186).

In fact, the accusation levelled at Kant is anything but unfounded. We can indeed read in the transcript of a lecture given by Kant in 1775 “On the Different Races of Man”: “... the negro is produced, well suited to his climate; that is strong fleshly, supple, but in the midst of the bountiful provision of the motherland lazy, soft and dawdling.” And he had more to say on this issue. In 1775, Kant proceeds on the assumption of a white “stem genus” (“white brunette”) which was subdivided into different climate zones, and through “mixing”, into four races: 1. “very blond (northern Europe) [...], of damp cold” 2. “copper-red (America), of dry cold” 3. “black (Senegambia), of damp heat and 4. “olive-yellow (Indians), of dry heat”.³⁰

This statement is indeed astonishing, as up until then, Kant had been seen not only as one of the principal philosophers of the enlightenment and maturity, but in fact almost as the spiritual father of the German constitution (cf. Will 2004) — and was instrumental in the advancement of the concept of human “dignity” that he had promoted so strongly. Kant was in fact one of the first to develop this concept, though before his time a philosopher of the Italian Renaissance, Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), had already strengthened the concept politically and philosophically (Mirandola 1988).

One of Kant’s most important phrases in this context can be found in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics for Morals*: “In the kingdom of ends, everything has either a price or dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is raised above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity” Kant 1998: 42). People — and only people — are granted this dignity because they are fundamentally capable of autonomously passing moral judgement: “Autonomy is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature.” (ibid.: 43)

How can the statements Kant made in his lecture on the different races of man be reconciled with Kant’s universal principle? From the transcript of his lecture, it is clear that Kant primarily defines “race” as “skin colour”, only to then go on to assure us that: “... there are no different kinds of human beings. Otherwise, the unity of the phylum from which they could have originated would be denied.” (Wilson et al. 2007: 153) A conviction he provided detailed justification for at an earlier stage:

30 Quoted in: *Race and the Enlightenment. A Reader*, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, pp. 46–48.

Properties that belong essentially to the species [man, M.B.] itself, and thus are common to all human beings as such, are indeed unfailingly hereditary. But since no difference of human beings lies therein, no heed is paid to them in the division of the *races*. What comes into question for establishing a division of the species into classes are physical characters through which human beings (regardless of their sex) *differ* from one another, more precisely, only those physical characters which are hereditary (see §3). Now these classes are to be called races only if those characters are *unfailingly* hereditary (in the same class as well as in the mixing with every other). Thus the concept of a race contains first the concept of a common phylum, second *necessarily hereditary* characters of the classificatory difference among the latter's descendants. Through the latter, reliable grounds of distinction are established according to which we can divide the species into classes, which then, because of the first point, namely the unity of the phylum, may only be called *races* and by no means *kinds*. The class of the whites is not distinguished from that of the blacks as a special kind within the human species, and there are not *different kinds of human beings*. (ibid.)

Even if Kant was a racist — although he was most certainly not a Darwinist one — we must nevertheless ask ourselves what his attitude towards the institution of slavery and European conquest of the countries of the Global South was, given that — and this is not a widely known fact — Prussia was also involved in the slave trade. At the end of the seventeenth century, on the coast of Ghana, the fortress of *Groß Friedrichsburg* was established and from there Prussian slave ships were said to have transported up to 30,000 people. One of these slaves, who went on to become a renowned philosopher, was Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703–1753) — born in Ghana and taken to be given as a child-slave to the Duke of Braunschweig. In 1789, having completed his education, including studies in a number of subjects, Amo received his first doctorate, having written a thesis “On the Legal Status of the Moors in Europe” (a paper that is now missing) and, in 1734 a second PhD from Wittenberg with a thesis (also written in Latin) on the mind-body problem. He then went on to teach at the universities of Halle, Wittenberg, and Jena from 1736 to 1739. After a series of racist attacks, Amo returned to Ghana in 1747, where he passed away in 1753 (on this, see: Martin 2001: 308–327).

A contemporary of Anton Wilhelm Amos, Immanuel Kant did not explicitly address the issue of slavery, but did examine the institution which was known in Prussia as “servitude”. In his work *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant

categorically rejected war imprisonment as a reason for servitude, and inherited servitude, or more accurately the “slavery” of the descendants of prisoners of war, all the more so (Kant 1968b: 472). In a recent article (“Kant was an anti-racist”) in the *FAZ* daily newspaper of 9 July 2020, Michael Wolff calls into question all those who accused Kant of being a racist.

The Kant debate was temporarily halted in its tracks by a dispute between the two philosophers Marcus Willaschek and Michael Wolff. Willaschek, none other than the editor of the renowned three-volume Kant Lexicon (2015), claimed in an article published in the *FAZ* on 23 June that Kant’s statements about “Negros” in *Physical Geography* are proof that he was a racist. Around four weeks later, philosopher Michael Wolff criticised Willaschek’s sources (*FAZ*, 9.7.2020), stating that neither Willaschek’s incriminating quote nor *Physical Geography* were written by Kant. Instead, Kant had used it as a source in a lecture he had given which is only recorded in a transcript. According to Wolff, this meant that “Kant’s behaviour could in fact be referred to as anti-racist because when it comes to moral issues, he does not accept differences between merely empirical human traits”. In the end, Willaschek countered this in the same newspaper, stating that Kant was very much a racist: “We do Kant no service by putting him on the very pedestal of infallibility that his postcolonial critics want to push him off.” (*FAZ*, 15.7.2020)

In any case, it is essential that we take into consideration various ambiguous statements made by Kant, which can only be found in transcripts of lectures he gave about physical geography:

One can say that the only true Negroes are in Africa and New Guinea. Not just the evenly smoked-black color but also the black woolly hair, the broad face, the flat nose, and the thick lips constitute the characteristics of these people, in addition to clumsy large bones. In Asia these blacks have neither the deep black color nor the woolly hair, unless they are descended from people who have been brought over from Africa. There is no native black person in America, where the facial color is copper and the hair is straight. However, there are large groups of descendants of the African slaves. (Kant 2012: 572f)

What was Kant trying to express here with the term “large groups”? Kant certainly had racial prejudices, although he was not a racist who believed that “racial characteristics” were inherited and fixed. He was also an opponent of servitude and slavery, and from an early stage was one of the

most vehement critics of European colonial expansion. In the academic language of the late nineteenth century, Kant thus revealed himself as a “Lamarckist”, in other words someone who believes that the physical characteristics of large groups of people are not written in their genes, fixed and unchangeable, but rather created in response to the environment and can, in turn, be inherited — today this view is referred to as “epigenetics”.

The question that remains, however, is whether Kant had in fact expressed a view, and if so what view, on European overseas conquest and settlement, in other words what is described today as “colonialism”. Here, the lively debate in English-speaking countries over the last few years, in particular, assumes the Königsberg-born philosopher underwent a learning process (on this, see McCarthy 2009; Kleingeld 2012; Flikschuh/Ypi 2014). In one of his later works, his essay on “Perpetual Peace”, written in 1791, he explicitly expresses his rejection of all forms of conquest and settlement. Although he does vote in favour of a “right of hospitality”, “that is, the authorization of a foreign newcomer — does not extend beyond the conditions which make it possible to *seek* commerce with the old inhabitants”. Kant looks harshly on Europe’s “civilised” commercial states: referring to “[t]he injustice they show in *visiting* foreign lands and peoples ... goes to horrifying lengths” (Kant/Wood 1996: 329). Here, Kant turns our attention to Great Britain: “In the East Indies..., under the pretext of merely proposing to set up trading posts, but with them oppression of the inhabitants, incitement of the various Indian states to widespread wars, famine, rebellions, treachery, and the whole litany of troubles that oppress the human race.” (ibid.)

So, Kant was not a racist, and yet he was — and this much is certain, despite his friendship with Moses Mendelssohn — an anti-Judaist, if not occasionally even an antisemite — a subject that will not be further explored in this chapter, however, since it is something the author has already elaborated on elsewhere (Brumlik 2002b: 27–74).

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL’S POSITION ON SLAVERY AND BLACK PEOPLE

Hegel’s position, on the other hand, is the mirror image of Kant’s and as such the work of the former is incomprehensible without reference to the latter. Over the course of his lifetime, with regards to the Jewish people and Judaism, Hegel proved himself to be incredibly willing to learn and

acknowledge his mistakes. This makes his blatant racism towards black people and Africans all the more astonishing.

When it comes to Hegel's position on the Jewish people, there is now evidence to suggest that at least in his younger years, from the fragments of his work about popular religion and Christianity, Hegel did not hold the Jewish people in particularly high regard, despite his endeavours to produce an "objective" assessment: "The great tragedy of the Jewish people is no Greek tragedy; it can rouse neither terror nor pity, for both of these arise only out of the fate which follows from the inevitable slip of a beautiful character; it can arouse horror alone. The fate of the Jewish people is the fate of Macbeth, who stepped out of nature itself, clung to alien Beings, and so in their servitude had to trample and slay everything holy in human nature, had at last to be forsaken by his gods ... and be dashed to pieces on his faith itself." (Hegel 1975: 204f)

A professor in Jena since 1801, Hegel takes his criticism further by describing the Jewish faith as the embodiment of a relationship of servitude with God: "The root of Judaism is the Objective, i.e. service, bondage to an alien Lord." (ibid.: 298) Ultimately, at the end of a long philosophical path, in the lectures he held on religious philosophy in Berlin, Hegel described Judaism as the "religion of sublimity" (Hegel 1970e: 50f.). Hegel had already given an early indication of this shift in perspective during his time in Heidelberg, when he engaged in such an intensive critical debate with an early antisemitic contemporary, the self-proclaimed Kantian Jakob Friedrich Fries, that in his preface to the *Philosophy of Right* he even accused his contemporary of shallowness (Hegel 1970b: 18). In Section 209 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel granted the Jews equal civic rights: "It is the essence of education and of thought, which is the consciousness of the individual in universal form, that the I should be apprehended as a universal person, in whom all are identical. Man must be accounted a universal being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German or Italian, but because he is a man." (Hegel 2001a: 169)

According to Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*, a problem had arisen with his earlier theory of Judaism: "The root of Judaism is the Objective, i.e. service, bondage to an alien Lord." Hegel 1975: 206) If we also acknowledge that the dialectic of domination and servitude developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ultimately results in the "servant" in the service of the Lord becoming the victor of history, the relationship between Judaism and Christianity proves to be complex. Perhaps such that Christianity, which developed out of Judaism after all, is the transformed servant.

Yet, the dialectic of domination and servitude is also linked to something else, a connection that was long overlooked. Certainly, the chapter on “domination and servitude” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in 1807 (Hegel 1970c: 145–155) was one of the fundamental works of modern, contemporary social philosophy — Alexandre Kojève (1958), Axel Honneth (1992), Ludwig Siep (1979) are just a few of the modern philosophers who drew on Hegel’s concepts (and this list is far from exhaustive). All of them developed the theme of the struggle for recognition as the foundation of social philosophy. In this context, however, we are not interested in a general discussion but rather, entirely in keeping with postcolonial critique of Western universalism, we focus on the question of whether or not Hegel took a position (and if he did, what was that position) on de facto servitude, in other words slavery and the subjects of slavery, black people, something that in Hegel’s lifetime also existed in Prussia, and most certainly in France, England, and the USA. Indeed, even in German-speaking countries, there were cases of enslavement, as historian Rebekka von Mallinckrodt (2017: 347–380) showed some years ago.

Studies on the philosophy of history have demonstrated that Hegel’s renowned theorem of “servitude” was by no means shaped only by ideas from theology or general social history, but was in fact significantly influenced by questions relating to the enslavement of black people and their emancipation. And this was so despite the fact that Hegel, who frequently expressed his views on black people, was, on the face of it, quite clearly a racist. Incidentally, a postcolonial reading of Hegel had, largely owing to Frantz Fanon, been the subject of philosophical research for a quite some time already.³¹ It is certainly the case that Hegel expressed racist sentiments in his lectures on the philosophy of history: “The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.” (Hegel 2001b: 111)

When it came to his position on black people, to begin with, Hegel undoubtedly followed Kant, who wrote: “Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites. The yellow Indians do have a meagre talent. The Negroes are far below them, and at the lowest point are a part of the American peoples. ... the Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the ridiculous.” (Kant 2012: 316)

31 On this, see Purtschert 2008.

Hegel the philosopher, born in Stuttgart and working as a university lecturer in Berlin, expands on this with an almost geographical philosophy about the African continent: “the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. ... In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence.” (Hegel 2012: 109f)

We could expand on these examples — after all, Hegel also explicitly addressed the transatlantic slave trade:

Another characteristic fact in reference to the Negroes is Slavery. Negroes are enslaved by Europeans and sold to America. Bad as this may be, their lot in their own land is even worse, since there a slavery quite as absolute exists; for it is the essential principle of slavery, that man has not yet attained a consciousness of his freedom, and consequently sinks down to a mere Thing — an object of no value. Among the Negroes moral sentiments are quite weak, or more strictly speaking, non-existent. Parents sell their children, and conversely children their parents, as either has the opportunity. Through the pervading influence of slavery all those bonds of moral regard which we cherish towards each other disappear, and it does not occur to the Negro mind to expect from others what we are enabled to claim. (ibid.: 96)

This is a theme that American philosopher Susan Buck-Morss (renowned in particular for her research on Walter Benjamin — Buck-Morss 1991) developed in a revolutionary manner a whole decade ago in her book *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, published in German in 2011, in which she did no less than propose a blueprint for a new universal history (more on this later). As already mentioned above, Iris Därmann was critical of Marx and Engels’s position on the American Civil War, which was also about the abolition of slavery. She quotes from a polemic by Marx and Engels against Max Stirner which appeared in *German Ideology* and which says that Stirner imagines that “...the insurgent Negroes from Haiti and the fugitive Negroes of all the colonies wanted to free not themselves, but ‘Man’”³² (Därmann 2020: 169). In this context, she is critical of Marx and Engels for failing to recognise the universal demand for liberation that was at the centre of the Haitian Revolution.

32 The German Ideology, Karl Marx (With F. Engels), Prometheus Books, 1998, 327

As we know, the French Revolution began — in terms of the history of events rather than structural history — on 14 July 1789 with the storming of the Bastille in Paris. Like England, the Kingdom of France also owned overseas colonies, including the island of Haiti — an important producer of sugar, the sweetener for the new drug of the middle classes: coffee (see Heise 2002). In 1697, Spain ceded the western part of the island to France and, in the years that followed, 90 percent of the population on this part of the island were black slaves. The remaining ten percent comprised a more or less equal mix of white and mixed-race people, referred to at the time as “mulattos”.

In as early as 1685, French King Louis XIV enacted a “Code Noir” for all French dominions that proclaimed Roman Catholicism as the state religion, as well as a law imposing draconian punishment on disobedient or escaped slaves, although it did still allow for them to be liberated (see Plumelle-Urbe 2004). In fact, the Ancien Régime had been heavily influenced by slavery, although this was not acknowledged (see Peabody 1996). Indeed, this was one of the main reasons why, in 1791, the newly elected French assembly, the National Convention, found itself unable to revoke the Code Noir, which resulted in the black slave population of Haiti, led by François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture (1743–1803), taking up arms and fighting back. In the run-up to the uprising, Toussaint made attempts to get the Spanish rulers in the other part of the island on his side, even showing respect for the Catholic faith and the Spanish monarchy (see Israel 2014). The uprising itself ended in a series of brutal massacres against the French colonial governors.

In 1811, Heinrich von Kleist’s *The Betrothal in Santo Domingo* was published, a story which depicts, like no other literary account of the time, the horrors of a revolution of liberation, which ultimately descended into an almost genocidal massacre — events which also found expression in classical German literature: “The mad desire for freedom”, according to Kleist’s novella “which took hold of all these plantations and drove the Negroes and the Creoles to cast off the chains that bound them and seek revenge for all the atrocities that a handful of evil white men had inflicted upon them.” (Kleist 1985: 80)

Six years later, the revolutionary Convention at last officially abolished the Code Noir, but not for long. In fact, in 1801, under Napoleon I — who at the time was the First Consul of the Republic, and then from 1804 the self-appointed Emperor of the French — Haiti’s liberal constitution was abolished again. In his capacity as First Consul, Napoleon dispatched a

French expedition corps to Haiti to arrest the leader and self-appointed Emperor of Haiti, Toussaint Louverture. This corps was soon driven from the island, however. Toussaint died in 1803 in France as a result of his imprisonment, and his post was then taken over by Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758–1806), who in 1804 declared the independence of Haiti and appointed himself Emperor — the first declaration of independence of a European colony in world history. Dessalines, however, was murdered by a rival in 1806, which led to a civil war in Haiti between the Africans and the Creoles. A newspaper published in German-speaking countries at the time reported on this. The report in the *Augsburgische Ordinari Postzeitung* of 12 January 1807 read as follows:

London, 22 December (via Denmark) ... The day before yesterday we received news coverage from America for the period up until 20 November. According to this report, the ruler of Santo Domingo or Haiti, Dessalines, was killed in an insurrection, which occurred as a result of his tyrannical rule. Responsibility for the government of the island will be handed to the Negro Christophe, whose talents are said to far surpass those of Dessalines. Before Dessalines was assassinated, he had ordered several of his generals and officers to be killed. Great turmoil prevails on Santa Domingo. It is said that a multitude of Negroes are intending to surrender to England and in the process lay down certain conditions to the benefit of the Blacks. (Quoted from the Wikipedia entry on Jean-Jacques Dessalines)

What this means is that the educated and erudite public in German-speaking countries must have been aware of what was happening in Haiti. Indeed, Susan Buck-Morss proves not only that Hegel might have known about events in Haiti but in fact that he most certainly must have known, given that he was a regular reader of *Minerva*, a newspaper published by the liberal Prussian officer von Archenholz and a publication Hegel regarded very highly. *Minerva* reported extensively on the Haitian Revolution. However, up until the 1990s, with just one exception (Tavares 1992), there was not a single author who had examined the possibility of a link between Hegel and the revolution in Haiti. The systematic neglect of the Haitian Revolution (in the literature) led Buck-Morss to fiercely criticise Eurocentrism and to postulate a new universal history. This universal history, informed by postcolonialism, could, however, also be said to be guilty of the self-same neglect. In fact, at one point in her study, Buck-Morss mentions a black West African by the name of Bookman who had been deported to Haiti, speculating over whether he might actually have been a Muslim, educated in one way or another. But then it would have

been appropriate to mention that, for centuries, Islam also played a role in maintaining the system of slavery, and — unlike the world of Christianity and enlightenment — never experienced an abolition movement (see N’Diaye 2010).

Därmann’s criticism of Marx and Engels along with a previous study about Hegel’s denial of the Haitian Revolution not only revealed that Marxist analysis had come to premature conclusions, but also that the idea of human emancipation has to be firmly anchored in the framework of what Schiller had already named “universal history”.

COLONIALISM, RACISM AND (MODERN) ANTISEMITISM

This example of genealogy of Western universalism ought to have shown — as the last chapter did — that the objectives of the philosophical oeuvres of authors such as Mbembe were by no means primarily anti-Semitic. In fact, they were far more about exploring the philosophical and historical genealogy of racism as a misguided form of European universalism, something which ultimately developed into a deadly ideology of domination. With Mbembe deconstructing the terms “race”, “Africa”, and “Negro” against this background, this raises the question as to whether the “Negroes” and the “Jews” ultimately stem from the same context. This theory can be rejected not least and with good reason against the background of the history of Christian anti-Judaism, as David Nirenberg recently showed in a study that was as monumental as it was precise (Nirenberg 2015). On the other hand, it is definitely beyond reasonable doubt that the Nazis’ antisemitism was deeply influenced by the racial antisemitism that developed during colonialism. In light of this, this section will focus on the genealogical relationship between racism and (modern) antisemitism.

From a sociological perspective, “antisemitism”, a term coined and used by antisemites themselves, emerged on the basis of the centuries old anti-Judaism of western Christendom, the main accusation being that the Jews were deicidal, the children of Satan, and that they prevented the resurrection of Christ. It was no coincidence that this ideology of “antisemitism” developed in the late nineteenth century as a reaction to capitalism, which was in the process of establishing itself, as well as modernism in the arts and sciences, which was calling traditional values into question. Unlike traditional anti-Judaism, however, antisemitism placed great val-

ue on “scientificity”. From Russia to Germany, modern antisemitism opposed first and foremost the “corrosive” forces that were allegedly ruining the traditional peasant economy, traditional crafts, and small-scale trade. Antisemites believed the cause of this to be the overrepresentation of Jews in the monetary economy, the sciences, new publishing houses and critical journalism — a reflection of the fact that Jews were not permitted to work as civil servants or be part of the guilds.

In the German Reich, this new antisemitic worldview took the form of what were called “associations of antisemites” that were founded by far-right intellectuals with an interest in politics. Here we might mention Göttingen-born theologian Paul de Lagarde (see Sieg 2007) or publicist Wilhelm Marr (see Zimmermann 1986). The basis of this form of hostility towards Jews was the claim that “German Christian” culture was being defended against the forces of modernity. And this form of antisemitism was particularly prominent and virulent in the political milieu of organised Protestantism following Adolf Stöcker, the anti-Semitic preacher in the court of Wilhelm II. Thus, in as early as 1895, the political agenda of the “Christlich-Sozialer Volkspartei” (Christian Social People’s Party) proclaimed that the party aimed to “oppose... all un-Christian and un-German institutions which bring about collapse from the inside and upheaval from the outside; in particular, it directed its weapons at false liberalism and oppressive capitalist domination, encroaching Judaism and revolutionary social democracy” (quoted in Fricke and others 1983: 445f, own translation). Moreover, at the end of the Weimar Republic in 1928, the “Conservative People’s Party” and the “Christian Social People’s Service” called for a true community of the people. Christian reservations about the party’s plan to make state, race, economy, and culture absolutes, of course, did not prevent a Christian anti-Semitic voters’ initiative at the end of the Weimar Republic from collectively backing the “Christian People’s Party” — which later became the “German Centre Party” — , the “German People’s Party”, and the “German National People’s Party”, under the slogan “For church, family, and school in the spirit of Luther, Bismarck, and Hindenburg.” In this environment, Judaism was soon identified as the institution responsible for encouraging these destructive forces of modernity or even actually initiating modernity in the first place.

In the spirit of this, Basel-based theology professor Adolf Köberle held a sermon in 1933, in which he focused on the differences between proper Jews that follow the religious laws and modern, secular Judaism. His sermon was published in the newspaper of the “Christian Social People’s Service” of Hessen/Nassau:

In addition, there is another type of Judaism: that of the secular, non-religious Jew. He has resolutely followed the path of rebellion against God to the very end. He has also bid farewell to the last remnants of faith in God and fear in God. His ideal is the spirit of the French Revolution, the spirit of liberalism and materialism, of Marxism and Bolshevism, but also, where possible, the spirit of unscrupulous mammonism and the unbounded Caesar-like craving for world domination. Wherever there is anything to corrode or undermine, anything that can be destroyed, whether that be marriage or the family, love of the Fatherland or the Christian church, discipline and order, chastity and decency, wherever there is something to gain or profit from, he is right there, right up front, with witty and sneering derision, with smart, business-like talent, with tenacious, destructive, burrowing energy. An atheist always has a destructive impact; but nowhere is the pernicious power of this mindset more devastating than among Jews who have squandered their rich Old Testament heritage and gone to live with the pigs. (quoted in Gerlach 1993: 33, own translation).

Far from only representing the views of Germany's *völkisch* or ethno-nationalist minded Christians, this attitude was even typical of those devout groups, so true to their faith, from which the Confessing Church emerged. The critique of modernity, interpreted as anti-Semitic, voiced by Christians who saw themselves as socially responsible, politically active, and utterly devout to their faith served as a bridge to recognition and acceptance of National Socialism. It is undeniably the case that, despite the many differences between National Socialism with its ethno-nationalist worldview and the political Protestantism that was supposedly committed to the gospel, the common denominator between them was the absolutely openly acknowledged antisemitism, which ultimately made it possible for political Protestantism to support Hitler's government in 1933.

In "modern" antisemitism, however, Jews are no longer seen as a decidual religious community but — supposedly for scientific reasons — as a biological race, whose conduct no longer had anything to do with religious convictions but actually with patterns of behaviour that was pre-determined by natural law, which is why antisemites were also particularly strongly opposed to Jews and Judaism converting to the Christian faith. The words of Austrian antisemite Georg von Schönerer (1842–1921, a role model for the young Adolf Hitler; see Opitz 1996: 33), disseminated by the antisemite associations at the time, captured this: "No matter what

their religion — the swinishness is in their blood” (“Die Religion is einerlei — im Blute liegt die Schweinerei”).

Just how influential this biologically determinist view was later in shaping the Nazis’ programme of extermination is illustrated by a polemic by the aforementioned philosopher Paul de Lagarde. De Lagarde expressed his hatred of the Jews using the language of the science of hygiene that was emerging at the time:

“One would need”, Lagarde writes in a polemic against liberal-minded scholars penned in the late 1880s, “a heart as hard as crocodile hide ... not to hate the Jews and despise those who — out of humanity! — defend these Jews or who are too cowardly to trample this usurious vermin to death. One does not negotiate with trichinae and bacilli, nor are trichinae and bacilli to be educated; they are exterminated as quickly and thoroughly as possible.”³³

It is beyond a doubt that modern antisemitism is a conspiracy theory based on biological determinism — the question we have to ask ourselves from a postcolonial perspective, however, is whether and to what extent this form of antisemitism is as deeply rooted in colonial rule. Contrary to the impression we might have, the following description is neither about the German concentration camp survivors who were liberated by allied troops in 1945, nor of the starving Africans from the Sahel region in the early twenty-first century:

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. ... These moribund shapes were free as air — and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. ..., and all about others were scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or a pestilence” (Conrad 2018: 17)

33 Quoted from Dawidowicz, Lucy. *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p. 32.

Josef Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was first published in 1899. In this novella, the author tackles the Belgian royal family's colonial exploitation of the Congo — at the time, the Congo was not “owned” by the Belgian state but was in fact the private property of the monarchs themselves — in this case Leopold II who reigned from 1885 to 1908. It was during this time that what is today referred to as genocide took place in the Congo. Murder, famine, and disease, along with the resulting 50-percent decline in birth rates decimated the region's population by around ten million people (see Hochschild 1998: 320f.). It is unsurprising, therefore, given the growing international awareness and sensitivity regarding the issue nowadays that, on 30 June 2020, King Philip of Belgium expressed his deepest remorse for these atrocities in a letter to President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Congo, officially asking for forgiveness:

“Our history is made of common achievements, but it has also experienced painful episodes. At the time of the independent state of the Congo, acts of violence and cruelty were committed, which still weigh on our collective memory”, wrote the King. Just hours after the letter was published, the city council of Ghent removed a bust of the former colonial ruler accompanied by public applause.³⁴ (www.tagesschau.de/ausland/kongo-belgien-kolonie-verbrechen-101.html, own translation)

It is no coincidence that this crime against humanity took place in Africa — a continent where just a few years later, the German Reich, too, committed its first act of genocide: formally described as the German race war, the war of destruction in German Southwest Africa against the Herero and the Nama. In 1904, under the orders of General von Trotha, a race war was waged on the African continent, publicly declared as a campaign of ethnic extermination (see Zimmerer/Zeller 2013), which drove around 30,000 Herero into the desert on death marches — a course of action which around ten years later, the Young Turks used against the Armenians. In Africa, however, the focus was also on slave labour or, ultimately, “extermination through labour”, and so the German colonial regime set the Herero to work on the construction of railroads. This knowledge increasingly substantiates the early hypothesis (according to Schmitt-Egner 1975) of the role model function played by the German colonial war in Southwest Africa for the National Socialists' racist policy of extermination.

34 <https://tricksfast.com/the-king-of-belgium-sends-remorse-to-congo-for-leopold-iis-atrocities/>

nation. One thing that has certainly been proven is that eugenicists such as Eugen Fischer and Theodor Mollison, who later taught concentration camp physicians, including Josef Mengele, conducted their first research on natives during the colonial war (see Gessler 2000).

This raises the question of the relationship between colonialism, slavery, and racism, and that includes the relevance of Europe's colonisation of Africa for racist and totalitarian politics in Europe addressed for the first time by Hannah Arendt (see Brumlik 2008). To claim that colonialism and slavery are identical phenomena would be just as erroneous as asserting that they have little or even absolutely nothing to do with one another. European colonial expansion to South America and into large parts of Africa was indeed a necessary, albeit not sufficient condition for the institutionalisation of the transatlantic slave trade.

Over a period of more than 20 years, a history of the concept of "race" that is rich in sources has evolved. In his book *Race. The History of an Idea in the West* (1996), Ivan Hannaford traces the history of the concept since antiquity, showing that it has always been related to slavery, drawing on arguments that extended into modern political philosophy — those put forward by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, for instance (see Lott 2002). Iris Därmann concurs with Hannaford's line of reasoning in her book *Undienlichkeit* (Unsubservience) (2020). In his *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei* (A world history of slavery) (2009), Egon Flaig demonstrates that racism, in one form or another, is inherent in every form of slavery. The division, especially of North American but also Latin American societies into those who were allowed to be masters, and those who were allowed to be or indeed were forced to be slaves reflected a legitimisation strategy based on a bible passage (Genesis: 9, 21–27) referring to Noah's curse of his son Ham, who had told his two brothers how he had seen his father Noah drunk and naked. This was an argument that, in the European Middle Ages had never been used to refer to black people and it was not until 1444 that the Portuguese introduced it with respect to Muslim slave hunters.

In any case, since 1944 at the latest, it has been considered a proven fact that racism was a consequence rather than the cause of slavery (Flaig 2009: 192; on this, see also Blackburn 1998). Even important thinkers of the Enlightenment and advocates of tolerance invested in the slave trade and justified this by arguing that even the slaves traded their own children, thus providing evidence of their own inferiority. In the words of Voltaire: "...a people which trades with its children, is much more dam-

ming than one who purchases slaves. This trade demonstrates our superiority..."³⁵

This was a comparatively new racist justification of slavery, at least in European thinking, which was most certainly accepting of slavery. Up till then, slavery had been deemed an institution legitimately reserved for those who had been defeated in the various wars, in particular. (Brockmeyer 1987: 106f.). That said, scholastic philosopher Thomas Aquinas had already postulated that "those who excel in terms of reason, will rule by nature" (quoted in Ritter/Gründer 1995: 979, own translation). Thus, even before modern racism, according to traditional doctrine, there was a natural inequality between people, and this doctrine did not begin to crumble until the emergence of the modern territorial state and its principle of sovereignty. It was Jean Bodin (1529–1596) who postulated that the sovereign prince could certainly provide his subjects with better protection than even the most powerful of slave owners. For this reason — according to Bodin — the slaves owed their sovereign more obedience and loyalty than their owner — which meant that ownership, which was almost a principle of natural law, was broken (Bodin 2005: 8). This was the product of Bodin's thinking that all states emerged as a result of violence anyway, which is why slavery as a legal institution — contrary to what its supporters believed — was itself outside the laws of nature.

The assumption of equality of all subjects developed by Bodin, as well as the conviction that all people are equal, justified by puritanical groups based on the bible, soon led to the emergence of abolitionist groups focused on the blacks who had been deported from Africa and South America and their enslaved descendants. At first glance, this development appeared to be driven by humanitarian impulses — in this case from the Spanish Dominican friar and priest Las Casas (1484–1566), who was devoted to the cause of the weakened and exploited indigenous slaves in South America, thus prompting the Spanish throne to replace them with blacks imported from Africa.

The visible foreignness of black Africans compared to white-skinned Europeans that was perceived as a result served as the basis for a theory of different, more or less worthy, races which now justified slavery "scientifically" (Bitterli 1976), particularly in the age of the "Enlightenment". In

35 "Un peuple, qui trafique en ses enfants est encore plus condamnable que l'acheteur; ce négoce demontre notre supériorité." (see Thomas 1997: 465; see also Peabody 1996) *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des Nations. Essay on the Blacks and the Spirit of the Nations.*

Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, under the entry for "Nègre", the following definition can be found: "Negro, man who inhabits different parts of the earth, from the tropic of Cancer to that of Capricorn ... Not only their color distinguishes them, but they differ from other men in all the traits of their faces, with large flat noses, fat lips and wool instead of hair, and seem to constitute a new kind of men."³⁶ Admittedly, the article goes on to assert — contrary to the views of other writers at the time — that all "these peoples that we have just run through, so many diverse men, come from a single mother."³⁷ The *Encyclopédie* thus positions itself against the idea of "polygenesis", in other words against a theory which argues that human races evolved independently of one another, deeming one inferior to the other. Important adherents of the theory of polygenesis include the sceptical Enlightenment philosopher David Hume (1711–1776), who, in his essay *Of National Characters*, regarded the blacks as a different species, "naturally inferior to whites", and endorsed their enslavement, though he rejected the institution of slavery for pragmatic reasons. Views like Hume's emerged against the background of a biblical theory of creation, such as that put forward by Georgius Hornius (1620–1670), which largely referred to the curse of Ham by Noah. The increasingly frequent travels of European geographers and explorers to the African region, along with the emergence of the practice of observational biology, which turned to the chimera of the tailless man, saw a continuum of beings distinct through sexual mixing. The French naturalist of the Enlightenment Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707–1788) reported having seen "an ape as tall and strong as a man, and equally as ardent after a woman as its own females."³⁸ Along these lines, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it was firmly believed that apes and humans engaged in sexual intercourse with one another.

In his essay *Of National Characters* written in 1753, David Hume included the following footnote: "I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) are naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other

36 Formey, Johann Heinrich Samuel. "Negro." The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project. Translated by Pamela Cheek. Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2003. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.026>. Originally published as "Negre," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 1:76–79 (Paris, 1751).

37 Ibid.

38 Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon, *Buffon's Natural History*. Volume IX (of 10) Containing a Theory of the Earth, a General History of Man, of the Brute Creation, and of Vegetables, Minerals, &c. &c, Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45731>

complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences ..., there are negroe slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity..." (quoted in Martin 2001: 298). Tellingly, Hume, renowned as one of the founders of the methodology of empirical research, refers to those blacks who came to Europe through the institution of slavery to support his polygenetic speculation — in his footnote the historical connection between the development of racist theories and the slave trade is unmistakable. But even the French Enlightenment writer Voltaire already presumed a natural hierarchy of different races, coming to the conclusion that Jews and Negroes were equally inferior: "The Jews were regarded with the same eye as we see Negroes, as an inferior species of man." (quoted in Hentges 1998: 177, own translation) Over the long term, however, given the interest in the rational establishment of the rule of law, neither cynicism nor blind faith in creation could justify the import of slaves that was so crucial for the economic development of the American colonies. It was English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), founder of a liberal theory of democracy based on individual property rights (see Macpherson 1967) who undertook the task of establishing the rule of law in his *Treatises of Government*. Locke published the *Treatises* between 1680 and 1682. Much like the renowned opening sentences of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, Locke's first treatise opens with quite the statement: "Slavery is so vile and miserable an Estate of Man, and so, directly opposite to the generous Temper and Courage of our Nation; that 'tis hardly to be conceived, that an Englishman, much less a Gentleman should plead for't."³⁹ At first glance, this seems like the fanfare of a treatise for the emancipation of slaves, but of course it soon turns out to be a polemic against another political theorist of the time, Robert Filmer, who had developed the theory of an absolutist sovereignty doctrine and as such represented the hypotheses that all people are slaves to a certain extent.

Locke, who was the first to develop a theory of property, was concerned with the question of how individuals could gain lawful control over land and property. Based on this, he developed the theory that men are by nature free and that they should also have ownership of the fruits of their labour. One of Locke's main convictions was that man was the owner of his own person: "Yet every man has property in his own person: this no body

39 The First Treatise of Government, Para 1.1 <http://studymore.org.uk/xlocke.htm#:~:text=From%20the%20First%20Treatise%20of,Gentleman%2C%20should%20plead%20for%20it.>

has any right to but himself.”⁴⁰ The fact that, in this regard, both John Locke’s thoughts and his actions were paradoxical is something that Iris Därmann recently demonstrated. In her book *Undienlichkeit* (Unsubservience), Därmann analyses certain statements made by Thomas Hobbes on this topic which thus far have been largely overlooked and, in particular, John Locke’s colonial philosophy, to which she devotes an entire chapter entitled “Agricultural Capitalism in South Carolina” (Därmann 2020: 81–103).

Although the paradox of the theories and the life of this founder of the theory of modern possessive individualism begins with the opening words of his *Two Treatises of Government* quoted above, John Locke was, at the same time a shareholder of the “Royal African Company”, which had the royal monopoly for “the whole, entire and only Trade, liberty, use and privilege of Trade and Traffic” — including the right to seize land in order to ship “gold, silver, Negroes [and] slaves” (ibid.: 81) on the “American plantations of his Majesty, which cannot subsist without them”. Locke initially justifies this practical everyday inconsistency in Section 130 of his first treatise, taking recourse to a purportedly biblical law of war. Here he claims to have read in Abraham’s Old Testament stories that patriarchal heads of families had the right to send their family members — and not necessarily only blood relatives in the narrowest sense — to war. Accordingly, he also constructs a right of growers in the Caribbean to send members of their households to war: “A Planter in the West Indies has more, and might, if he pleased (who doubts) muster them up and lead them out against the Indians to seek Reparation upon injury received from them, and all this without the Absolute Dominion of a Monarch ...” (Olsthoorn 2019: 243)

John Locke saw the legitimacy of the institution of “ownership” as being based on the fact that people were lawfully entitled to what they had had created with their own hands, initially on free land, from which, unlike Kant, he derives a legitimate right to violent conquest and settlement and to wage a colonial war against any indigenous people who resist any such conquest and settlement. Moreover, from this conquest and settlement, Locke deduces that the conquerors are entitled to complete obedience from the conquered — irrespective of any potential prerogatives of absolute monarchy. This claim to complete obedience on the part of the members of the household who had been sent to war was based on the legitimacy of the preced-

40 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Urbana, Illinois, Retrieved from www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7370

ing act of purchase. One example that illustrates this quite clearly is the fate of a horse which can be sent to battle by a military commander because it is part of divine creation, according to which the people and subjects of Adam must be obedient. For Locke, however, this also applies to those of Adam's descendants who must work as servants or slaves: "Abrahams leading out the Servants of his Family is, that the Patriarchs enjoy'd this Lordship by descent from Adam: since the Title to the Power, the Master had in both Cases, whether over slaves or horses, was only from his purchase; and the getting as Dominion over any thing by Bargain and Money, is a new way of proving one had it by descent and Inheritance." (Locke 1988: 237)

With this new version of Protestant ethics, Locke reinterpreted the original Calvinist predestination doctrine such that the legality of the deeds of sale of the middle class resulted in a guaranteed entitlement to the respective commodities purchased, which then also applied to the commodity of human life — despite the fact that this contradicted Locke's original assertion that every man, first and foremost, has the right to the property of his own person and body. In this case, Locke does not resolve this unmistakable contradiction by taking recourse to scripture but rather by referring to the ancient Greek custom of making slaves of conquered enemies who had become prisoners of war. According to this tradition, people who, in one way or another, had lost the chance of freedom and the chance to lead a self-determined life did not even have the power to subject themselves to the domination of others above them by giving up their personal rights voluntarily.

Consequently, the fundamental argument postulated by Locke that no person has the right to sell ownership of his own person, to pass that ownership to others, remains unaffected — no one is allowed to sell themselves. But no injustice befalls the vanquished, provided that they are used by a conqueror for the latter's own purposes. After all, slavery "is nothing else, but the state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive" (Locke 1988: 284). It is thus no coincidence that, at the end of the relevant section of his work, Locke, who was a biblical scholar, also mentions the people of Israel, the Jews — since, after all, (in Egypt, M.B.) they, too, sold themselves into drudgery and servitude. In light of these theories, it comes as no surprise that Locke saw "freedom" as inalienable property, served as secretary of an organisation of planters in North American Carolina from 1671 to 1675, and on the behalf of the organisation, drafted a treaty that justified slavery. As mentioned earlier, the young Locke already held stocks in the "Royal African Company" (on this see Thomas 1997: 199–201).

Indeed, over a period of four years (1699–1703), the first slaves were shipped to Carolina. Altogether, alongside the province's 9,500-strong population, there was a total of around 3,000 slaves living in Carolina — including 1,100 women, 1,200 children, 500 male Indian, and 600 female Indian slaves, as well as 300 enslaved Indian children. A year later, in his *History of Navigation from its Original to this Time (1704)*, Locke provided a sober and detailed assessment of slavery:

The natives [of the West African coast] are for the most part black, or else inclining to it. All the commodities brought from thence, are gold-dust, ivory, and slaves; those black people selling one another, which is a very considerable trade, and has been a great support to all the American plantations. This is all that mighty continent affords for exportation, the greatest part of it being scorched under the torrid zone, and the natives almost naked, no-where industrious, and for the most part scarce civilized.⁴¹

Irrespective of their otherwise sober, matter-of-fact tone, in today's terms, these statements constitute a case of racism pure and simple — and much needed, albeit in no way sufficient basis for the National Socialists' extermination of the Jews — a fact that strongly suggests that this racism originated in colonialism in Africa. In her book *Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in English in 1951, Hannah Arendt already tackled this issue as much as 70 years ago:

Critical to the concept of race in the twentieth century are the experiences of Europeans in Africa, which only entered into the more general European consciousness through the "scramble for Africa" and the policy of expansion. [...] Race was the Boers' answer to the overwhelming monstrosity of Africa — a whole continent populated and overpopulated by savages (p.185). So the Boers were never able to forget their first horrible fright before a species of men whom human pride and the sense of human dignity could not allow them to accept as fellow-man (p. 192). Here, given the compulsion of coexistence with black tribes, the idea of humanity and the common origin of the human species, as taught in the Christian Jewish tradition of the Western world, lost its compelling force, and the desire for systematic extermination of entire races became all the more powerful, as it became

41 Locke 1824: 414–17, quoted in David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State*, Blackwell Publishers, 2002, 45

evident that unlike Australia and America, Africa was far too overpopulated for the solutions to the problem of the native population being tested there to ever be a viable option. (Arendt 1986: 308f, own translation)

The question remains, however, as to whether, given everything we know, this genealogy does not have something of an apologetic undertone. Is there evidence that, confronted with the indigenous population, the colonisers really were seized with fear and horror? The travelogues that, for example, Kant and Hegel drew on, provide no such evidence. There is, therefore, good reason to question — contrary to Arendt's argument — whether it really was the encounters with indigenous African people and their ostensible otherness that had such a fundamental impact on racism. Arendt herself refers to social Darwinism as well as the racist theories of the French aristocracy, who deemed themselves to be of 'superior' 'Frankish' descent. She was therefore unable to provide conclusive evidence of the penetration of 'Boer' ideas. Nevertheless: "The concept of race used in Africa was an emergency explanation employed by the Europeans in response to tribes of people that they were not only unable to understand but were unwilling to recognise as humans, as one of them. The Boer concept of race", according to her preliminary conclusion, "is born from the horror they felt when faced with creatures who appeared to be neither man nor beast and who, ghostlike, with no tangible civilisational or political reality, populated and overpopulated the black continent." (ibid.: 308, own translation)

These passages from Arendt's book have been a subject of fierce and controversial debate for many years. Anne Norton (1995), for example, stated that, despite her public position of solidarity with the victims of colonialism, Arendt's statements ultimately gave the Boer perpetrators a voice and understanding. Seyla Benhabib, on the other hand, defends Arendt in more nuanced terms — arguing that the latter's description of the African continent shows no trace of 'racism' (Benhabib 1996: 83–86). Hauke Brunkhorst (1999: 102f.), in contrast, claims that Arendt has a philosophical idea of humanity which makes it impossible for her to fully recognise each and every individual as a person in every sense of the word.

However, a closer examination of Arendt's remarks shows Brunkhorst and Norton, and not Benhabib, to be right. In fact, her statements showed that although Arendt had the right intuition, because of her racist prejudices, she was unable to convey her message properly. Arendt's conclu-

sion on this issue (as already quoted further above): “From the horror that such creatures might be people too, came the resolve not to be part of the same human species. Here, given the compulsion of coexistence with black tribes, the idea of humanity and the common origin of the human species, as taught in the Christian Jewish tradition of the Western world, lost its compelling force, and the desire for the systematic extermination of entire races became all the more powerful, as it became evident that unlike Australia and America, Africa was far too overpopulated for the solutions to the problem of the native population being tested there to ever be a viable option.” (Arendt 1986: 308f., own translation)

Using the term “wholesale extermination”, Arendt addresses the issue of the era — genocide. The era has, in this respect, reached its lowest point with the “unprecedented catastrophe in human civilization” (Yehuda Bauer) of the Shoah, the Holocaust — yet this era is still not over.

The following excursus explores the genealogical intent behind mass killings with a view to gaining a clearer understanding of genocide.

EXCURSUS INTO THE ISSUE OF GENOCIDE

The term “genocide” has always been unclear — the reason for this lack of clarity is largely rooted in the UN “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” (the Genocide Convention), adopted in December 1948. In the first paragraph alone, the Convention states that “genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they [the signatories to the convention, M.B.] undertake to prevent and to punish”. That said, the Genocide Convention contains so many ambiguities that those with reservations, whether for political or opportunistic reasons, would find many points to support their position. The “Responsibility to protect”, which was not adopted until the twenty-first century, sharpened the perception of that responsibility, making it clearer. In any case, the 1948 Convention defined “genocide” as follows:

In this Convention, the word ‘genocide’ means a criminal act directed against any one of the aforesaid groups of human beings, with the purpose of destroying it in whole or in part or of preventing the preservation or development. Such acts consist of: 1. Physical genocide. Causing the death of members of a group or injuring their health or physical integrity by: (a) group massacres or individual executions; or

(b) subjection to conditions of life which, by lack of proper housing, clothing, food, hygiene and medical care, or excessive work or physical exertion are likely to result in the debilitation or death of the individuals; or c) mutilations and biological experiments imposed for other than curative purposes; or (d) deprivation of all means of livelihood, by confiscation of property, locking, curtailment of work, denial of housing and of supplies otherwise available to the other inhabitants of the territory concerned.

This concept was subject to a whole series of clarifications, according to which conspiracy and public incitement to genocide as well as attempts to carry out or participate in genocide are also outlawed. The actions that are thus prohibited range from the non-consensual provision of contraceptives by US American development workers to indigenous women in 1960s Bolivia to the mass shooting of 7,000 Bosnian men by Serbian nationalists in Srebrenica in late February 2007.

The term genocide itself was coined by Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959), a Polish-born Jewish lawyer who had fled to the USA via Sweden where, from 1941, he then taught at various universities. Lemkin had already used the term in 1933 when he advocated for a change to what was referred to at the time as “vandalism”, in other words the “barbarity” of the groups of crimes described — debates he engaged in even before the Second World War at the University of Lemberg, where he was closely following the trials in Berlin for the genocide of the Armenians by the Young Turks, for example. Since the current Turkish government is still reluctant to recognise the murders that were systematically carried out by the then Kemalist Turkey as “genocide” — claiming that it was at most a “massacre” that had suddenly broken out — , this debate, in which all areas of conflict and difficulties related to the term “genocide” are discussed, endures to this day.

The crux of the matter here is whether it can be proven that such a crime was premediated and if so, how — both in terms of explicit intention to commit that crime and in terms of its magnitude. Is it possible to prove, for example, that what were claimed to be no more than “evacuations” of groups of the population were in fact deliberate precursors to the murder of these groups? With regard to the case of the Young Turks’ genocide of the Armenians, used by Lemkin as a representative example, the background, accountability, and magnitude of the crime committed by the Young Turk regime has since all been explained. Armenian sociologist Vahakn N. Dadrian, for example, described the events in detail without in

any way shying away from drawing parallels with similar crimes (Dadrian 1995). Besides, there is now also a comprehensive body of literature on this matter (Hoffmann o.J.; Dadrian 1996: 95f.; Akcam 2004; Hosfeld 2005; Gust 2005), which, more importantly, provides evidence of the extent to which the German Reich, an ally of Turkey during the war, made this genocide possible.

Later in the USA, Raphael Lemkin made a renewed attempt to enforce his condemnation and naming of the crime of “genocide”, which in 1933 had been rejected by the US Congress. In 1944, Lemkin published a book titled *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, urging for criminal prosecution for the atrocities committed by the Nazis, something that at that time was yet to be done, given that until 1948 “genocide” was not prohibited under international law.⁴²

On this basis, during detailed and at times conflicting debates held in 1948, the members of the fledgling UN discussed the question of how to define the act of genocide more precisely than the vague “crime against humanity” invoked during the Nuremberg trials. Here, a question that was central to the debate was whether war was required for this crime to be recognised as such. The crucial new factor compared to the norms of the international military tribunal was the fact that genocide — a crime that was not even among the charges brought at the Nuremberg trials — was no longer tied to acts of war between two countries, a fact which, at the same time, raised the question of whether, in such cases, intervention should not override the sovereignty of individual states.

Other key questions were whether and to what extent the subjective (criminal) intent should also be taken into account when determining whether or not “genocide” has been committed. Further, the question arises as to the liability or responsibility for the crime committed in each case. It is now clear that proof of intent of individuals or groups is a prerequisite, “but also that it is only physical persons, not legal entities such as states that can be held responsible. Similarly contentious was how to define the groups that can be considered victims of genocide. It had been previously established — something the Soviet Union thwarted in the 1940s — that this also includes large social groups or even large sexual or generic groups. Similarly, it is also the case that “genocide” is not

42 The following text up until the end of this chapter was taken from a previously published essay written by me (Brumlik 2004). I would like to thank the editorial office of the *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* for giving permission for text to be reproduced.

deemed to be present if both the perpetrators and victims belong to the same group of people . One question this raises is whether the Khmer Rouge, whose policy of extermination claimed the lives of one and a half million victims (see Kiernan 1996), had in fact committed “genocide” — a significant problem when it comes to identifying and explaining genocide from a social science perspective. Just as contentious, both then and now, is the exact definition of the words “attempt to commit genocide” stated in Article III (d) of the Convention.

What is remarkable here, and this is something which is also of significance for a social science theory of genocide, is that “ethnic cleansing” as well as expulsion or displacement, if not committed with the intent to destroy the physical existence of a group, do not constitute genocide but rather, at best, a “crime against humanity”. Some of the cases that might come to mind here are the mass removal, set in motion by the Potsdam Agreement, of ethnic Germans from East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia, in other words the German-populated ‘ethnic islands’ in Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War. Or the expulsion of the Palestinians, both during the war in 1948 and then again in 1967 by the Israeli army. As a result, and this was also established by the District Court of Jerusalem where Adolf Eichmann stood trial in 1961, the expulsion of the Jews from Germany was not genocide. Only the systematic planned extermination of Polish and Russian Jews from autumn 1941 could be regarded as constituting genocide.

The obvious benefit of this, at times seemingly pedantic, focus of legal discourse on the definition of terms and concepts, which is invariably influenced by clearly identifiable political interests, is that it identifies what Christina Möller considers “a crime against humanity” or even “genocide” as a criminal offense, which in turn necessitates criminological characterisations and explanations and implies legal consequences (Möller 2003, own translation). This raises questions regarding international criminal law, which in the age of globalisation is highly contentious, including the issue of the jurisdiction of an international criminal court that goes beyond the scope of and is very different to the ad hoc criminal tribunals established by the UN for Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In Möller’s view, a social science theory of genocide could have carried out the function that in conventional discourse on criminal justice, would typically fall into the category of criminology. Given the heterogeneity of the phenomenon and the contentious nature of legal categories alone, is this kind of general theory even feasible?

These very questions are also addressed by historian and Professor of European History at Brown University, Omer Bartov, who has a special interest in the enemy images that were constructed during the second half of the twentieth century, in particular, as well as the corresponding cultural patterns of interpretation (Bartov 2000). Needless to say, by focussing on the proximity of apocalyptic world views, utopian visions of society, and genocidal policies built on a “quest for purity”, Bartov at no point goes beyond the phenomenological view already outlined by Hannah Arendt. Criminal sociologist Alex Alvarez has come up with an altogether different proposal, reinterpreting the murder of the Jews by the Nazis, the “politicide” in Cambodia in which the Khmer Rouge eliminated one-and-a-half million members of their own population, as well as the above-mentioned Serbian massacre (Alvarez 2001). In his analysis, Alvarez draws on the specific criminological “neutralization theory”, which explores the question of what techniques individuals who deviate from their main normative values employ to justify their actions to themselves. Alvarez thus applies categories from conventional criminology to genocidal crimes and the instigators of such acts to describe the complex social psychology of different collectives of perpetrators and spectators — without actually verifying these findings using detailed comparative country studies. With such a general approach, it is impossible to pin down the factors that make the occurrence of genocidal crimes more likely.

In comparison, the observations by sociologist and Professor of International Relations at the University of Sussex, Martin Shaw, are somewhat more compelling. According to Shaw, war has always possessed a dimension of mass slaughter, which is why he believes the strict distinction between war and genocide in the Genocide Convention is not fitting in this case (Shaw 2013). After all, in the context of both war and genocide, there is a tendency to breach legal barriers and consequently disregard the duty to protect enemy civilian populations and captive enemy forces. Thus “wars” that have systematically degenerated ultimately culminate in genocide. Shaw therefore defines genocide as the destruction, primarily instigated by an organised army, of a large group of civilians by killing the members of that group. Thus, with genocide, civilians are not the enemy because of their proximity to enemy forces, but simply because they are civilians.

If, therefore, every war is a necessary and even sufficient condition for genocide, then we must ask ourselves how the Stalinist crimes, the massacre in Rwanda, or the murders the Khmer Rouge committed against members of their own population can fall under this heading. The Soviet

campaign of “dekulakisation” in the 1930s, with its targeted intentional starvation of millions of people, would only fit into Shaw’s theory if the liquidation of the kulaks were to be seen as a late sequela of the Russian civil war. The same applies to Rwanda: Here, Shaw refers back to the civil war between the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the regime in Kigali, which took place in the years before the massacres. In this scenario, the massacres should not be understood as a late sequela of a war but rather as a strategy employed to safeguard the regime against continued threat from external forces — similar to the situation with Young Turks’ genocidal persecution of millions of Armenians. Despite the many potential inconsistencies, Martin Shaw shows that, with the exception of the Stalinist “dekulakisation” mentioned above, it is virtually impossible to provide evidence of historical genocides committed by totalitarian regimes in peacetime. If Shaw’s theory is correct, this would have significant consequences for human rights-motivated discourses: armed intervention, ostensibly the last resort against a genocidal regime, would in fact be, if not the catalyst, most certainly a factor that reinforces or enables genocide.

Former Professor of History Eric Weitz took an entirely different approach, integrating sociopsychological, phenomenological, and also macrostructural factors. In reference to the Young Turks’ genocide of the Armenians, the Soviet Union under Stalin, the Khmer Rouge, and the Serbian policy of extermination in the Bosnian War, he identifies a unique function of modern ideologies and — unlike the authors mentioned so far — also addresses the crucial importance of the transatlantic slave trade in the genealogy of the crime of genocide (Weitz 2003). In his view, the transatlantic slave trade is the main institutional factor in the development of modern racism in both of the Americas. Although legal enlightenment almost eradicated the institution of slavery, conversely not only was the perversion of the scientific enlightenment of this process of elimination not stopped, but it even created a new justification for this inhumane institution: the “inferiority” of black-skinned people legitimised their enslavement. In the same vein, the Young Turks justified their genocide of the Armenian people by referring not only to “security interests”, but also to the social Darwinist, Turanian, racist ideology of overvaluing an allegedly objectively existing Turkish race (see Kieser/Schaller 2002).

Along similar lines, without direct reference to the studies conducted by Kieser and Schaller, Eric Weitz shows that highly utopian concepts and the Nazi philosopher Carl Schmitt both use the friend/foe dichotomy, according to which the foes all need to be eliminated — just as the “kulaks” were by the Stalinists. Based on this, Weitz formulates a genocidal pat-

tern of development. A radically utopian group acquires political power and then categorises the entire subjugated population — a categorisation which has ultimately always resulted in certain groups being “cleansed”, i.e. eliminated. Weitz uses the English term *purge* to describe this process. The “ultimate purge” — genocide — follows categorisation and expulsion or displacement. In some cases, this also includes the deliberate humiliation of members of this group — for example the Jews under National Socialism or people wearing glasses under the Khmer Rouge.

Indeed, according to Weitz, Stalin’s Soviet Union was also on the brink of becoming a thoroughly racist, genocidal state, with its targeted killing of the Tartars, Koreans, Chechens, and the Ingush even corresponding to the conventional definition of genocide. This assessment is not entirely accurate, however, as is shown by the significant number of perpetrators of the killings who were members of the very same group of the population. What remains unclear, of course, is whether the groups that were attacked in this way were not in fact subject to wholesale “racialization”. After all, simply belonging to a particular “class” was enough to be persecuted without the behaviour of individuals even playing a role. In any event, the case of the Khmer Rouge and their “politicide” of broad swathes of their own population show how social utopian, racist, and nationalist motives converged. This seems to contradict William A. Schabas’ argument that the crimes of the Khmer Rouge did not (!) represent a clear case of genocide because the victims were exclusively members of the same population as the perpetrators (Schabas 2003).

Eric Weitz bases his arguments on ideas put forward by Ben Kiernan — a professor of history at Yale — who wrote a standard work of reference on the issue (Kiernan 1996). Kiernan provides a description detailing just how much the Khmer Rouge’s utopian ideology was based on a concept that can really only be described as racist, a concept of the historically chosen, genetically profoundly gifted Khmer people. The agrarian revolution that was then executed by the Khmer Rouge led to parts of the population being killed solely on the basis of their origins. In cases of “interracial marriages”, for example, they questioned which racial group these people might belong to. So, there is a grain of truth in the claim that the Khmer Rouge were the second National Socialist movement of the twentieth century after Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.

The aforementioned works of historical genocide research can in no way be suspected of denying the singularity, the “unprecedentedness” (Bauer 2001) of the Holocaust, the Shoah. Especially since the comparative per-

spective shows that and how German society after the First World War, admittedly crisis ridden, was fundamentally different from both Russian society during the civil war and the ruined agricultural societies of Cambodia or Rwanda. In the case of Germany and the Holocaust, it was — despite all the damage caused by the war — a deeply bourgeois class society with a highly developed educated middle class that committed these singularly genocidal crimes against European Jews (and not only against them); crimes whose magnitude and force exceeded the most frequently cited precursor, the Young Turks' genocide of the Armenians, in every respect. In this sense at least, the recently much discussed and to some extent rebutted assertion that Germany had taken a *Sonderweg* or unique path continues to apply to this day. As shown above, for Michael Rothberg in particular, it is important to show the parallels between these crimes while highlighting their disparities at the same time. However, we should not overlook the fact that Rothberg's perspective on the Holocaust in the genealogy of colonialism was heavily criticised in the review sections of German-speaking newspapers, for example by Claudius Seidl in an article in the *FAZ* on 28.2.2021 (Seidl 2021) or Thomas Schmid in the *WELT* on 26.2.2021 (Schmid 2021).

In the context of the globalised world of the early twenty-first century, there is not quite as much to learn from the German example than from the cases of Rwanda, Cambodia, and Serbia. Existing works by Philip Gourevitch (1999) and Alison Des Forges (2002) on Rwanda or the captivating, analytically informative reports written by Slavenka Drakulic (2004) on the trials against Serbia in The Hague are testimony to the coherence of Eric Weitz's arguments, right down to the details, highlighting, in particular, aspects of propaganda backed by the media as well as the complicity of the international community.

For this reason, any theory of genocide and its prevention guided by the present will most certainly — and this is something the theory of totalitarianism admittedly does — have to focus on the development and dissemination of radical utopian, nationalist, socialist, or even religious fundamentalist theories among members of the elite in volatile societies. Such a theory will however have to accept the factors of instability in the intermediate areas, the folds of the politically organised globe, where there is a threat of civil war, in other words where public order has simply disintegrated or the political interests of the great power blocs tend to be insignificant, but where the economic interests of powerful corporations dominate all the more. We are most likely to find the answers to these questions in books such as Herfried Münkler's (2015) — in themselves

quite heterogeneous works on the “new wars”, but what they all lack is something that an outsider, unfortunately largely unnoticed, already tried to do some years ago, namely to take a social science approach to root cause analysis. One does not need to agree with every aspect of Hartmut Diessenbacher’s analysis, conceived along Malthusian lines, in order to see that, his work *Kriege der Zukunft. Die Bevölkerungsexplosion gefährdet den Frieden* (Wars of the future. The population explosion is a threat to peace) (Diessenbacher 1998) presents a type of analysis that essentially allows us to identify long-term risks and implement preventative counter-strategies.

The approach taken by the international community up till now, which is to round up troops at some point and, if necessary, to invade, is — and this is something that is shown both by the literature on the new wars and diverse historical analyses — not the solution but rather a part of the problem that serves only to exacerbate the situation. This can also be expressed more simply: Today, the way to reduce the likelihood of genocide in the danger zones of this globalised world is to stabilise the global food situation and population growth, to facilitate modest economic growth in the poor countries of the world in order to reduce excessive inequality, to rein in exploitative corporations internationally and, most importantly, to prevent war in all its dimensions. Here, too, the analogy with criminology is rather fitting: even the most efficient of police forces or fairest and most just of legal systems cannot prevent a crime from occurring if the root causes of the problem in society are not tackled.

In Article I of the Convention touched on at the beginning of this excursus, the signatories solemnly avowed punish and prevent genocide. The dominant debate today would appear to be more about punishing genocide in a way that might even have a deterrent effect. However, before punishment can even be meted out, the crime that the Genocide Convention describes as an “odious scourge”, must already have been committed. Here we must call for the discourse to be reversed and to consider developing a systematic approach to genocide prevention.

Given the public concern triggered by the debate about the colonial crimes committed predominantly by European powers, another question that has been increasingly discussed is whether, for example, the support of Zionism as well as the creation of the state of Israel was only possible in a colonial context or whether even this issue is really a case of “Israel-related antisemitism”, as implied in the resolution condemning the Palestinian BDS movement adopted by the German Bundestag in May 2019, for example.

CHAPTER 5
ZIONISM AND
POSTCOLONIAL
CRITIQUE

Without wanting in any way to accuse Zionism of such colonial crimes, against the background of the debate surrounding Achille Mbembe and his theories, or more to the point in light of the debate on postcolonial criticism of Israel, we cannot avoid addressing the following questions. First: Was the Zionist settlement of Palestine since the mid-nineteenth century only conceivable and possible under colonial conditions. Second: Was the de facto creation of the State of Israel in May 1948 only possible under colonial conditions? And third: Is the State of Israel with its borders prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war — this is not about the occupied territories — a “state of Jews or a Jewish state”? Before we can even begin to tackle these questions, however, we need to be clear on what “Zionism” actually is.

The only way we can properly understand modern Zionism is if we acknowledge first, the undeniable fact of modern antisemitism since the eighteenth century, extending from Russia to France; second, the dominant ideology of the ethnic nation-state that prevailed in the nineteenth century, an ideology that the big empires were intended to replace; and third, the fantasies rooted in the history of philosophy that evolved with the development of modern Greece and the creation of modern Italy (for more on this, see Brumlik 2019).

One of the biggest advocates of this was philosopher, publicist, and friend of Karl Marx, Moses Hess (1812–1875). As a young man Hess, the son of a Rabbi, had been a communist and comrade-in-arms of Marx. However, in 1862, at the age of 50, in response to antisemitism and the anticipated failure of communism, Hess distanced himself from communism, publishing *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*, a work that for a long time went unnoticed. In the context of the Polish and Hungarian independence movements at the time and the emergence of a (Republican) Italy, as well as modern Greece, Hess saw, after more than two millennia, the rebirth of the very people that had given Europe its character: the Greeks/Hellenics, the Romans, and the Jews! That said, with almost uncanny lucidity, Hess already saw a devastating race war looming: “Just as after the last catastrophe of organic life, when the historical races came into the world’s arena..., so after the last catastrophe in social life, when the spirit of humanity shall have reached its maturity, will our people, with the other historical people, find its legitimate place in universal history.” (Hess 1918: 178)

If we initially only consider the theory or — if you will — the *Weltanschauung*, it is evident that Zionism is rooted in two independent sets of cir-

cumstances. First, it stems from the indisputable existence of European antisemitism, which, in the countries of Western Europe, is expressed as social ostracism of and discrimination against Jews — even in countries where in an era of emancipation, Jews were formally granted the same civil rights (and here the Dreyfus affair, in particular, comes to mind). And second, it is rooted in the experience of the frequently fatal pogroms, which occurred again and again especially in Eastern Europe and Russia.

At the latest since Theodor Herzl, Zionism has thus been considered rooted in the project that was the Jewish people's creation of their own *State of Jews* — which is not the same thing as a Jewish state — as well as in the cultural Zionism advocated most prominently by Herzl's contemporary, Ahad Ha'am ("one of the people"), otherwise known as Ascher Ginsberg (1856-1927). The objective of this cultural Zionism was for the Jews to primarily see themselves as a dispersed cultural nation and not — as many assimilated Jews believed — merely as a monotheistic confession. Whether and how these two forms of Zionism — one advocating the foundation of a state and the other cultural — were meant to culminate, as promised in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in the creation of a Jewish community in Palestine, on the territory of what was then the Ottoman Empire, is, however, a different and indeed highly complex question. After all, contrary to what is often assumed — especially in post-war (Western) Germany — the State of Israel may have been established after the Holocaust, but it was not established in response to the Holocaust.

In fact, in reaction to European antisemitism, the Jews had been settling in Palestine in small but gradually growing numbers since the end of the nineteenth century. Besides, even much larger scale immigration of Jews to Palestine would not have saved their lives, had the British Army in the Middle East under Field Marshall Montgomery not succeeded in defeating the German Africa Corps under General Rommel in 1942. The "Yishuv" — the Jewish community or settlement — in Palestine had already prepared to take refuge on Mount Carmel in anticipation of a German invasion, while in Greece the SS had begun testing the first mobile death camps in the form of "gassing vans" (for more on this, see Gorenberg 2021; Segev 1993: 67–81; Mallmann/Cüppers 2006).

After the Battle of El Alamein, however, the danger of the Nazis destroying what was to be the new Jewish homeland was averted; a significant number of men and women from the Yishuv who were of fighting age joined the British Army — including Hannah Szenes who, originally from Hungary, had emigrated to Palestine, and in 1943 had parachuted into Hungary

where she was then murdered by the Hungarian police, who were affiliated with the German National Socialists. Apart from repeated instances of friction with the Palestinian Arabs, in the final years of the war, the Jewish population was able to devote itself to expanding the Yishuv, which later culminated in the formal creation of the Jewish state.

The partition of Palestine stipulated in Resolution 181 adopted by the United Nations in November 1947 was legitimate from the perspective of international law, as it was intended to defuse a conflict that was simmering on the eve of the Cold War. What is not widely known in this context, however, is that this partition plan would never have had a majority, had the Soviet Union, at the time under Stalin, along with its satellites, not voted in favour of the plan — motivated by the belief that a socialist State of Israel would be able to help counter British influence in the Middle East. It was one thing for a military coalition of Arab states to invade the State of Israel shortly after it had declared its independence in May 1948 — a move that was in violation of international law. The fact that Israel largely won this war because it received significant arms shipments from Czechoslovakia, which even then was already influenced by the Soviet Union, was an entirely different thing altogether. That said, this defensive war gave the Israeli state not only the chance to conquer contiguous territory but also an opportunity to displace, to some extent systematically, 700,000 Palestinian Arabs (see Pappé 2007 and Morris 2008), enabling them to take possession of their land, crops, and property, and create a legal foundation for doing so by legally revoking the right of return or repatriation for refugee or displaced Palestinian Arabs, in order to assign ownership to the new Jewish immigrants (see Gerjes/Lobel 1970: 95f.).

For the Jews of the predominantly European diaspora, who had six million victims to mourn and needed emotional compensation for the traumas they had experienced during the Holocaust, the emergence and the establishment of the State of Israel was like a miracle akin to the biblical scene of death and resurrection. The relationship and identification with the State of Israel still applies — albeit to a diminishing extent — to Jews living in the diaspora today, especially if their religious education is on the decline. The “Land of Israel” (“Erez Israel”) was always of vital importance to the Jewish faith, which is evidenced by the fact alone that one of the verses of the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy, the Amidah (also known as “Shemoneh Esreh” which is Hebrew for eighteen, see Sluis among others 2005: 231–242) repeatedly asks for the return of God to Zion. These words were removed in nineteenth-century Reform Judaism, which is not in keeping with the essence of Rabbinical Judaism, given that the Rabbis

of late antiquity already debated the relationship between the promised land of Israel and the fulfilment of religious duties. They were divided over whether these duties could in fact only be carried out properly in the land of Israel, in other words whether this proper fulfilment was only possible with the Messianic, eschatological return of God to Zion.

Of course, the Rabbis of late antiquity, not to mention the people who wrote the biblical scriptures, had no concept of the romantic term of the nation and its state, which precludes any attempt to capture the emergence of the State of Israel in theological categories, such as that being made by the Israeli settler movement since 1967. Zionism is in fact a typical case of the romantic nationalism that largely originated in the nineteenth century, a nationalism which after the Second World War seemed to have been gradually overcome, yet which is currently experiencing a renaissance as a parry against different forms of political and, in particular, economic globalisation.

Regarding the original reason for Zionism, however, that being hatred of Jews in all its forms and manifestations and endangerment of life and limb, in particular, it has to be said that despite the fatal attacks both in the USA and in Germany (we only need to recall the attack on the synagogue in Halle), in no other country in the world is the life and limb of Jews in more in danger than in Israel and the occupied territories. That said, it is important to note that the relationship between the Jews of Israel and the Jews of the diasporic communities is curiously fractured. For one — and this is mainly for theological reasons —, the notion of “Chaverim Kol Yisrael” (All of Israel are friends) still applies today although all this means is that all members of the Jewish people make up, at least in a moral if not political sense, a reciprocal community of responsibility. On the other hand, something else that has applied since the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BC and continues to apply to this day are the words of the prophet of the diaspora Jeremiah (29,7) expressing God’s instructions should the Jews be forced into exile: “seek the peace of the city” (“dirshu et shalom ha’ir”).

In any case, what holds true for the thoroughly modern movement of state-building Zionism is that the very Jewish people that took on the political form of a sovereign nation is ultimately solely responsible for itself and its own mode of existence, and will continue to be so. This means, however, that the State of Israel cannot assume the responsibility for the life and mode of existence of Jewish communities in the diaspora; nor is it the distinct or particular responsibility of the Jews in the diaspora to

defend or criticise the politics of Israel and its democratic sovereign. The latter is the responsibility of state-building Zionism, especially in the form of the “nation-builder” (and here the term is really very apt) David Ben-Gurion, who expressed with almost unsurpassed clarity in as early as 1949 in reference to the Jewish community in the USA: “No Jew in the Diaspora, be he Zionist or non-Zionist, can take part in the government of Israel. The state is sovereign, and its regime, constitution and government will be determined only by the will of its citizens... On the other hand, the State of Israel does not represent the Jewish people in the world, nor is the Government of Israel entitled to speak on behalf of world Jewry... A Jew in the State of Israel has no particular prerogative to deal with [worldwide] Jewish matters in preference to any other Jew elsewhere.” (Segev 2018: 339)

It was Raw Avraham Kook (1865–1935), an Orthodox Rabbi during the first half of the twentieth century, who attempted to create a modern political theology of the resettlement of the Jewish people in the land of Israel even before the arrival of the Messiah. This made Kook the founder of the religious Zionism that the settlers in the West Bank continue to depend on — albeit far from justifiably — to this day (on this, see Brumlik 2015: 53). This aside, there is no doubt that in spite of being repeatedly driven out by the Romans, (admittedly small) groups of Jews have lived in the land of Israel for two thousand years and that in the Jewish liturgy (especially the Jewish family holiday of Passover) the powerful phrase “Next Year in Jerusalem” has acquired genuinely special meaning. This liturgical but also existential longing is expressed in the poetry of the medieval poet Yehuda Halevi (1075–1141), whose Hebrew poems proclaimed a particular longing for Zion. That said, in accordance with medieval Jewish Orthodoxy, it held true that only the future saviour sent by God would lead the Jewish people back to his land — so that only on their return would the pacification of the whole world begin.

It was medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) who declared faith in the coming of the Messiah to be mandatory, admittedly associating this with the very sobering idea that the Jewish people could at least then live in safety within their own state (see Patai 1979: 323–327). It was the aforementioned Raw Kook who, as a consequence of this idea, described the first thoroughly atheist and socialist settlers as the predecessors of the Messiah. Unlike Maimonides, for whom the Messiah was not an eschatological prince of freedom, his slightly younger contemporary Nachmanides (1194–1270) declared, invoking the Prophet Isaiah in a documented Jewish-Christian debate, that the Messiah would not only liberate the Jewish people but would in fact redeem the whole world. In

light of all this, it becomes clear that, as a worldview, (state-building) Zionism did not even become possible until modern times — in other words in a time that was also seen as an era of European expansion. In light of all this, it becomes clear that, as a worldview, (state-building) Zionism did not even become possible until modern times — in other words in a time that was also seen as an era of European expansion. In any case, Zionism did in fact have earlier precursors that, conceptually speaking, were down to the growth and expansion of Europe — and not from a theological perspective.

Two early modern Jewish scholars in particular deserve a mention here: the Prague Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (1512–1609), who is seen as the creator of the legend of the Golem, and the renowned philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), both of whom discussed the principle of the nation-state as well as the notion of a Jewish nation-state in the former land of Israel. In his book *Nezach Israel* published in 1591, Loew wrote that “Exile is a departure from the natural order, through which God put every people in the place to which they were most suited. ... The place that was assigned to them according to the order of all that exists was Erez Israel ..., insofar as a natural entity is not divided. ... And as the Jewish nation is an undivided nation, albeit more disparate than any other nation ..., this dispersion is against nature.” (quoted in Ben-Sasson 1979: 394, own translation)

Half a century later, particularly during the course of European expansion, this early modern theory of (ethnic) nationhood found further confirmation — at least with regard to the Jewish people. For example, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (A Theologico-Political Treatise), published in 1670 in Amsterdam, referring to the expansion of the Dutch colonies in Asia, (Marrano) philosopher Baruch Spinoza prophesied that the Jewish people would experience a similar revival to the Chinese. Spinoza knew of the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* founded in the Netherlands in 1602, in the context of which a man by the name of Jan Pieterszoon Coen (!) presented an initial plan for how Dutch colonies could be established in Southeast Asia (see Schmitt 1987: 71–80). Further, Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657, see Roth/Offenberg 2007 for more on ben Israel) with whom Spinoza was at least superficially familiar, and who was to play a key role in the negotiations for the readmission of Jews to England, and for his part had planned to emigrate to Brazil, penned in 1650 a book titled *The Hope of Israel*, in which he claimed that the lost ten tribes of Israel had been rediscovered in Latin America. In any case, Spinoza wrote the following in his Treatise: “Nay, I would go so far as to believe that if the foundations of their religion have not emasculated their minds they may even,

if occasion offers, so changeable are human affairs, raise up their empire afresh, and that God may a second time elect them.... Of such a possibility we have a very famous example in the Chinese... They have not always retained empire, but they have recovered it when lost." (Spinoza 2000: 37)

All these — let's call them "proto-Zionist" — approaches would go on to be fundamentally altered by the ideas set out by Theodor Herzl in his book *The Jewish State* written in 1896 — as this political Zionism, which saw itself as something different to the aforementioned cultural Zionism, was really about the creation of a state for persecuted Jews — wherever that may be. In reaction to the French Dreyfus affair, Theodor Herzl, who was initially assimilatory minded, not only turned away from the idea of a mass baptism of all Jews but also conceived the idea of a Jewish state in a sparsely populated territory, although at the start at least, it was not important where this state of Jews — which is not the same as a Jewish state — was to be established. Indeed, Palestine, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire at the time, was not the only place Herzl was thinking of. In fact, he thought just as much about Argentina or the East African country of Uganda, which at that time was ruled by Great Britain. Moreover, Herzl sought to understand the Jews in a modern sense as a "nation" and wrote as much in *The Jewish State*: "I think the Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one.... It is a national question..."⁴³

It was Theodor Herzl (see Avineri 2016) and his close collaborator Max Nordau (see Schulte 1996) who developed what was seen as "political", state-building Zionism. At the latest since the First Zionist Congress in 1897, this "political Zionism" began to replace similarly oriented endeavours by the organisation "Hovevei Zion" (Lovers of Zion), endeavours that had more philanthropic motives and that were especially pronounced in Russia and Poland (see Schoeps 2005). In fact, it was the aforementioned Moses Hess who, a few years before this in 1862, disenchanted with socialism's futile struggle against antisemitism wrote his proto-Zionist work *Rome and Jerusalem*, the publication of which went largely unnoticed (for more on this, see Naaman 1982 and Weiß 2015). Broadly speaking, modern, state-building or "political Zionism" saw the Jews as a nation — and this in reaction to the different forms of antisemitism found in Western and Eastern Europe.

43 *The Jewish State*, published by the American Zionist Emergency Council for its constituent organizations on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the publication of "DER JUDENSTAAT" in Vienna, 14 February, 1896, 75–76, available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25282/25282-h/25282-h.htm#toc>

This raises the question of how to define the term “nation”, and here there are essentially two distinct meanings. The first definition being a political community built on the will of all citizens irrespective of origin, which is the definition that applied during the French Revolution and, to a certain extent, also the earlier American Revolution of 1776. And the second definition being an ethnic community whose members were bound by their common origins and language. But who were the Jewish people? Politically, Zionism comprised three different currents: First, cultural Zionism, which sought mainly for the Jews to see themselves as one people with one language and a common ethnic consciousness, in other words a culturally defined ethnic group that also possessed a geographical centre (the land of Israel), albeit one where it was not mandatory for all Jews to live. The second form was socialist Zionism, which focused primarily on getting as many of the world’s Jews to the land of Israel, so that they could, by working on the land and creating communist forms of community, leave behind their “unnatural”, allegedly alienated modes of existence as merchants, scholars, and intellectuals. The third current, which is important to mention here, is “political Zionism” as represented by Theodor Herzl and physician and cultural critic Max Nordau, and later Vladimir Zhabotinsky (on the latter, see Halkin 2014 and Stanislawski 2001: 116–237), who was primarily an advocate of territorial statehood — if necessary, even with the use of violence. Indeed, Zhabotinsky was one of the most vocal advocates of this concept.

EXCURSUS: VLADIMIR YEVGENYEVICH ZHABOTINSKY (ZE’EV JABOTINSKY)

Almost a hundred years ago, in November 1923, a Russian newspaper entitled *Rassvet* (Dawn) was published by Jewish emigrants in Paris. In an editorial which appeared under the headline “The Iron Wall” the author, who convincingly argues for equality of all people, expresses his conviction that there will never be a voluntary peaceful settlement between the Jewish colonisers and the Arabs in Palestine because there is no historical precedent of a colonised people voluntarily surrendering to the colonisers. According to the author, the Arabs of Palestine “feel at least the same instinctive jealous love of Palestine, as the old Aztecs felt for ancient Mexico, and the Sioux for their rolling prairies.”⁴⁴ In stark contrast to the synthesis of building a settlement in the country and international diplomatic

44 Jabotinsky, *The Iron Wall*, <http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>, 2

efforts as represented by Zionist politicians such as Chaim Weizmann, this author believes that Zionism either has to cease its efforts or advance its interests with no consideration at all for the native population. According to the author of the editorial, however, this is only possible with the protection of an “Iron Wall”, in other words an army of Jewish or British soldiers. The author was well aware that this practice of state establishment using military means was controversial but goes on to write nevertheless: “We hold that Zionism is moral and just. And since it is moral and just, justice must be done, no matter whether Joseph or Simon or Ivan or Achmet agree with it or not.”⁴⁵

The man who penned these lines, Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky (Ze'ev Jabotinsky), was born in 1880 in Odessa on the Black Sea into an “assimilated” middle-class Jewish family. His novel *The Five*, written in 1935 but not published in German until 2012, revives the flair of turn-of-the-century Odessa, the city of his birth. In lucid, never accusatory prose, Jabotinsky describes the life, love and suffering of an assimilated Jewish family, concluding with the words: “It was an amusing city; and laughter itself is a form of tenderness. By the way, there’s probably been no trace left of that for quite some time now, and there is no reason to regret that I’ll never get back there...” (Jabotinsky 2014: 201). Jabotinsky, who attended a Russian school, had a religious upbringing and learned Hebrew, although by his own admission he had no inner connection with Judaism. After completing his school-leaving exams in 1898, he went on to study law in Bern and Rome, working as a correspondent for two Odessan newspapers under the pseudonym “Altalena”. In Rome, Jabotinsky, who rejected Marxism as “mechanistic”, first became a socialist, then an individualist and nationalist.

Years later he confessed that Italy was his spiritual fatherland, stating that the myth of Italy’s unifier Garibaldi, the works of the republican politician Mazzini, and Leopardi’s poetry helped transform what he referred to as his “shallow Zionism” from an instinctive feeling to a reasoned worldview. In fact, even before the First World War, he translated large parts of Dante’s *Inferno* into Hebrew. In 1901, back in Odessa, influenced by the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903, Jabotinsky became a Zionist and in the same year attended the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel, where he met Theodor Herzl in person and subsequently, with his impressive talent for languages — he had a good command of Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, English, Ital-

45 Jabotinsky, *The Iron Wall*, <http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>, 7

ian, and French — tirelessly campaigned for the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

In 1908, the Zionist Executive posted him to the Ottoman Empire to participate in talks on the Jewish settlement of Palestine — his first opportunity to see the territory of the much longed for state with his own eyes. After World War One broke out, as a correspondent for Moscow newspaper, Jabotinsky travelled to the Egyptian port city of Alexandria where he met with a Jewish war veteran from the Army of the Tsars, Joseph Trumpeldor. A group of Jewish settlers from Palestine were also staying in Alexandria, having been deported by the Young Turk authorities under suspicion of having collaborated with Great Britain. Together with Trumpeldor, who had fought in the Russo-Japanese War, Jabotinsky developed the idea of a “Jewish Legion”, which initially led to no more than the “Zion Mule Corps”, a volunteer transport company formed by Jews that was part of the British Army.

In 1917, the British High Command finally gave in to pressure from the Corps and created the “38th Battalion of Royal Fusiliers”, whose cap badge bore the symbol of a menorah. Jabotinsky signed up and even received honours for leading the group across Jordan. As a result of his political campaigning for a Jewish state, he was imprisoned in Akko fortress by the British Mandate Authorities but then released in 1921 to become a hero of the Yishuv. In the same year, during the pogrom-like turmoil of the Ukrainian Civil War, Jabotinsky, who had always sympathised with the Ukrainian national movement, negotiated in vain with the emissary of the Ukrainian government in exile under Symon Petlura (1879–1926) to spare the Jews living in Ukraine. But the negotiations came to nothing.

Frustrated with the hesitant approach of the World Zionist Organization, Jabotinsky founded, first in 1925 and then again in 1935, another dissident Zionist organisation that sought the revival of Herzl’s original idea of the restoration of a Jewish state, radical change in British policy in favour of Jewish immigration, as well as the creation of a Jewish state on both banks of the River Jordan, and rejected any form of compromise with the Arabs. According to Jabotinsky’s will, however, this Jewish state should guarantee the Arab minority equal rights in cultural and religious affairs. Thus, he always envisaged the future Jewish state being led by a Jewish president with an Arab vice president by their side.

After Hitler came to power, Jabotinsky tirelessly warned of the danger that National Socialism posed for European Jews, strongly advocating a

boycott of National Socialist Germany as well as against the “Haavara Agreement”. According to this Agreement, Jews would be permitted, before World War Two, to leave Nazi Germany for Palestine under certain economic conditions (see Weiss 2012: 490–494). Germany retaliated against Jabotinsky with a pamphlet entitled “Zionism, The Enemy of the State” (1938) written by Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. During the same period — just months before Hitler invaded Poland — Jabotinsky lobbied the governments of Poland, Romania, and Hungary to approve an “evacuation plan”, in other words a mass exodus of one and a half million European Jews to Palestine — an initiative that was vehemently rejected by Polish and US American Jewry.

In September/October 1939, Jabotinsky wrote a letter analysing the situation with extreme clarity: East European Jewry, the main potential of Zionism, has been destroyed and the remainder will have been swallowed up by the Soviet Union. Ultimately, however, the Yishuv in Palestine is powerless and, in the best case, Jewish-Arab troops will be established which will only reinforce the unresolved status quo in Palestine. In February 1940, Jabotinsky left Europe for the USA, where in August of the same year while visiting a Zionist young organisation near New York, he suffered a fatal heart attack. The head of the Yishuv at the time, his close friend David Ben-Gurion, refused to have his remains sent to Israel, arguing that Israel needing living Jews and not dead ones. It was only Prime Minister Levi Eschkol who reversed this decision and allowed Jabotinsky’s remains to be buried on the Herzlberg in Jerusalem in 1964.

In a very meticulous study, historian Michael Stanislawski described Jabotinsky as a “cosmopolitan nationalist” (Stanislawski 2001: 203f), while his political enemies — especially socialist Zionists like Ben-Gurion — accused him of being a “fascist” because he ran a naval academy in Mussolini’s Italy from 1934 to 1938, and others still see him as a liberal individualist who believed the rights of the individual took precedence over the interests of ideological communities. Evidence that Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky was no retrograde, ethnic-nationalist fanatic can be seen in the novel he wrote in 1927 about the biblical hero Samson. This novel was republished in German in 2013 under the title *Judge and Fool (Richter und Narr)*. The story, set in a mythical time before the Jews, leaves us in no doubt that Samson, the Danite hero who was strongly reminiscent of Siegfried of the Nibelung Saga, was a spiritually flawed man who only had the refined culture of the (Greek) Philistines to thank for all that he eventually became.

We do not know what position Jabotinsky would have taken towards the fundamentalist, Arab-hating settlers of *Gusch Emunim* if he had been alive today. There is no doubt that he was more upright than the majority of Zionist theorists, whose zigzagging from nationalism to socialism was the subject of a study by Zeev Sternhell, Israeli theorist on the phenomenon of fascism (Sternhell 1999). The Marxist debate of the 1980s frequently referred to “Western Marxism” — perhaps Jabotinsky’s approach could be described as “Western Zionism”. This was a highly problematic programme, and, in the words of Jabotinsky’s biographer Joseph Schechtman, no-one was more aware of that than the “rebel and statesman” (Schechtman 1956), “fighter and prophet” (ibid. 1961) that was Jabotinsky.

However, Jabotinsky was not the only one to be under no illusions about the Zionist project and describe it as being unavoidably colonialist in nature (see Fürtig 2016). Even socialist founder of the State of Israel David Ben-Gurion as well as the aforementioned Yosef Weitz expressed similar views. Weitz, for instance, at the time one of the directors of the Jewish National Fund, had already advocated complete resettlement in as early as 1940 (!):

It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples. ... If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us. ... The only solution is a Land of Israel, at least a western Land of Israel, without Arabs. There is no room here for compromises. ... There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them, save perhaps for Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the old Jerusalem. Not one village must be left, not one tribe. The transfer must be directed at Iraq, Syria and even Transjordan. For this goal funds will be found. ... And only after this transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers and the Jewish problem will cease to exist.” According to Weitz: “There is no other solution. (Boehm 2021: 109)

And in 1938, Ben-Gurion, too, stated, as quoted in Tom Segev’s biography (2019): “I favor forced transfer. I do not see it as something immoral, but forced transfer is possible only by England and not by the Jews.”

Were there even any Jewish groups in Palestine at the time who opposed this policy? During the Mandate period and especially following the creation of the State of Israel, it was primarily left-wing communist groups of various hues, including Trotskyist (on this, see Fiedler 2017), that declared

themselves to be avowed anti-Zionists, but also figures such as writer Uri Avnery, who identified as citizens of a future Israeli State with internal structures that were no longer geared towards absorbing the Jews of the world, but, more importantly, towards reconciliation with the Arabs living in Israel and the creation of an Israeli nation. With the exception of ultra-Orthodoxy, one thing all these groups have in common is that they acknowledge as a historical fact the displacement of 700,000 Palestinian Arabs by Jewish militias and the Israeli Defence Army during the 1948 war and the fact that in many — albeit far from all — cases, they advocate a return of the Palestinians.

SO, AGAIN: IS ZIONISM A FORM OF COLONIALISM?

This, however, gives rise to the question of whether the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians that was facilitated by the Arab states' declaration of war following Israel's declaration of independence along with the earlier deliberate settlement of Palestine correspond to the classic model of colonialism. In the cases of Algeria, British India, and Indonesia, nothing of this kind happened; what is open to question, however, is whether the colonisation of North America, Australia, and New Zealand — territories which later declared independence — count as cases of colonialism. The displacement of the native Indians in North America and their confinement in reservations is sufficiently well known that it does not need to be documented again here — and the same applies to the Union of South Africa (on the latter, see Hagemann 2003: 59f.). In Canada, the native Indians, Mestizos, and Inuit who lived in tribal groups were not even granted the right to vote until 1960 (Sautter 2000: 107). In Australia, on the other hand, from the mid-nineteenth century the British colonial powers waged a fierce war against the Aborigines for land and pasture (Hagemann 2004: 56f.). Only in New Zealand did it prove possible from the mid-nineteenth century on to reach a more or less acceptable resolution to the conflict with the indigenous population, the Maori (see Reinhard 1996: 147–150).

In the dispute over Palestine and the alleged displacement of the Arabs living there, one fact is raised time and again — and rightly so — namely that during the time of the Mandate, there were just as many non-Jews — from Syria, for instance — immigrating to the British Mandate territory and, what is more, Jewish immigration in fact greatly improved the welfare of the Arab population, something which was also confirmed by the Peel Report (see Karsh 2010: 13). In any event, in the interwar years the Jewish population in Palestine adhered to socialist Zionism, a movement

which purchased land before the First World War, when Palestine was still part of the Ottoman Empire, in order to create communist communal settlements based on a voluntary programme known as *kibbutzim*. The most important force, however, was probably the youth movement founded in Poland in 1913 known as *Haschomer Hazair* (Young Sentinels). This anti-bourgeois, social revolutionary, “leftist” Zionism (akin to the *Bündische Jugend* German youth group after the First World War), which originated primarily in Russia and Poland and was also influenced by communist and anarchist ideas, focused largely on what was seen as “self-realization”.

One of the most important spiritual forces behind this movement was Aharon David Gordon, who was born near Zhytomyr in 1856 and died in Degania Kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee in 1922. Gordon, who emigrated to Palestine in 1904 at almost 50 years of age, created a Tolstoyan, though anti-Marxist community doctrine with strong elements of natural religion (Gordon 1929). In a letter sent from Palestine, Gordon writes: “Labour must be national. Labour is the people, the entire strength of the people. Their struggle is not a class struggle, it is a national struggle, the struggle of a people against its parasites.” (ibid.: 273, own translation) This view was directed at groups of Marxist Zionists, such as the *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) and their leader Ber Borochov, whose mission was not to create *kibbutzim*, but rather to unite class conscious workers from Palestine cities with Arab workers to campaign for the creation of a socialist state. Here, Borochov took a Marxist position, postulating a law of history according to which the Jewish workers of the diaspora would, with a certain inevitability, begin to lean towards emigrating to Palestine (on this, see Katz 2010).

The most significant movement of socialist Zionism was the aforementioned *Haschomer Hazair* (The Young Sentinels — on this group, see the articles on the homepage of JewishGen.org | The Global Home for Jewish Genealogy: www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rzeszow/rze172.html), a youth movement founded in Poland in 1913 which consistently campaigned for a political alliance of Jews and Arabs and which, besides being a social democratic association (*Ihud ha-Kvutzot ve-ha-Kibbutzim* — Union of *kibbutzim* and groups) up until the mid-1970s, was an important, if not the most important component of the *kibbutz* movement. The political culture of the State of Israel tended towards the social democratic and was strongly influenced by trade unions and organised Zionists well into the 1970s. These included the founder of the Israeli State, David Ben-Gurion, as well as Berl Katznelson, editor-in-chief of the Hebrew-language daily *Davar* who had emigrated to Palestine in 1909 (for more on Katznelson, see Shapira 1988).

An entirely different approach was taken by a small group of intellectuals primarily from German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia) who had emigrated to Palestine. In the 1930s, the members of this group — which has already been mentioned in connection with Hugo Bergmann — came together to create a covenant of peace — Brith Shalom — that sought peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. The members of Brith Shalom included prominent figures such as Gershom Scholem, founder of the academic study of Kabbalah, philosophers Hugo Bergmann and Martin Buber, as well as Judah Leon Magnes, the first chancellor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem that was established in 1925. And it was these very groups Jabotinsky's political Zionism was directed at, based as it was on power and conflict.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the Zionist settlement of Palestine smacked of colonialism — and this is something that even Israeli historian and director of the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig, Yfaat Weiss, concedes. When recently asked her view on the postcolonial approaches in Zionist research, she responded as follows, unawares of the apparently provocative nature of her words: “Any Zionist interested in the settlement of Palestine would be well aware that this was a colonial endeavour. The German-language documents in the Zionist archives consistently referred to the ‘Kolonisierung Palästinas’ [the colonisation of Palestine].... But the idea that we can just dip into the toolbox of postcolonial theories and find an approach with more explanatory power than those that already exist is something I am rather sceptical about.” (quoted in Hirte/Klinggräff 2020: 557, own translation)

That said, against the background of postcolonial criticism of the foundation of a Zionist or, rather, Israeli State, such as that also voiced by Achille Mbembe, we must ask ourselves what form of colonialism this state-building and the settlement of Palestine that came before it actually took. First of all, it has to be noted that a descriptive theory of colonialism distinguishes between several different types: trade colonialism, military colonialism, and settler colonialism. In the online Lexikon zur Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa (glossary of culture and history of Germans in Eastern Europe) produced by Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, under the entry for “colonialism”, the first, very apt, definition draws on the ideas of historian Jürgen Osterhammel: “Colonialism is defined as the endeavours of one collective to establish and stabilise a relationship of domination over a culturally foreign collective. The colonised collective is deprived of fundamental possibilities to conduct an autonomous life, and the dominance is typically justified with as-

sumed cultural superiority and the notion of a civilising mission.” (Kiene-mann 2013, own translation)

Osterhammel himself provided a second definition in his book *Kolonialismus. Geschichte — Formen — Folgen* (colonialism. History, forms, consequences): “Colonialism is a relationship of domination between collectives in which the fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonised people are made and implemented by a culturally different minority of colonial rulers, themselves largely unwilling to assimilate, in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. In modern times, this is usually accompanied by ideological justification doctrines based on the colonial rulers’ conviction of their own cultural superiority” (Osterhammel 2009: 21, own translation). But does this apply to the Zionism and the Zionist settlement of Palestine that has been observed since the last third of the nineteenth century? In any case, from this perspective, there are three different historical stages that must be examined: First, the Jewish or Zionist settlement of Palestine since the second third of the nineteenth century; second, the creation of the State of Israel itself; and third, the conquest and colonisation of the West Bank after Israel’s victory in the Six Day War in 1967 to today, the early twenty-first century.

A closer analysis of the discussion will reveal first and foremost that what constitutes “postcolonial” critique of Zionism and is ultimately denounced as a form of “Israel-oriented antisemitism”, already has a long history. In as early as 1967, in an article that appeared in the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, founded and published by Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, French Marxist historian and orientalist Maxime Rodinson (1915–2004; son of Jewish parents who perished in Auschwitz) expressed the view that Israel was a colonial-settler state (Rodinson 1967 and 1968). In reference to the debate surrounding Rodinson’s book *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*, Charles Glass wrote in an article for *The Guardian* in May 2001: “Rodinson’s book *Israel: A Colonial Settler State?* required a question-mark in its title that Segev and Shepherd would probably remove. In what he referred to as ‘an obvious diagnosis’, Rodinson took Israeli statehood to be the ‘culmination of a process that fits perfectly into the great European-American movement of expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries whose aim was to settle new inhabitants among other peoples or to dominate them economically and politically’”⁴⁶

46 www.theguardian.com/books/2001/may/31/londonreviewofbooks

But it was not just Rodinson's ideas that triggered a broad debate, especially among Jewish authors, including those living in Israel. In as early as 1970, for example, Eli Lobel and Sabri Geris gave the second chapter of their book *Die Araber in Israel* (*The Arabs in Israel*) the title "For Jewish colonisation" (Lobel/Geris 1970). Another example is Nathan Weinstock's book *Zionism: False Messiah*, which he wrote after the Six Day War and which came out in German translation in 1975. In this work, Weinstock distinguishes between the different phases of the "history of colonisation" (Weinstock 1969). Weinstock, who was born in 1939, has since recanted his statements on the roots of the conflict in Palestine, going as far as to withdraw his permission for the book to be published. In 1980, this was followed by the publication of a book written by Dan Diner, *Israel in Palästina. Über Tausch und Gewalt im Vorderen Orient* (*Israel in Palestine. About exchange and violence in the Middle East*), in which the author not only refers to Maxim Rodinson but also attempts to interpret the conflict between the Arabs in Palestine and the Zionist movement using categories developed by the legal theorist Carl Schmitt (Diner 1980).

In 1992, Anita Shapira published her monograph *Land and Power. The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948*, in which she writes: "The Jewish Colonists had no particular sympathy for the Arab. In their eyes, he was a foreigner, with strange customs and a religion and system of values different from what they had been accustomed to among their Gentile neighbors ... Achad Ha'am [pseudonym of Ascher Ginsberg, 1856–1927, leading cultural Zionist, M.B.] gained a highly unfavorable image of the colonists toward their Arab neighbors: 'They behave hostilely and cruelly toward the Arabs, encroaching upon them unjustly, beating them disgracefully for no good reason, and then they do not hesitate to boast about their deeds.'" (Shapira 1992: 58)

Subsequently, Zeev Sternhell sought to show that the settlement of Palestine resulting from the Zionist movement would ultimately culminate in "nationalist socialism" (Sternhell 1999). Lastly, in 2004, Ilan Pappé was convinced that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, an international constellation was created "...that suited Europeans to visit, occupy, settle or radically transform the land. ...These newcomers varied in origin, ideology and purpose, and yet were all colonizers, Christian Missionaries and Zionist settlers alike. Colonialism is not just a catchword explaining motivation; it also implies certain consequences. So, depicting all the new arrivals in the formative period of Palestine as wishing to turn it into a 'modern' entity also shows something about the way they perceived the indigenous population." (Pappé 2004: 32)

At first glance a somewhat conflicting image emerges, with Angela Merkel, for example, seeing the State of Israel as an expression of a renaissance of the Jewish people who were killed in the millions by Germany and its collaborators, while over there the State of Israel is the epitome of a new form of colonialism, settler colonialism — an expression of the creation of the last colonial state, of all times at the point when the era of colonialism had largely come to an end following the conclusion of the Second World War. The clearest manifestation of the political injustice that went hand in hand with the establishment of the State of Israel, however, was the flight and expulsion of some 700,000 Palestinian Arabs in 1947/48, a fact that serious Israeli research has since acknowledged (see Morris 2004). In fact, in his book 1948. A History of the First Arab-Israeli War, Israeli historian Benny Morris takes this even further, writing: “In truth however, the Jews committed far more atrocities than the Arabs and killed far more civilians and POWs in deliberate acts of brutality in the course of 1948. This was probably due to the circumstance that the victorious Israelis captured some four hundred Arab villages and towns during April–November 1948.” (Morris 2008: 405)

A friend of Ben-Gurion, the poet Chaim Guri, saw a sheet of paper on his desk with a verse from the Book of Exodus (23: 29-30), which said in relation to the people of Canaan: “Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.”⁴⁷ Till this very day, right-wing fundamentalist Jewish settlers in the West Bank use these and similar bible verses to justify their actions.

The debate surrounding the question of whether the Zionist settlement of Palestine, the establishment of the State of Israel, as well as the occupation and settlement of the West Bank are a form of colonialism and if so, what form, temporarily came to an end in 2016 with three articles in the renowned international *Handbook of Israel: Major Debates, Volume 2* (Ben-Rafael, inter alia 2016). The principal article in this publication (ibid.: 794–808) was penned by Gershon Shafir, Israeli professor of sociology at the University of California San Diego, who was “President” of the Israel Studies Association from 2001 to 2003. A number of the points Shafir makes in his article are challenged by historian Tuvia Friling, professor at Ben-Gurion University in Be’er Sheva in his contribution “What do Those Who Claim Zionism is Colonialism Overlook” (Friling 2016), while Yitzhak Sternberg, a lecturer at Beit Berl College near Kfar Saba to the north of Tel

47 <https://www.bible.com/bible/111/EXO.23.30.NIV>

Aviv, argues in favour of reconciliation in his paper “The Colonialism/Colonization Perspective on Zionism/Israel” (Sternberg 2016).

Even in the twentieth century, the classic model of colonialism mentioned earlier in relation to Jürgen Osterhammel could also refer to the case of Algeria, India, or Indonesia, for example. Modern-day Algeria, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, was conquered by France in 1830, winning back its independence in 1962 after a decade-long war of independence fought on many different fronts. In 1756 the British East India Company had taken over parts of the Indian subcontinent, all of which would then go on to become a full-fledged British colony — a colony that became independent in 1947. Indonesia, too, had been under Dutch rule since 1908 before winning back its full independence over the period 1949 to 1955.

In other words, the traditional model of colonialism is based on a motherland that takes possession of — and exploits — the territories, workforce, and natural resources of the colony. History, however, has shown us other distinct forms of colonialism: trade colonialism, military colonialism, and settler colonialism. Shafir considers it an established fact that Zionism is a form of settler colonialism, although he fails to show evidence of the “motherland” that founded the colony. Similarly, Zionism does not appear to be based on the economic exploitation of the given indigenous workforce. Unlike other nation-states that were established in the late nineteenth century (especially in the Habsburg Empire, in East-Central Europe) the Jewish nation-state was not to be created by secession but through conquest and settlement — and therefore did not seek to exploit the population economically, but to create an ethnically homogeneous labour market that excluded the indigenous population as well as to achieve — and this was one of the requirements — an ethnic national, i.e. Jewish land monopoly as was the aim of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) established in 1901. Even the Hebrew name “Keren Kajemet Le Jissrael” (literally Israel land fund) shows that any land in the hands of this institution was only allowed to be owned and used by Jews. “The aims of the JNF and the Histadrut,” explained Gershon Shafir, “were the removal of land and labor from the market, respectively, thus closing them off to Palestinian Arabs (in Ben-Rafael 2016: 797).

This stood in stark contrast to the first Jewish colonies in Palestine whose owners regularly employed Arab workers. Unlike theorists who consider Zionist state-building that is not based on secession but rather on outmigration with all the exclusion strategies it entails to be unique, Shafir underlines that this was in fact not such a rare occurrence in the history of

colonialism — especially under the different forms of settler colonialism. To support this, he refers, for example, to Australia's policy of limiting Chinese immigration, the fierce resistance of English settlers in Kenya to the British government's plans to establish a Jewish homeland there, as well as the Chinese Exclusion Act passed by the US Congress in 1882. Even the worldview of the socialist kibbutz movement, which was crucial to the settlement process, did nothing to alter this fact, as the aforementioned studies by Shapira and Sternhell have shown. More to the point, important politicians from the Jewish Yishuv such as Yosef Weitz had already considered the idea of outmigration, of transferring the Arab population, at a relatively early stage.

In any case, Shafir does not hesitate to attribute Israel's occupation and settlement policy in the West Bank, which has been ongoing since 1967, to colonial rationale. In accordance with Israel's four legal land appropriation strategies — employment of the Ottoman Law Code on "uncultivated land", seizure for military needs, regulations governing "absentee property", as well as expropriation for public needs — around one third of the West Bank has been transferred to Israeli hands since 1967(see *ibid.*: 802f.).

Sternberg and Friling, however, see Shafir's uncompromising perspective as evidence of overly rigid determinism. According to them, Shafir does not differentiate between colonisation and colonialism. In fact, explains Ran Aronsohn, for example, "Colonization [is] a fundamentally geographic phenomenon — whose essence is immigration and the establishment of immigrant settlements in a new land that are distinctive from older traditional settlements — colonialism is a political and economic phenomenon, characterized by the forcible dominion and exploitation of a state over territory and population beyond its own borders. Whereas the former found expression in the establishment of a colony in the sense of the settlement generally similar to a European village, the latter phenomenon was expressed in transforming the conquered territory into a colony in the sense of a county under the rule of a European power." (quoted in Sternhell 1999: 839)

According to this perspective, Zionism was a form of colonisation, but not colonialism, a fact that ultimately raises the question as to whether in 1917 Great Britain had the right under international law to pledge, in the Balfour Declaration, to establish a national home for the Jewish people in what at the time was the Ottoman Empire. Was — as many believed — Palestine a "land without people" that could be pledged to "a people without a land"?

The possible division of Mandatory Palestine was raised in two documents at a time when the Jewish people were under massive pressure to flee Germany after the Nazis had come to power. In 1937, the Peel Report was published, followed by the corresponding White Paper by the British government in 1939. This report, which was published in the aftermath of the 1936 Arab Revolt, contained a proposal to partition the land into a Jewish zone along the coastal plain — Jezreel Valley and much of Galilee — while the Arab part (Judea, Samaria, Negev Desert) would encompass what is now Jordan (then Transjordan) as well as a British controlled corridor in Jerusalem as far as Jaffa on the coast. In addition to this, to ensure that the populations were as homogenous as possible, the possibility of a mutual population transfer was also considered. In actual fact, major institutions and politicians from the Jewish Yishuv for the most part entertained the transfer of the Arab population — however this was to be enforced. Two years later the British government's White Paper once again sought to regulate the division of land. This time, the aim was to stop parts of the Arab Palestinian population under the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el Husseini, from inclining towards alliance with Nazi Germany (on this, see Motadel 2017: 55f).

The Macdonald White Paper contained the following provisions:

I/4: His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State. ...

I/10/1: The objective of His Majesty's Government is the establishment within ten years of an independent Palestine State in such treaty relations with the United Kingdom as will provide satisfactorily for the commercial and strategic requirements of both countries in the future.

I/10/2: The independent State should be one in which Arabs and Jews share government in such a way as to ensure that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded. ...

II/13/1: Jewish immigration during the next five years will be at a rate which, if economic absorptive capacity permits, will bring the Jewish population up to approximately one third of the total population of the country. ... as from the beginning of April this year, of some 75,000 immigrants over the next four years. ...

II/13/3: After the period of five years, no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it.

II/13/4: His Majesty's Government are determined to check illegal immigration, and further preventive measures are being adopted. ...

III/16: The High Commissioner will be given general powers to prohibit and regulate transfers of land.⁴⁸

That was 1939. The debate over whether the territory of Mandatory Palestine could accommodate two national communities, however, was something the political head of the Yishuv, i.e. the Jewish settler community, had been grappling with for longer. Even leading Zionist intellectuals were aware that the establishment of a Jewish community would inevitably be violent, indeed colonial in nature.

Unlike Shafir, when it comes to the Zionist settlement in Palestine, Friling and Sternberg introduced a distinction between colonisation and colonialism, conceding that Zionist settlement most certainly did entail processes of colonisation, while arguing that this did not amount to colonialism in its classic form. In the same vein, Israeli historians Alon Confino and Amos Goldberg wrote in the taz newspaper on 1 May 2020, agreeing with Achille Mbembe insofar as they, too, referred to the Zionist state as a settler colony: "And," wrote the two historians,

we are not denying Israel the right to exist. Those who describe the USA, Canada, or Australia as settler colonies, are under no circumstances questioning their right to exist. But this perspective reveals the conflicting nature of Zionism. It was a national liberation movement which offered Jews who were fleeing from antisemitism a safe haven. It created a place for Holocaust survivors to rebuild their lives and exercise self-determination once again. What Zionism also created, however, was a colonial settler state where there was a clear hierarchy between Jews and Arabs and segregation and discrimination were part and parcel of daily life. Such phenomena were certainly not new, and there is no reason not to analyse and debate the situation in Israel and Palestine from this perspective, including reference to the concept of apartheid. Understanding Zionism means comprehending

48 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Paper_of_1939

two complex stories that are in fact complementary, despite their apparent irreconcilability. We have a duty to tell the story of how anti-semitism and discrimination in Europe led the Jews to flee to Palestine. And we also have a duty to tell the story of the consequences this has had for Palestinians over the past one hundred years. (Confino/ Goldberg 2020, own translation)

CHAPTER 6
**WHY CRITICISM OF
ISRAELI POLICY
TRIGGERS SUCH
CONTROVERSY**

At first glance, it may seem as if the debate surrounding Achille Mbembe's criticism of Israeli politics is something unique to political culture in Germany — or at least this is the position taken by Felix Klein, Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Antisemitism.

“What this means,” explained Klein in a discussion (already mentioned in Chapter 2) that aired on *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* on 21 April 2020,

is the singularity of the Holocaust, something that is also an important narrative for the culture of remembrance in Germany, and for the establishment of the German Federal Republic. To use the words of former German President Joachim Gauck: The Holocaust and how we confront this chapter of history are very much an integral part of German identity. So when Mr Mbembe, a foreign academic, engages in a debate like this and makes problematic assertions, he must be asked to make clear what he actually meant. For me, these statements can also be interpreted as him playing down the Holocaust, and in my capacity as Commissioner for the Fight against Antisemitism, I feel it is my duty to intervene in this debate and express my concern that this may be misunderstood. This is why I have spoken up, and the debate this has triggered is wholly appropriate. ... I believe that these fantasies of separation are something entirely different altogether. Whether we are talking about a fence separating residential areas, or a wall dividing nations, or an extermination camp isolated from the rest of the population — there is a fundamental difference.⁴⁹

Here, Government Commissioner Klein quite rightly emphasises just how crucial, just how important the history and experience of the Holocaust are, not only for political consciousness in Germany but also for the normative framework of the state. In fact, without this experience, the first article of the German constitution — “Human dignity shall be inviolable” — would never have been written. However: Does mentioning other historical atrocities and these experiences in the same breath mean a person is guilty of playing the Holocaust down? One of the most important considerations here is the singularity of the Holocaust. Those wishing to reaffirm this will inevitably run into at least three seemingly unavoidable paradoxes — a paradox of perception, a paradox of representation, and

49 Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 21 April 2020: The matter of Achille Mbembe. Serious accusations and controversy over a number of text passages. René Aguigah in a discussion with Felix Klein and Andrea Gerke.

a paradox of action, i.e. paradoxes of theoretical, aesthetic, and practical rationality.

The paradox of perception is brought about by the valid claim that “Auschwitz” was a singular event, such that any other claim to uniqueness will inevitably lead to comparisons — though drawing comparisons is not tantamount to drawing parallels or equating the mass murder of the Jews with other historical events. The singularity paradox is rooted in a political culture based on human dignity, a growing awareness of genocide, both past and present, and comparative genocide research. As complex as this debate may be with respect to the ‘industrial’ mass murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany, one thing is clear today: In light of the Armenian genocide committed by the Young Turks, Stalin’s crimes against the peoples and population of the Soviet Union, or the race and class-based massacre of the Cambodian people by Khmer Rouge, the suffering endured by the victims is by no means singular, neither qualitatively nor quantitatively. What makes the case of Germany under the National Socialists unique, however, is the fact that the systematic atrocities committed were done so by a highly civilised, bourgeois nation, with the active involvement of significant parts of the educated middle-class population.

When we think of the paradox of perception, it essentially corresponds to a paradox of representation. In fact, if you look at the language used in reference to “Auschwitz” there was seldom a term more ubiquitous than “unimaginable horror”, a phrase that would appear to almost challenge film directors, poets and visual artists to try to depict the unimaginable. Staying with the example of films, attempts to do just that range from the two-dimensional TV series Holocaust to Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* and Lanzmann’s *Shoah* — and the success of all these attempts lies in the very question of whether they, as in the case of Lanzmann’s film or Peter Eisenman’s documentary about the Holocaust monument in Berlin, also express their own inadequacy and inevitable failure to depict the unimaginable or whether their depiction of the events is naïve or even involves overly dramatised tales of suspense. The cause of and reasons behind the disproportionate significance attached to everything and anything related to the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state lie in the ‘fallacy of presentism’, a phenomenon which is hard for biblical theologians to avoid and all too easy to grasp in terms of the psychology behind it — and which refers to the tendency to view a small regional conflict through the lens of Jewish and Christian history, imbuing it with additional meaning. Just how disproportionate this added significance is, is immediately evident in the sobering light of the history of the twentieth century. In 1959, tens

of thousands of Tibetans perished in the Tibetan uprising against the People's Republic of China — a long-forgotten event in the Far East, a region of which there is no mention in the Bible. Then there was the civil war in Colombia, which cost an estimated 200,000 lives and has only recently come to an end. Seen from Europe, these people's lives and deaths were an event in the Western Hemisphere, a region which the bible does not mention either — with the exception of the Mormons, that is. Thus, any analysis of these conflicts and their victims will, insofar as one's judgement is based on the moral institutions in biblical writings, be no more than a generalisation. The fact that there is such an uproar over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while the civil war in Syria continues virtually unnoticed — despite the fact that in just six years the war in Syria has cost half a million people their lives and displaced three million more, far more than all the victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict throughout the 100 years of its existence — is typical of this fallacy of presentism.

As to the conflicts that have been happening within what the bible referred to as the Kingdom of Israel, what was later known as the Roman province of Judea, or later still the province of Palestine, and even later as Milliyet Filastin — conflicts that have been happening since antiquity — the situation is entirely different. At the latest, the very latest since the conflicts between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Church over where Jesus was born and died, the erection of the Islamic shrine the Dome of the Rock, the crusades, the messianic claims of the false messiah Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676), over Zionism, religious Zionism in particular, and, finally, Al-Quds Day — moral and political judgements, whether rooted in the Bible or the Quran, and the illusions that are becoming reality began to overlap. Yet this was already the case when the State of Israel was created, with the Declaration of Establishment in fact stating: "Erez Israel [(Hebrew)] – the Land of Israel, Palestine] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood ...".⁵⁰ A statement that — strictly speaking — can only apply if the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, whose peoples are never referred to as "Jews" in the Hebrew bible, are seen as examples of independent Jewish states. At this point, it is not necessary to go into all the details of the actual history of those who were referred to as Jews following the Babylonian Exile. In our context what is of particular interest is the position taken by Protestant Christians, especially

50 The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 14 May 1948, available at: <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel>

in Germany, towards Jews, the State of Israel and Zionism — particularly in light of the blame, which was most definitely not only of a moral nature, that Protestantism, from Luther to the Third Reich, has burdened itself with in regard to European Jews.

To illustrate what I refer to as the fallacy of presentism, I will limit myself to just a few examples pertaining to the subject matter at hand. In his book *Die Juden und ihr Land* (The Jews and their country) published in 1975, protestant theologian Friedrich Wilhelm Marquardt (1928–2002) writes, for example: “After all, even modern Zionism advocates the return of the Jewish people to Israel. The decision at the World Zionist Congress in 1903 to reject an offer from Great Britain to create a Jewish homeland in Uganda was like the world of faith forcing its way into the world of calculated decision-making.” (Marquardt 1975:138) In 1980, i.e. years later, this interpretation was politicised in a synod resolution by the Church in the Rhineland (EkiR): The synod acknowledged that the “continued existence of the Jewish people, their return to the promised land, as well as the establishment of the State of Israel are signs of God’s faith in his people” (quoted in www.ekir.de/www/service/2509.php, own translation).

The assertion that the establishment of the State of Israel is a sign of God’s faith in the Israeli people is of course a typical example of political theology according to Carl Schmitt’s definition — as is the case with pretty much every statement made by theologians, especially protestant ones, on this issue. This is also and especially so today — after all, the relationship that Christian churches have with the State of Israel remains “difficult” and is still the subject of much debate, particularly in light of the Kairos Palestine document by Palestinian Christians (see *Evangelischer Pressedienst* 2012).

The fact that political theology, especially that portrayed by Carl Schmitt, plays a significant role, and not only in this conflict, is substantiated by a more recent strand of critical social science that is devoid of any trace of fundamentalism. Drawing particularly on the cases of the ‘fence’ along the border between the US and Mexico or Israel’s wall around the West Bank, Wendy Brown, for example, puts forward compelling arguments that that this recent renaissance of spatially defined, protective boundaries is a manifestation of a new form of political theology. Without calling into question the ability of the Israeli fence to deter terrorists, Brown credibly shows that, in this context, walls and fences are ultimately symbols of failure (Brown 2018). In a time in which the system of nation-states that has been in place since the Thirty Years’ War is irreversibly eroding as a re-

sult of globalisation, walls symbolise a form of sanctuary, political sanctuary even, which is out of touch with global societies today.

It was Jewish-born, protestant philosopher Karl Löwith (1897–1973), a critical pupil of Martin Heidegger who — feeling deflated from the experiences of the Second World War — bade farewell to the very philosophy of history that took its inspiration from theology: In *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen* (World history and the advent of salvation), Löwith writes that “It is the very absence of meaning in the events themselves that motivates the quest. Conversely, it is only within a pre-established horizon of ultimate meaning, however hidden it may be, that actual history seems to be meaningless. This horizon has been established by history, for it is Hebrew and Christian thinking that brought this colossal question into existence. To ask earnestly the question of the ultimate meaning of history takes one’s breath away; it places us in a vacuum which only hope and faith can fill.”⁵¹

51 Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The theological implications of the philosophy of history*, traced through the works of Burckhardt, Marx, Hegel, Proudhon, Comte, Condorcet, Turgot, Voltaire, Vico, Bossuet, Joachim, Augustine, Orosius, and The Bible, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1949, p. 4

EPILOGUE
**THE MULTI-
DIRECTIONALITY
OF MEMORY**

It goes without saying that the importance of any philosophy of history lies in the role it plays in remembrance and memorialisation in human societies or among certain groups of people. This is particularly so in the case of Holocaust Memorial Day (on 27 January), a day that is now commemorated worldwide, and even officially recognised by the United Nations. This day is not, however, the only day of commemoration recognised by the UN or, more specifically, by UNESCO. In fact, what many people do not know is that for some years there has also been an official UN slavery remembrance day, commemorating the beginning of the 1791 uprising against the slave trade in Haiti. Since 1998, on 23 August each year, UNESCO has marked the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition: "This International Day is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the slave trade in the memory of all peoples. In accordance with the goals of the intercultural project 'The Slave Route', it should offer an opportunity for collective consideration of the historic causes, the methods and the consequences of this tragedy, and for an analysis of the interactions to which it has given rise between Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean".⁵²

And so this begs the question of whether Nazi Germany's murder of six million European Jews really should be the only "master narrative" driving human rights awareness? To quote the words of sociologists Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider in a study about remembrance in the global age:

Historical disputes have unforeseen consequences that can even marginalize the historians themselves as new spaces open up to the public, making room for the 'mass culture' that many historians abhor. This new space of remembrance can become the cosmopolitan form of memory. ... Related questions about the uniqueness and comparability of the Holocaust may lose their significance, as well. The Holocaust, as a unique event, can be compared to others. The particular victimization experienced by the Jews can be universalized. (Levy/ Sznaider 2006: 127)

As evidence to substantiate their theses, Levy and Sznaider refer to an advertisement that the three prominent American Jewish organisations — the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League — had run in the New York Times on 5 August 1990, just as the first images of Bosnian people imprisoned in Serbian

52 <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/slavetraderemembranceday>

camps were being distributed for the world to see: “Alongside the blood-stained names of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and other Nazi death camps, must now be added the names of Omarska and Brcko. ... Is it possible that, fifty years after the Holocaust, the nations of the world have decided to stand by passively and do nothing, claiming that they are helpless to do anything?”. “We hereby underline,” the advertisement concludes, “that we are prepared to take all the necessary steps, including the use of violence, to stop the madness and bloodshed.” (quoted in *ibid.*: 159)

In the same spirit, 20 years ago at the turn of the year 2000–2001, representatives from 40 countries came together in Stockholm, at the invitation of the Swedish government, to discuss human values in a global age in the context of ever increasing racism and to draw upon the lessons to be learned from the “Holocaust”, in other words the industrial mass murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany — and not only Jews but millions of Poles, citizens of the Soviet Union, and other minorities. Very much in keeping with this is the closing statement at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which was based primarily on the words of Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer: “With humanity still scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils. ... Our commitment must be,” concludes this document, “to remember the victims who perished, respect the survivors still with us, and reaffirm humanity’s common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice.”⁵³

This event should not have been needed as catalyst, however. Indeed, in her first major work about the origins of totalitarianism published in 1951, Hannah Arendt had already cited — albeit using an unfortunate turn of phrase — the European imperial experience in African colonies as the origins of racism. Years later, Michael Rothberg showed how black author and anticolonial activist Aimé Césaire — one of the founding fathers of the “negritude” movement who was born in Martinique in 1913 — had proven, in a debate with critic Yves Florenne, how Hitler’s Nazi ideology had continued to reverberate through the French bourgeoisie. (Rothberg 2009: 76) It must be said, however, that Aimé Césaire was by no means the first or only antiracism activist to, against the background of racism towards black people, confront the crimes committed by the Nazis.

53 https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/ihra_annualbrochure_web.pdf, page 11

Black intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was the founding father of the antiracist theory the “color line”. In 1949, Du Bois, who as a student in the late 19th century had spent time in Germany, visited the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto, writing a short piece about it under the heading “The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto” — a text that was continued some years later in an essay entitled *Jewish Life*, which said:

The result of these three visits, and particularly of my view of the Warsaw ghetto, was not so much clearer understanding of the Jewish Problem in the world as it was a real and more complete understanding of the Negro problem. In the first place, the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer in my mind a separate and unique thing as I had so long conceived it. ... No, the race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns, perverted teaching and human hate and prejudice, which reached all sorts of people and caused endless evil to all men.⁵⁴

Remembrance and memorialisation are therefore not only a universal moral responsibility which, with very good reason, can reference the Holocaust as a unique event in world history. Instead, they are — and this is particularly so in a globalised world — inevitably interwoven with memories of other events — but in a non-zero-sum game way. This very notion, however, is what gave the 2020 debate in Germany about the work of Achille Mbembe its senseless and unforgiving pungency. Rothberg, for example, does not shy away from addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict either, as seen in his debate with Israeli historian Benny Morris, a man who had scrutinised the criminal side to the displacement of the Palestinians in 1947/48 like no other (see Morris 2008: 405–407) only to openly — and almost cynically — justify this displacement some years later (according to Rothberg 2009: 309–312). Memories and forms of remembrance — Rothberg stresses repeatedly — are not a zero-sum game. The question we must ask ourselves in conclusion is how this fact affects our understanding of the Holocaust as a singular event in world history, a common conception especially in Germany (and with good reason, too)? And how this belief in the singularity of the Holocaust can mean that any referencing of other crimes against humanity is considered Holocaust trivialisation?

54 <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=DuBois-The-Negro-and-the-Warsaw-Ghetto.pdf>

The following characteristics are generally considered to be the reasons why the Holocaust can be viewed as a singular event that has no precedent: Firstly, the degradation and dehumanisation of the victims by stripping them of their names and assigning them numbers — which is indeed unprecedented in world history; secondly, the fact that the victims were gassed to death, exterminated like insects. Thirdly, the autotelic and boundless nature of the murder of the Jews, mobilising all available means, a fate that was intended for every Jew on the planet for all eternity — especially in the context of a war in which every available means should actually have been used to fight the Allied Forces. And fourth, the fact that — and this is something that is seldom pointed out — the society that committed this crime against humanity was very much an advanced, civilised bourgeois society.

Unlike Stalin's apparatchiks or the teenage jungle fighters of the Khmer Rouge, during the Holocaust it was those at the top, the elite, but also broad sections of bourgeois society in the Third Reich that worked together to carry out these crimes. That being said — as I have attempted to show above — we are by no means detracting from the singularity of the Holocaust by commemorating the singularity of colonial crimes, be it in the Congo or in relation to the transatlantic slave trade. I repeat: Remembrance and commemoration are not a zero-sum game. Michael Rothberg concludes his book with the following words — and while these words need no commentary or explanation, they could nonetheless be taken as a maxim for future remembrance in a globalised world. Once again referring to Morris' cynical justification of the displacement of the Palestinians, Rothberg writes:

I draw two corollaries from the kinds of memory conflicts emblemized by the Israeli/Palestinian dispute. First, we cannot stem the structural multidirectionality of memory. Even if it were desirable — as it sometimes seems to be — to maintain a wall, or cordon sanitaire, between different histories, it is not possible to do so. Memories are mobile; histories are implicated in each other. Thus, finally, understanding political conflict entails understanding the interlacing of memories in the force field of public space. The only way forward is there entanglement. (Rothberg 2009: 313)

We could add here that even and especially Achille Mbembe would be well advised to bear these words in mind in his criticism of Israel.

**POSTSCRIPT:
IS ISRAEL
AN APARTHEID
REGIME?⁵⁵**

55 This postscript was the result of intensive discussions with Gert Krell, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for his help and support.

According to a report published by Amnesty International in February 2022, the State of Israel is guilty of committing the crime of apartheid against the Palestinians. Even the mere suggestion that the term “apartheid” could be used to describe the situation in the West Bank or in the heartland of Israel is regarded in much of the public debate as antisemitic. With good reason,⁵⁶ it is quite rightly pointed out that neither in Zionism nor in the doctrine of the State of Israel has there ever been mention of Arabs being biologically inferior. In fact, there has never been a system of economic exploitation such as that seen in South Africa, neither in the Mandate territory of Palestine nor in Israel. For a time, the very reason the mere mention of the UN Apartheid Convention, which has been part of international criminal law since 1998, was contentious because it specifically targeted racist discrimination. If, however, we continue to define the term apartheid — a common practice that has yet to be reflected in international law — as political, social, and economic dominance, combined with forms of repression, discrimination, and segregation, directed at large groups of people defined other than “racially”, it follows that this term can most certainly be used to describe the situation in the West Bank — although not that in the heartland of Israel within the 1967 borders.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism concurs with this view, stating that, while it may be highly controversial, it is not antisemitic per se to compare Israel with other historical cases, including settler colonialism and apartheid.⁵⁷ In the West Bank, most roads and settlements are largely asymmetrically segregated to the disadvantage of the Palestinians. There are two different legal systems for the Israeli settler population and Palestinians; for the latter, military regulations and military jurisdiction apply, resulting in serious deficits in terms of the rule of law. The Palestinians’ self-determination and political, civil, and economic rights are, in part, severely restricted. Even back in the mid-1990s, Ami Ajalon, commander-in-chief of the Israeli navy from 1992 to 1996 and later head of the Shin Bet, Israel’s secret service, was fiercely critical of Ariel Sharon’s settlement policy in the West Bank. Ajalon argued that Sharon’s tactic of riding roughshod over plantations and homes, of annexing land and trapping the Palestinians in quasi-reservations — unconnected settlements surrounded by fortress-like Israeli towns and military exclusion zones — not dissimilar to the South African Bantustan model, would leave stub-

⁵⁶ A brief but comprehensive overview of the controversial international debate on this subject can be found here: gaz.wiki/wiki/de/Israel_and_apartheid.

⁵⁷ jerusalemdeclaration.org, Point 13.

born wounds that could only result in yet more fanaticism.⁵⁸ Fifteen years ago, geographer Elisha Efrat referred to this as a uniquely Israeli system of segregation and apartheid in an area where the dominant minority has already appropriated the lion's share of the territory (Efrat 2006: 80–82). And in February 2002, in an interview for *Le Monde*, Michael Benyair, Israeli attorney general from 1993 to 1996 in Jitzhak Rabin's second term, stated: When two groups of people have neither the same status nor the same rights, when the army protects the property of one group but destroys that of the other, when a settler has the right to access far more water than a long-established population, when segregation is written into the laws, this can only be described as apartheid.⁵⁹

Israeli political scientist and former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Meron Benvenisti, argues along similar lines. Benvenisti even regards the term "occupation" as euphemistic given that international law sets out specific conditions governing the behaviour of the occupying forces. According to international law, for instance, occupying forces are prohibited from settling their own population in occupied territories: "No paradigm of military occupation can reflect the Bantustans created in the occupied territories, which separate a free and flourishing population with a gross domestic product of more than US\$ 30,000 per capita from a dominated population unable to shape its own future with a GDP of US\$ 1,500 per capita. No paradigm of military occupation can explain how half the occupied areas ("Area C") have essentially been annexed, leaving the occupied population with disconnected lands and no viable existence." (Benvenisti 2016: 1,201)

Today, even international organisations use the term apartheid to describe the conditions under Israeli occupation, as can be seen from the Human Rights Watch report released on 27 April 2021, for instance. In a position paper published at the start of 2021, for example, B'Tselem, the renowned Israeli human rights group, even decided that the Israeli heartland, along with the West Bank and Gaza should be described as a single, multi-tiered system of apartheid rule (B'Tselem 2021). On 1 February 2022, Amnesty International published a research report supported by a broad empirical basis in which it made serious accusations of apartheid

58 As reported by Sari Nusseibeh 2009: 449–450. Nusseibeh, Sari. *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life*. United States: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015. For a while, Nusseibeh and Ajalon organised and led a mixed Israeli-Palestinian grassroots peace initiative.

59 As quoted in Sylvain Cypel, *The State of Israel vs. the Jews*, New York 2021, p. 280. See also Benyair's guest article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8.2.2022, p. 10.

against Israel (Amnesty International 2022). Even the more nuanced reactions to this report point to the lack of consideration given to the history of protracted real-life conflict between Jews and Arabs.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the analysis by Amnesty International does concede that Israel has a fundamental right to preserve its national security interests, going on to stress, however, that these security interests are frequently used as an excuse for the settlement expansion and exploited to the detriment of the Palestinians in other respects, too.

The violent fanaticism on the other side, especially the brutal suicide bombings specifically targeting the Israeli heartland during the second Intifada (2000–2005), which practically pulled the ground from under the feet of the Peace Camp and left in its wake a widely felt scepticism regarding the peace process that continues to resonate to this day, were undoubtedly fatal both in the literal and the political sense. But even here it is impossible to dismiss the “dialectic of violence”. The enduring settlement colonialism prevailing in the West Bank and in and around East Jerusalem, which neither the peace talks nor the warnings issued by the US government or the EU have proven capable of stopping, is associated with segregation, massive physical and social restrictions, innumerable checkpoints and controls, and to some extent also the displacement of the local population. On top of this, violence committed by radical settlers or soldiers, which invariably goes unpunished, is an almost daily occurrence in the West Bank or, for example, the city of Hebron, where the Jewish settler population in the very heart of the old town make life for the original Palestinian inhabitants difficult and deprive them of their livelihoods. In addition, one has to consider the ‘unliveable’ environment of the Gaza Strip caused by the highly restrictive Israeli blockade. For years, renowned Israeli peace activist and Indologist, David Shulman, has worked with other Israelis and Palestinians to help Arabic farmers and shepherds in the occupied territories by providing nonviolent protection from the land grabbing and destruction of their fields and olive groves by Jewish settlers. His bleak summary written in 2018 read as follows:

I have seen it mutate from harsh military rule at its inception to the inferno of violent theft and state terror that is in place today. It embodies wickedness of such intensity that it calls into question the legitimacy and viability of the state itself. Worse even than that, it has corroded

60 See, for example, the discussion with Meron Mendel, Eine Einladung zur Selbstzerstörung, www.zeit.de/kultur/2022-02/amnesty-international-israel-apartheidstaat (20.2.2022).

the souls of thousands, possibly millions.... One cannot violate the inner being of an entire people without violating and impoverishing one's own inner life. The universe has its laws. Israelis need to be liberated from Occupation no less than the Palestinians need to become free. (Shulman: 2018: 181) ⁶¹

61 See also Schulman's very unsettling report "Lost Illusions", in: *The New York Review of Books*, 12.1.2022, pp. 26-27.

**ROSA LUXEMBURG
FOUNDATION:
PUBLICATIONS
ADDRESSING THE HOLO-
CAUST, ANTISEMITISM,
ANTI-RACISM,
JEWISH HISTORY, BDS,
ACHILLE MBEMBE AND
RELATED TOPICS**

2022

conflict & communication online

Diskussionsforum zur Arbeitsdefinition Antisemitismus der IHRA/
Discussion forum on the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism
Coordinator: Florian Weis

https://regener-online.de/journalcco/2022_1/inhalt21_1.htm

2021/2022

“Die jüdische mit der allgemeinen proletarischen Bewegung
zu vereinen.” Jüdinnen und Juden in der internationalen Linken
(Band 1, 2021) www.rosalux.de/publikation/id/45015/die-juedische-mit-der-allgemeinen-proletarischen-bewegung-zu-vereinen

“Wenn du ausgegrenzt wirst, gehst du zu anderen Ausgegrenzten.”
Jüdinnen und Juden in der internationalen Linken (Band 2, September
2022)

2021/ongoing

Bibliografie: Linke und Antisemitismus, jüdische Geschichte,
Nationalsozialismus, Shoah, Nahostkonflikt

<https://www.rosalux.de/dossiers/linke-und-antisemitismus/bibliografie>

2021

ManyPod #9: Multidirectional Memory against Racism
and Antisemitism

Massimo Perinelli and Sina Arnold in conversation
with Michael Rothberg

[www.rosalux.de/en/publications/media-library/detailseite-en/
media/element/1639](http://www.rosalux.de/en/publications/media-library/detailseite-en/media/element/1639)

Die Kampagne «Boykott, Desinvestitionen und Sanktionen»

Hintergründe, Ziele und Methoden

Von Tsafrir Cohen, Katja Hermann, Florian Weis

www.rosalux.de/publikation/id/45527/die-kampagne-boykott-desinvestitionen-und-sanktionen

Aktueller Antisemitismus in Deutschland

Verflechtungen, Diskurse, Befunde

Anne Goldenbogen, Sarah Kleinmann

www.rosalux.de/publikation/id/43659/aktueller-antisemitismus-in-deutschland

2020

The Grammars of Genocide

Richard Benda, Dorothee Braun, and Florian Weis in conversation on the meaning of mass violence in history

www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/44041/the-grammars-of-genocide

Contributions to the “Causa Mbembe”

By Florian Weis

www.rosalux.de/en/postcolonial_debate

Another Reading of Achille Mbembe

By Dorothee Braun

www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/43392/another-reading-of-achille-mbembe

2019

On the IHRA’s “Working Definition of Antisemitism”

A critical evaluation

By Peter Ullrich

<https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/41169/on-the-ihras-working-definition-of-antisemitism>

The second edition of Micha Brumlik’s book *Postkolonialer Antisemitismus?* appeared in 2022:

www.vsa-verlag.de/nc/detail/artikel/postkolonialer-antisemitismus

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