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The Affair or the State: Intellectuals, the Press, and the Dreyfus Affair

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A Senior Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors in History. Faculty Advisor: Kristen Stromberg Childers

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Abstract
In his introduction to The Age of Revolution historian Eric Hobsbawm considers "a few English words which were invented, or gained their modern meanings, substantially in the period" between 1789 and 1848. The list includes 'capitalism', 'socialism', 'aristocracy', 'liberal', 'conservative', 'nationality', 'crisis', 'journalism', and 'ideology'. For Hobsbawm, "To imagine the modern world without these words (i.e. without the things and concepts for which they provide names) is to measure the profundity of the revolution which broke out between 1789 and 1848, and forms the greatest transformation in human history since the remote times when men invented agriculture and metallurgy, writing, the city and the state." This analysis is relevant when thinking of the Dreyfus case. To imagine the Affair without words such as 'capitalism', 'aristocracy', 'nationality', 'crisis', or 'ideology', is not hard, it is impossible.

Comments
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The Affair or the State: Intellectuals, the Press, and the Dreyfus Affair

By David Rimoch

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Table of Contents

Introduction…….3

Chapter I
The Origins of the Dreyfus Affair……..8

Chapter II
The Fight for Light: Dreyfusards and Anti-Dreyfusards……..23

Chapter III
The State and the Individual: the Case of Dreyfus……53

Epilogue……..96

Conclusion……..98

Bibliography……103

Introduction

In his introduction to *The Age of Revolution* historian Eric Hobsbawm considers "a few English words which were invented, or gained their modern meanings, substantially in the period"[1] between 1789 and 1848. The list includes 'capitalism', 'socialism', 'aristocracy', 'liberal', 'conservative', 'nationality', 'crisis', 'journalism', and 'ideology'. For Hobsbawm, "To imagine the modern world without these words (i.e. without the things and concepts for which they provide names) is to measure the profundity of the revolution which broke out between 1789 and 1848, and forms the greatest transformation in human history since the remote times when men invented agriculture and metallurgy, writing, the city and the state."[2] This analysis is relevant when thinking of the Dreyfus case. To imagine the Affair without words such as 'capitalism', 'aristocracy', 'nationality', 'crisis', or 'ideology', is not hard, it is impossible.

This thesis argues that the only way to fully understand the Dreyfus Affair is to situate it inside a conflict between modernity and premodernity. Zeev Sternhell writes that "the Affair provoked a conflict between two visions of the world, two conceptions of society, two stairways of moral values."[3] [4] In an intellectual sense the Affair brought into the open the clash between two visions of man. Premodernity understands man as a being determined by external circumstances – age, gender, family, social class, religion, church, community, nation. Modernity, on the other hand, sees in each man an individual; a being determined by his internal aspirations. Premodern man does not know liberty; modern man does not know stability. Premodern man does not know equality; modern man does not know community. If the two cannot be opposed it is

[1] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 1.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Zeev Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le Nationalisme Français* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), 278.
[4] All translations from French are my own unless otherwise noted.

because the shift from premodernity to modernity is not immediate and uncomplicated. More importantly, an analysis of these conceptions must avoid being too categorical. Elements of the modern are present in the premodern, and vice versa. By tracing the divisions at the heart of the Dreyfus Affair one discovers that the modern period is in fact torn between these two visions.

Before turning to the intellectual stakes, the Affair must be understood as the personal drama of a French Jewish Captain under the Third Republic. In 1894 the French Army discovered that secret military information had been received by the German Embassy in Paris. After a short and biased investigation Alfred Dreyfus was suspected and arrested. A court martial tried him based on one document and unanimously convicted him after receiving a secret dossier made up of fabricated evidence. The trial sparked important demonstrations of anti-Semitism. Dreyfus was sent to Devil's Island and after a prolonged period of silence the new head of counterintelligence, Colonel Picquart, discovered that the real traitor was in fact another officer, Esterhazy, and that most of the evidence had been forged. The matter slowly turned into a national debate and after Esterhazy was acquitted by a court martial in January 1898, Dreyfus' few supporters mobilized for his cause. The turning point came when the famous novelist Émile Zola wrote an open letter, *J'accuse*, to Félix Faure, the President of the Republic. In the months that followed, the debate went from being a legal discussion to a full-fledged ideological battle. After the forger of the documents, Henry, committed suicide, and Esterhazy fled to England, a new trial was held at Rennes in the summer of 1899. Dreyfus was again found guilty, but with mitigating circumstances. The President then granted him a pardon and the Affair died out.

Dreyfus continued to fight for rehabilitation, and in 1906 he was finally reintegrated into the Army and awarded the Legion of Honor.[5]

I vaguely remember learning about the Dreyfus Affair as a young child. An image that has stayed with me is an original copy of *J'accuse*. On a trip to Paris my family decided to visit the Museum of Jewish History and Culture, and as I walked through the galleries I came across a room dedicated to the Affair. *J'accuse* lay behind glass and as I read over it I realized how confusing the matter seemed. I skipped most of the first part quickly and moved on to the conclusion, with its famous repetitions of *J'accuse* (I accuse). And yet, I knew none of the names and I could not verify any of the claims. The letter appeared as a dramatic act but I was not quite sure why it still resonated in the present. Having studied the Affair, the names of du Paty de Clam, Mercier, Boisdeffre, are no longer meaningless. They are characters in an important drama, and the legal matters touched upon by Zola are the realities of a man unjustly accused and convicted. I learned more about the Affair throughout the years, but when I gave thought to writing my thesis on the topic the obvious question came to mind: why did the fate of one man – no matter how unjust – mobilize French society for decades? Why did the French of 1898 and 1899 care about Dreyfus? Why did they attach such importance to one case of individual iniquity?

Historians have of course touched on these questions in almost all imaginable ways. I have many times read introductions to books and articles about the Affair that begin by stating – or appreciating – the fact that so much research has been dedicated to Dreyfus, as if they would have to justify their own attempt at understanding the significance of the Affair. In the same way that the intellectuals, writers, journalists, and politicians of the Third Republic used their efforts to defend or attack Dreyfus, we now

[5] Instituted by Napoleon in 1802, the *Légion d'honneur* or *Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur* is the highest decoration of the French Republic. The order's motto is "Honor and Fatherland."

continue to use our time for the analysis and understanding of this period. There are in fact different levels to the Affair. There is the legal conflict between the fate of one individual and the raison d'État: "It is a veritable national crime to weaken the military institution, which is the protection of the country, in the name of the hypothetical innocence of one individual."[6] More importantly, "For the trial to become an affair it must have ideological implications. It must, in other words, develop into something more than a strictly legal issue of innocence or guilt. Participants in an affair see themselves as selflessly involved in a larger struggle, one that meshes into their general political convictions, into their view of the world."[7] In this light the Dreyfus Affair was also about the conflict between the individual and society, one that encompassed the fight for universal justice; the immunity of the Army; the role of the Catholic Church in society; the national question; and the place of Jews in France.[8] In this last respect the Affair revealed the power of political anti-Semitism and put into question the completeness of emancipation and assimilation. Even though the Affair was not only about anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism stimulated the debates of the Affair. Between the universalism of the Enlightenment and the specificity of the Jewish question, between the ideal of secularism and the religious foundations of the French nation, the contradictions opposed republicans and reactionaries in their opinions on the relationship between Church and State.[9]

All these questions seemed to point in one direction: a conflict between two visions of the State. The stakes were "moral and political. On the moral level, the Dreyfusards had defended the universal causes of Justice and Truth against the

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[6] Michel Winock, « Une question de principe, » in *La France et l'Affaire Dreyfus*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 554.
[7] Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank), 1894-1915* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.
[8] Winock, « Une question de principe, » 566.
[9] Michel Winock, *Édouard Drumont et Cie. Antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1982), 207.

particular cause of the raison d'État,"[10] and on the political level the antagonism was between the preservation of republican institutions and the development of nationalism. One vision saw France as the embodiment of universal values, another as the product of a specific history and context. Stephen Wilson argues that "the encounter on the national level between intellectuals and politicians of different persuasions, championing on the one side the Army, the Nation and Reasons of State, and on the other, Justice, the Rule of Law and Individual Rights, has had many chroniclers, but they have not told us why this particular battle took place in the France of the 1890s."[11] Faced with this question and unconvinced by the argument of the role of the State, I moved in a different direction. If Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards invoked particular philosophical traditions the obvious next step was to go back to the origins of the problem: the French Revolution. Zola saw the Affair as the culmination of 1789, and many important anti-Dreyfusards as a symptom of the malady that had afflicted France since the end of the Old Regime.

In this respect the question could be posed with particular attention to the development of French intellectual thought during the nineteenth century, and in accordance with preoccupations over how the Jewish question fit into the Affair. Intellectual history is concerned with how ideas affect, and are affected, by the historical setting in which they are created. This thesis takes as its starting point a crisis under the French Third Republic, but it argues that in order to understand its historical significance and contemporary relevance one must situate it within larger intellectual trends. Only through a close reading of the preoccupations it created among intellectuals can we grasp the significance of the Affair for the modern world.

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[10] Ibid., 99.
[11] Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (East Brunswick, NJ: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1982), 6.

Chapter I
The Origins of the Dreyfus Affair

On July 19, 1870, France declared war on Prussia. Backed by the North German Confederation, Prussia had also signed secret treaties of mutual defense with the South German states of Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria. The war that followed was an isolated conflict in which no other European powers were involved. A diplomatic clash over the succession to the Spanish throne had resulted in the escalation of tensions between the French Second Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia. Otto von Bismarck, the Chancellor of Prussia, had ensured that the confrontation would lead to war by editing a telegram describing an encounter between King Wilhelm I and the French ambassador in an incendiary light. Pressured by the press, public opinion, the political establishment and his wife Empress Eugénie, Napoleon III ordered the general mobilization of the French Army.

The Franco-Prussian War was a quick and disastrous defeat for the French. After a series of German victories, Napoleon III and an army of over 100,000 were defeated and captured at Sedan on September 2. The German forces were swift, better organized, and had the tremendous backing of the modern and powerful Krupp artillery. On September 4 the Third Republic was proclaimed in Paris and a Government of National Defense was created to continue the fight against the Germans. The Prussian and German armies made their way across northern France, quickly reaching Paris and instating a siege on September 19 – it wasn't lifted until January 28, 1871. Although at first the new government decided to continue the war, by January it had become clear that an armistice was necessary. The Treaty of Frankfurt, on May 10, 1871, put a definitive end to the Franco-Prussian War, but its conditions were deeply resented by the French. Territorially, Alsace and the Lorraine department of Moselle were annexed

to the newly formed German Empire and its residents given until October 1, 1872, to decide whether they wanted to emigrate to France or remain under German control. Financially, France was charged reparations of five billion francs due within three years, requiring the German Army to occupy parts of France until it was fully paid.

For Prussia and the other German states the war resulted in the final unification of the German Reich under Wilhelm I of Prussia, an event celebrated in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles. For France it was a humiliating defeat which brought the Second Empire to an end and took away two important provinces. The power void created by the siege of Paris and the downfall of the Empire gave way to the Paris Commune in March 1871. A National Guard created to defend Paris represented an alternative to the power of the newly elected conservative coalition. As one government signed an armistice with the Germans at Versailles, the other refused to surrender its arms in Paris. On March 18 Louis-Adolphe Thiers, head of the new executive power, ordered French troops to seize all arms within Paris. The National Guard refused to do so and numerous army units joined in the rebellion. Thiers ordered the government to evacuate Paris for Versailles just as the insurgents elected another government on March 26: the Commune. For two months Thiers' forces laid siege to the Communards, climaxing in the 'Bloody Week' of May 21 to 28 in which it is estimated that anywhere between 20,000 and 50,000 Parisians died. In those two months the Communal Council adopted a number of social measures akin to Jacobinism, including the re-adoption of the Revolutionary Calendar, the separation between Church and State, the exclusion of religion from education, the confiscation of Church property, the right to vote for women, the abolition of night work, and the abolition of prison sentences for those unable to pay their debts.

The Commune came to a bloody end, and after 1871 the forces of reaction came to the fore. Many expected a monarchy to be restored with a member of either the house of Bourbon or Orleans as king, but the conservative Republic prevailed. The constitutional laws of February 1875, which passed by only one vote in the Chamber of Deputies, made it clear that France was a Republic with a President and two chambers of parliament. The head of State was to be elected every seven years by the upper chamber, the Senate. Until 1879 the President was General Patrice de Mac-Mahon, Duke of Magenta, a convinced royalist who failed in his efforts to restore a constitutional monarchy. The end of the decade saw the emergence of a new center-left coalition in parliament that finally cemented the fate of the Third Republic.

In France, every regime since 1789 has understood itself in reaction to the previous one. The Revolution sought to substitute the *Ancien Régime* with a new Republic of virtue. The Directory was a response to the excesses of the Terror, the Empire a manifestation of Napoleon's desire for a centralized State, the Restoration an attempt to move back the revolutionary tide – crushing it seemed impossible –, the July Monarchy a bourgeois challenge to the aristocratic decay of the Bourbon system, the Second Republic an effort to democratize France, the Second Empire a dictatorial return to the First Empire's cult of personality. The Third Republic was keen to avoid the fiasco of the reign of Napoleon III by strengthening France's military position in a discreet yet determined manner. Domestically, the new order had to be cautious. Learning from the short lived republican experiments of 1789, 1848 and 1871 the supporters of the republican order had to prove effective at administering the country and rebuilding the military as they pushed through with a number of controversial reforms. The Commune had decreed the separation between Church and State and the

exclusion of religion from public education. The latter would be a policy of Republican governments after the Jules Ferry laws of 1881 to 1883, the former a more difficult achievement to come only in 1905.

The period following the Presidency of Mac-Mahon – from 1879 on – is usually referred to by historians as the Republic of the Opportunists.[12] This was a fragile period in the constitution of the Third Republic, governments rose and fell with great speed, and many firmly believed the Republic would be easily overthrown. The most critical political crisis came in 1886 in the form of Boulangism. In January, General Boulanger, a xenophobic monarchist sympathizer, was appointed Minister of War. He "[reformed] the army for the benefit of both the soldiers and the officers, and [was] regarded by the public as the man destined to avenge France for the disasters of 1870."[13] In May 1887 a new government excluded Boulanger from the War Ministry. Defying army rules he mounted an election campaign in 1888 advocating the "revision of the constitution, dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies and revenge against Germany. His slogan [was] 'Dissolve, Revise, Reconstitute.'"[14] All types of Royalists rallied behind Boulanger, who was elected to the Chamber of Deputies by a landslide on January 27, 1889. His supporters urged him to overthrow the government by marching on l'Elysée, the presidential palace. Because he hesitated, the Government had time to issue an order of arrest against him. In August he had to flee to Brussels, where he committed suicide on September 30, 1891. In the meantime the Republic had inaugurated an Exhibition commemorating the centenary of the Revolution on May 6, 1889, exactly 100 years after the reunion of the Estates General.[15] The defeat of Boulangism shattered the hopes of Royalists and conservatives, and yet "If the threat of Boulanger the adventurer was

[12] Jean-Denis Bredin, *L'Affaire* (Paris: Fayard / Julliard, 1994), 50.
[13] George Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 10.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 52.

slight, the threat of Boulangism was more serious, and continued into the two crises of the 1890s: the Panama scandal and the Dreyfus Affair."[16] As the moderate left gained ground in subsequent elections, the 14th of July was instituted as a national holiday and the tripartite motto *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* was adopted as the country's maxim.

The first two decades of the Third Republic were not only a return to the beliefs of 1789 in a symbolical sense. Even though the center-left coalition wanted to demonstrate its ability to govern and maintain the social order intact, it nonetheless re-introduced the practice of careers open to merit. In this sense, the first part of Alfred Dreyfus' life is typical of a generation of rising soldiers and civil servants. A juxtaposition of his trajectory alongside that of Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy provides insight into the contradictions that dominated France after 1789.

Esterhazy was born in Paris on December 26, 1847. His father, General Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy, was an illegitimate descendant of a well-known aristocratic Austro-Hungarian family.[17] When he was nineteen Esterhazy failed the entrance examination to Saint-Cyr, one of the most prestigious military academies in France. Determined to pursue a military career he was able to join the Roman Legion in 1868, just two years before the end of the Second Empire. After serving in Algeria in the French Foreign Legion he was granted permission to join the French Army during the Franco-Prussian War. During the 1870s Esterhazy took advantage of his aristocratic connections to obtain a number of positions, key among them his appointment as a German translator to the *Section de Statistique*, the counter-intelligence body created after the Franco-Prussian War. In July 1882 he was finally accepted into the Legion of Honor. He benefited from fast promotions: lieutenant in 1874, captain in 1880, decorated in 1882, major in 1892, commander by 1894. With friends in high places,

[16] Roderick Kedward, *The Dreyfus Affair: Catalyst for Tensions in French Society* (London: Longmans, 1965), 4.
[17] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 18.

including Maurice Weil, and Captain Henry in the *Section de Statistique*,[18] Esterhazy's career moved quickly. Pierre Birnbaum argues that Esterhazy greatly benefited from a system of social alliances that undermined the authority of the Third Republic.[19]

The military career of Alfred Dreyfus could not have followed a more different trajectory. Born in Mulhouse on October 9, 1859, Dreyfus was the son of a prosperous textile industrialist from an old Jewish Alsatian family. After the War of 1870 the family was forced to leave Mulhouse in order to keep its French nationality. Dreyfus attended a number of boarding schools before preparing his entrance exam for the prestigious *École polytechnique,* France's elite engineering school founded in 1794. He was admitted as number 182 out of 236,[20] graduating 128th out of 235 in 1880. From 1880 to 1882 he attended the artillery school to receive training as an artillery officer.[21] As France celebrated the centennial of the Revolution in 1889 Dreyfus was promoted to the rank of captain. In 1890 he entered the *École supérieure de guerre*, a training school created in 1876 that "sought to assure the primacy of a selection based essentially on intellectual assessments."[22] Coming 9th out of 81 officers in November 1892 he became a *stagiaire* (intern) with the General Staff in January 1893, a position he held until the Affair erupted over a year later.

The role played by Jews in the French Army was analogous to their situation in France since 1789. The Revolution had made them fully emancipated citizens in 1791, capable of exercising all professions. Not even in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where Jews enjoyed a privileged position, could a Jew rise in the State structure. Gustav Mahler, for instance, was only able to accept the directorship of the Vienna Opera, an

[18] Maurice Weil was an influential officer in the French army. His wife was the mistress of General Saussier, the military governor of Paris. Captain Henry was one of five officers working at the *Section de Statistique*, the department of counterespionage that discovered the document incriminating Captain Dreyfus in the summer of 1894.
[19] Pierre Birnbaum, ed., *La France et l'Affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 13.
[20] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 24.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 26.

Imperial post, because he had previously converted to Catholicism. Dreyfus, like many other Jews after 1791, profited from the French educative apparatus that helped intelligent students move up the social ladder. There were about 300 Jewish officers in the French Army at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. For Captain Dreyfus, as for most other Jews in the Army, the modern French nation had offered them the possibility to serve the State by turning them into citizens. However, as Jews like Dreyfus joined the military, anti-Semitism increased. His access to the Army may have been due to good examination results, but "this difference, like his character, [isolated] him in a certain respect. He [had], in the army, neither 'patron' nor powerful backing. He [was] neither the friend nor the protégé of any of the chiefs of the army, nor of any politician. That his name, his Jewish condition, which he didn't assert or hide, may have slightly hindered his ascension, it is probable."[23]

Esterhazy and Dreyfus. The former failed to enter an elitist school but managed his way up to the top of the Army in large part due to political connections and aristocratic partiality. The latter forced himself through France's highly selective system, reaching a sound position without the help or support of any superior. Which model did the Army abide by at large? Both, thus illustrating one of its many contradictions. The French Army was the product of two traditions: one monarchical, based on a hierarchical culture; another republican, born from the revolutionary notion of a nation united in arms.[24] At the same time that the Army attracted more Jews it also became a respectable option for members of the declining aristocracy and the conservative bourgeoisie, many of whom were profoundly anti-republican. If the Army became a refuge from the modernization of society it also remained confronted with fundamental questions: "Where lies duty? Where lies loyalty? Where lies legitimacy?

[23] Ibid., 36.
[24] Ibid., 26.

Republic? Empire? Monarchy?"[25] Simultaneously, the presence of Jews in the Army became a parallel source of grievance. The military was considered the only uncorrupted body of the Republic because it retained links to the Church, the aristocracy, and the past. How could it accept into its heart men like Dreyfus? Starting in 1892 the anti-Semitic journal *La Libre Parole* waged a ferocious campaign against the presence of Jewish officers in the Army. A number of duels were fought between Jewish officers and virulent anti-Semites. During one of these, the marquis de Morès, an anti-Semitic agitator, killed Captain Mayer, a young Jewish officer and the nephew of a prominent Paris rabbi. The memorial service gathered anywhere between 20,000 and 100,000 people and led to a heated debate over the place of anti-Semitism in French society.[26]

If all of Europe experienced a heightening of anti-Semitism during the 1880s, for a short time France seemed to have remained a safe haven from intolerance. There was not, for instance, a French delegation at the international anti-Semitic congress of Dresden in 1882.[27] It is unclear why the rest of the decade witnessed the rapid rise of anti-Semitism. When Union Générale, a Catholic bank founded by Paul Bontox in 1878 to rival Protestant and Jewish banks, crashed at the end of 1881 the Catholic press blamed Jewish machinations.[28] A number of periodicals joined the anti-Semitic camp, key among them *La Croix*, founded by Father Bailly in 1880 and funded by the Assumptionists.[29] In 1886 Édouard Drumont published *La France Juive* (Jewish France) to account for the invasion of France by over half a million Jews (there were in fact no more than 110,000 in 1890, including Algerian Jews). In two months, over

[25] Ibid., 28.
[26] Ibid., 35.
[27] Ibid., 41.
[28] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 8.
[29] The Augustinians of the Assumption, more commonly known as the Assumptionists, were a Catholic congregation founded in 1845 in southern France by Father Emmanuel d'Alzon.

100,000 copies were sold and by the end of the century Drumont's diatribe had joined Zola's novels as the top bestseller.[30] In 1892 Drumont founded the anti-Semitic daily *La Libre Parole* with the subheading "France for the French." The journal played an important role in turning the Panama scandal into a national attack on Jewish finance, which Drumont blamed of having corrupted the government: "The disclosure of corruption among Deputies and Senators [played] a decisive role in the rise of anti-parliamentary, anti-capitalist and anti-Semitic sentiments in France and a dramatic step forward for the Socialist movement."[31] By the time the Dreyfus Affair began anti-Semitism was more than part of the political landscape, it was a key factor.

Before the Dreyfus case turned into a national affair it was an intelligence incident concerning the national security of France. The Franco-Prussian War had dealt such a heavy blow to French security and confidence that after 1871 the entirety of the political and military establishment agreed on the restructuring of the Army based on the Prussian model. The Ministry of War was reorganized, military expenditure increased, and "in response to concerns about the European arms race and German military superiority, as well as the apprehension over a new invasion, a special Intelligence service (*service des renseignements*) [was] created devoted to espionage and counter-espionage."[32] The department, known as the *Section de Statistique* (Statistics Section) was secret, its officers were not listed in the Ministry of War, and it responded directly to the Chief of the General Staff. Located in the rue Saint Dominique in Paris, near the German Embassy in the rue de Lille, it was well placed to spy on German diplomats.[33] The bureau was at first ineffectual, but in 1887 it came under the

[30] Michel Drouin, ed., *L'Affaire Dreyfus de A à Z* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 398.
[31] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 14.
[32] Ibid., 7.
[33] Ibid.

command of a new chief, Colonel Sandherr, an espionage fanatic. In the summer of 1894 he already headed a small office of five officers – in hierarchical order commanders Cordier and Henry, captains Lauth and Matton, and an administrator and archivist, Gribelin – which employed innumerable spies and sources around France and Europe.

Key among these spies was Marie Bastian, who had been hired by the German Embassy in 1889 to clean the offices of the building. Madame Bastian would empty trash cans and deliver the contents to Henry from the Statistics Section.[34] It is from these trash cans that in the summer of 1894 the famous document incriminating Dreyfus made its way to the high command of the Army. It is still unclear when the so called *bordereau* (a note) was received by Henry but the general consensus is that on September 26, 1894, Henry met with Madame Bastian and discovered the ripped document among other papers. It was an unsigned, undated letter listing important military information and addressed to Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen, the German military attaché in Paris since 1892. On the 27th Henry showed the *bordereau* to his colleagues, thereafter concluding that the writer was most probably an artillery officer on the General Staff with access to important information. That same day General Mercier, Minister of War, was informed of the discovery by Colonel Sandherr.

Mercier, who had been the target of a press campaign calling for his resignation, decided to act quickly.[35] In the first week of October copies of the document were handed to the commanding officers of all four bureaus of the General Staff. It was one of these officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Henri d'Aboville, who on the 6th decided that it was in fact quite easy to identify the traitor: the information in the *bordereau* indicated

[34] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 71.

[35] General Mercier was unpopular with the French right, partly because he supported the Republican order (he never went to Mass). Several newspapers, including *L'Intransigeant*, *L'Autorité*, *La Libre Parole*, and *La Croix*, accused him of incompetence, corruption, and of harboring Jews and spies inside the army.

that he had gone through all four bureaus of the Ministry and only interns were in a position to do so. Having narrowed the pool of suspects to four or five officers, d'Aboville's superior, Colonel Fabre, remembered one of them: Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Fabre had given him an unfavorable grade in 1893. Fabre and d'Aboville compared the writing of the *bordereau* to that of Dreyfus and concluded that the similarities were striking. Jewish? Alsatian? With some family left in Alsace? Dreyfus became the perfect traitor. But the *bordereau* mentioned that its author was about to leave on maneuvers. Dreyfus hadn't done so since June, but neither had any other of the interns from the General Staff. Colonel Fabre then approached the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General Gonse, who himself told General Boisdeffre, the Chief of the General Staff. Sandherr, the anti-Semitic chief of the Statistics Section, was immediately convinced when informed of the discovery. As for the Minister of War, General Mercier, he was probably informed on the same day (the 6th) or on the morning of the 7th. In one day the top ranks of the Army had completed an investigation, found a traitor who confirmed the prejudices of many, and decided to act without delay. Convictions before evidence, prejudices above scrutiny, ideology over justice. Of course, the traitor was a Jewish officer.[36]

But who was the real spy? On July 20, 1894, Esterhazy visited the German Embassy in Paris for the first time. Dressed in civilian clothes, he introduced himself to Schwartzkoppen as an officer on active duty with the French General Staff, who could provide the Germans with valuable military information. He argued that his family's precarious financial situation forced him to act in such a treacherous way. During the two months or so that followed Esterhazy and Schwartzkoppen met and corresponded frequently. Esterhazy, who lived beyond his means, who gambled, who had spent his

[36] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 95.

wife's dowry, was in bad need of money. And money was exactly what the German Empire could provide him with.

By the end of September Esterhazy's actions had created great turmoil among the high ranks of the military and the leading figures in government. Since the *bordereau* involved the German Embassy the Affair had turned into a matter of State.[37] General Mercier was unsure how to act, and in the week that followed October 6 he met with a number of leading figures, not least the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the military governor of Paris (the highest military post in France). Caution was prescribed but Mercier, "Constantly attacked by the nationalistic press, [saw] the advantage he [could] extract from this affair."[38] At the same time two writing experts were summoned to the Ministry of War. The first one, Alfred Gobert, an expert close to the Bank of France, concluded that although the writing was similar it nonetheless presented striking differences that had to be accounted for. Another expert, Alphonse Bertillon, gave a 'better' conclusion: Dreyfus was most probably the author of the *bordereau*.

In the last days of that week Commander du Paty de Clam, an officer of the 3rd bureau and a protégé of General Boisdeffre, was charged with staging and executing the arrest of Dreyfus. An avid fiction reader with a morbid imagination, du Paty envisioned the theatrical dictation of a letter. On Saturday the 13th Dreyfus received a letter signed by General Gonse which asked him to present himself on Monday to the office of the Chief of the General Staff, dressed in civilian clothes. As Dreyfus enjoyed a calm Sunday with his family du Paty had his plan approved by his superiors. The infamous dictation that took place on the next day was a well concerted effort by the military

[37] Ibid., 96.
[38] Ibid., 98.

establishment to corner Dreyfus into a confession. Upon entering Boisdeffre's office Dreyfus found none other than du Paty, and three civilians standing in the back of the office. Du Paty then asked him to write a letter – the text of the *bordereau* – before interrupting him abruptly at one point to ask why he was trembling. Dreyfus responded that his hands were slightly cold and continued writing before du Paty finally stopped and declared: "In the name of the law I arrest you. You stand accused of the crime of high treason."

In tracing the development of the Dreyfus Affair it is possible to divide the period preceding the eruption of the Affair into three stages. The first comprises the interlude between the arrest of Dreyfus – for that is when the Affair as a personal injustice truly began – and his incarceration on Devil's Island; the second the relative indifference of public opinion that accompanied the end of the Affair, and which followed into 1897; the third includes the return of the Affair to French political life thanks to the efforts of Lieutenant-Colonel Georges Picquart, the new chief of the Statistics Section, and Mathieu Dreyfus, Alfred Dreyfus' brother.

The first phase of the Affair turned the fate of Captain Dreyfus into a national sensation when on October 28, a letter addressed to *La Libre Parole* disclosed that a Jewish officer had been imprisoned in the Cherche-Midi prison on espionage charges. On the 29th the newspaper published a brief inquisitive note: "Is it true that a very important arrest was made by order of the military authority recently? And the person arrested accused of espionage? If this report is true, why are the military authorities keeping it absolutely quiet? A response is called for."[39] In the next two days all the details of the arrest and the incident were made public by different dailies, forcing an

[39] *La Libre Parole*, October 29, 1894.

emergency Cabinet meeting on November 1. The situation was critical. On the one hand there was the diplomatic possibility of aggravating tensions with Germany, on the other the risk of domestic uproar and consternation. The campaign against General Mercier intensified in the first three weeks of November. Fearing for his job, Mercier publicly declared that he had absolute proof of Dreyfus' treason while privately pushing for a quick trial.

But the preliminary investigation moved quite slowly. Under pressure by Mercier, Sandherr "[instructed] his officers at the Section de Statistique to collect any espionage-related documents from their archives that could be used against Dreyfus."[40] The court martial of Dreyfus began on December 19, 1894, and lasted four days. On the first day it was decided that given the nature of the crime and the possible international repercussions it was necessary to hold a closed session. The prosecution's case rested on only one piece of evidence, the *bordereau*. Fearing an acquittal, du Paty passed on a sealed envelope containing a Secret Dossier to be reviewed by the judges during their final day of deliberations. This was not only illegal, it was also carried out in utter secrecy and kept undisclosed from the defense. The Secret Dossier was returned to du Paty on December 22, who in turn gave it back to Sandherr, who then passed it to Mercier. In the hours that followed Dreyfus was unanimously convicted. On the morning of January 5, 1895, Captain Dreyfus was degraded in the Cour Morland, the main courtyard of the *École militaire* (military school) in Paris. About 4,000 troops were present and a crowd of nearly 20,000 gathered outside to the shouts of 'Death to Judas', 'Traitor', 'Death to the Jews'. Those personalities present, such as "Léon Daudet and Maurice Barrès [could] recognize a Frenchman. The Jew Dreyfus [was] not one."[41] Another man was present in that courtyard that morning: Theodor Herzl, a

[40] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 41.
[41] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 18.

young Austrian journalist who had long admired France for its humanity and sense of justice. What a cold January morning to have been in Paris.

Chapter II
The Fight for Light: Dreyfusards and Anti-Dreyfusards

> The trouble is that, instead of being coupled, two feelings, equally respectable and hardly irreconcilable, have found themselves in opposition.[42]

> Raise your eyes, raise your head!
> The light is up there! Walk!
>
> Victor Hugo[43]

If one moment of the Dreyfus Affair has entered universal consciousness it is Émile Zola's publication of *J'accuse* on January 13, 1898. As a daring journalistic act, as an outcry against iniquity, even as a work of striking synthesis, Zola's letter to Félix Faure, President of the French Republic, was in many ways the major turning point of the Dreyfus Affair. It brought into question the legality of Dreyfus' condemnation; it united the Dreyfusard camp; it moved the fight for Dreyfus from the legal to the public sphere; and it gave public opinion a clear choice between two diametrically opposed camps. After the acquittal of Esterhazy on January 11 the Dreyfusard camp had been dealt a heavy blow. Unanimously pronouncing Esterhazy's innocence the court legally sealed the fate of Captain Dreyfus for a second time. Zola understood the significance of this legal impasse and resolved to take another path: public condemnation. Jean-Denis Bredin writes that "The genius of Zola was to understand that there was, for the moment, nothing else to expect from the legal conduits, that the only recourse was public opinion."[44] Zola's role cannot be underestimated, but addressing his contribution to the Dreyfusard movement is not as straightforward as a reading of *J'accuse* may seem. Dealing with a text of almost epic proportions is a complicated task, but the

[42] *L'Illustration*, February 26, 1898.
[43] This quote appeared in the journal *Le Siècle* on June 21, 1898, in a section entitled "The Spirit of Yesterday and Today."
[44] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 336.

significance of *J'accuse* can only be understood once the intricacies of the intellectual context in which it was conceived and elevated have been unraveled. Even though it is difficult to separate the text from its immediate success, it is only through an analysis of the former's conception that one can understand the intellectual milieu behind *J'accuse*. No text is separate from its history, but Zola's act was only deemed heroic because of what it signified for the Dreyfusards. To an analysis of this relationship we must now turn.

It would be difficult to determine at what point the Dreyfusard camp was born. The truth of the matter is that the overwhelming majority of public opinion, along with most intellectuals, politicians, journalists and writers, believed in Dreyfus' guilt at the end of his 1894 trial. Hadn't a military court unanimously declared him guilty? Weren't the Government and the newspapers convinced of his treason? Even if some figures, among them Zola, were disgusted by the anti-Semitism the trial had sparked in the last months of 1894, leading up to the degradation of January 5, 1895, no one publicly doubted the truthfulness of the sentence. Needless to say, from the moment Dreyfus was accused and imprisoned only a handful of personalities were convinced of his innocence. The first Dreyfusards, if the term can be aptly used at this point, were Alfred Dreyfus' two brothers, Léon and Mathieu, along with his wife Lucie. During the agonizing weeks of December 1894 and January 1895, Lucie and Mathieu knocked on all possible doors, talked to as many people as were willing to listen. The Dreyfus family was quickly joined by the prominent criminal lawyer Edgar Demange, who upon hesitation took up the case – "Catholic, conservative, led on by many of the prejudices shared by the accusers of Dreyfus, he…only [saw] the violations of the law, the fragility of the accusation, the risk of an atrocious judicial error. He… [became] the all devoted

lawyer of the Jewish officer."[45] By the end of the trial he was convinced of Dreyfus' innocence, and following the condemnation he made a public declaration in which he expressed this view without hesitations. Demange, like all other early Dreyfusards, lacked substantial evidence and was moved more by conviction than by judgment. Forzinetti, the Governor of the Cherche-Midi military prison where Dreyfus was imprisoned during his trial, convinced himself on the spot and against all odds that the Captain was the victim of a judicial mistake. Committed Dreyfusard from that point onward, he assisted Bernard Lazare in his publication of an 1896 pamphlet defending Dreyfus.[46] It was also from the ranks of the Army that emerged the key detonator in the rebirth of the Dreyfus Affair: Lieutenant-Colonel Georges Picquart. Picquart was "an outstanding officer who, although exhibiting anti-Semitic traits, fought fiercely for justice."[47] Convinced of Esterhazy's guilt, his investigation turned him into a declared enemy of the anti-Dreyfusard camp. Picquart showed that one could be both an anti-Semite and a Dreyfusard. It is important to note that for a small minority the judicial irregularities surrounding Dreyfus' arrest remained more important than his creed.

During the first stages of the Affair, Dreyfus' supporters asked only for a revision of the December 1894 sentence. Revisionism was initially a position concerned with the review of a legal matter. It did not advocate an ideological position or make clear a set of political goals. Instead, it was centered on the belief that the irregularities surrounding the degradation and condemnation of Dreyfus made the 1894 trial unjust. A new trial was thus in order. If revisionism was the first objective of the Dreyfusards, during the end of 1897 and the beginning of 1898 it emerged as part of a larger fight against anti-Semitism, militarism, nationalism and conservatism. To further complicate the issue, revisionism meant different things at different times. First it meant a new trial,

[45] Ibid., 112.
[46] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 460.
[47] Ibid., 467.

but at the end of 1897 it came to be concerned with Esterhazy's trial (the condemnation of Esterhazy would have opened the door for the retrial of Dreyfus). As Dreyfusard discourse gained ideological coherence and strength during 1898, revisionism lost its distinctive legal character. All Dreyfusards were for a revision, but not all revisionists were committed ideological Dreyfusards.

This tightly knit group was united by either moral or personal convictions, but it was Lazare who became the first public Dreyfusard before all other writers or journalists. If other initial Dreyfusards were unlikely allies of the Dreyfusard cause – Demange a conservative jurist; Forzinetti and Picquart officers in the Army that had convicted Dreyfus – Lazare, on the other hand, was an intellectual who took pride in being Jewish, and who had already addressed French anti-Semitism in the past. Before Lazare revisionism was hardly an intellectual movement. It is usually forgotten that by 1896-1897, when the Affair eventually resurfaced, the Dreyfusards were not united by political motives. The few figures on the side of the Jewish Captain were simply convinced of his absolute innocence, and the arguments they used were far from those that made their way into Dreyfusard discourse with the coming of Zola and other prominent intellectuals in 1898. And yet, if the Dreyfusards were not an ideologically heterogeneous group, Lazare provided the supporters of Dreyfus with a specific nemesis. His public disputes with Drumont, expressed in the dialogue between *Le Voltaire* and *La Libre Parole*, along with their subsequent duel, were the starting points in the separation between what later emerged as the Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard groups. If the divisions were not clear at the time he published *Une erreur judiciaire*, they were nonetheless beginning to emerge as foundations for later intellectual developments. When one tries to understand how Zola took the fight for Dreyfus from the judicial into the public realm, it is important to note that this process had started

almost two years earlier in the writings of Bernard Lazare, who prided himself on having been "The first Jew who stood up for the Jew."[48] Lazare was the first in a list of Dreyfus partisans; for if the Dreyfusard camp existed from the early stages of the Affair, it only became an intellectual, ideological and political movement with the gradual incorporation of prominent individuals.

Key among these, Émile Zola was a respected figure and an established writer at the time of the Dreyfus Affair: "He [was] then an accomplished literary man, a tranquil and rich bourgeois, who [seemed] happy. He [dreamt] of being finally elected to the French Academy, the ultimate social consecration that [seemed] to be missing."[49] Zola seems to have been in Rome during the Dreyfus trial, soon after taking some interest in the virulent anti-Semitism the trial had ignited. His first article in *Le Figaro* relating to the Affair, *For the Jews*, dates from May 26, 1896, and it is an attack on the anti-Semitism sparked by the Dreyfus case. Later on, in November of that same year, Bernard Lazare had tried to persuade Zola of Dreyfus' innocence. Unconvinced, Zola's awareness was sparked a year later, "In November 1897, Zola [had] met Lazare again, he [had] seen Scheurer-Kestner, he [had] compared the writings, he [had] read the documents, he [had] begun to accumulate information."[50] Converted to the Dreyfusard cause, he decided to act.

Taken from a 1994 colloquium entitled "The representations of the Dreyfus Affair in the press in France and abroad," *Zola and his representations of the Affair* looks at the importance of Zola's contribution in the elaboration of a particular ideological discourse akin to the lens of the emerging Dreyfusard camp. Béatrice Laville argues that even before *J'accuse* Zola was already formulating a position in

[48] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 188.
[49] Ibid., 336.
[50] Ibid., 337.

which he saw himself as a kind of national savior, a man of convictions fighting on the side of light: "From this point onwards, the idea of a sick France, corroded by an ulcer, a cancer, a gangrene, develops in the Zolaesque and Dreyfusard imagery, at the same time as the pre-figuration of the intellectual as liberator and therapist."[51] Although Laville does not analyze the use and impact of such imagery in *J'accuse*, partly as a reaction to the over-analysis of the text, partly because of different interests, she nonetheless makes the important argument that the article was in no way a spontaneous work as many historians have argued. Zola may have indeed written it in great haste and frantic fervor, but the ideas and imagery one finds in the letter are the result of a particular vision of France born out of an older political conviction that the Republic needed to be saved from its worst enemies.

Before addressing *J'accuse* one should identify the recurrence of particular themes in the texts that preceded its publication on January 13, 1898. In a letter from November 20, 1897, Zola writes to Scheurer-Kestner: "I don't know what I will do, but never has human drama filled me with more poignant emotion. It is the combat for truth, and it is the only good one, the only great one. Even in seeming defeat, victory is to the end, certain."[52] On November 25 *Le Figaro* inaugurated Zola's involvement in the Affair by publishing an article entitled *M. Scheurer-Kestner*. In it, Zola is still cautious, but the grand themes of *J'accuse* are already there, timidly no doubt, but all the same present. "I have said it, the affair itself, I don't want to deal with it,"[53] and a few lines later he adds: "Magistrates make mistakes, military men can make mistakes. How is the honor of the army engaged in this? Its unique role, if a mistake was made, is

[51] Béatrice Laville, « Zola et ses représentation de l'Affaire, » in *Les représentations de l'Affaire Dreyfus dans la presse en France et à l'Étranger*, Actes du colloque de Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire (Tours, France: Publication de l'Université François-Rabelais, 1994), 147.
[52] Émile Zola, « Lettre à Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 25.
[53] Émile Zola, « M. Scheurer-Kestner, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 31.

to repair it."[54] Zola also takes up the charge against anti-Semitism, "The press is a necessary force; I think in sum that it does more good than bad. But certain journals are not less guilty, some throwing into panic, others terrorizing; living off scandals to triple their sales. The imbecile anti-Semitism has propelled this folly,"[55] and ends the article with the famous "the truth is on the march, and nothing shall stop it."[56] His next article in *Le Figaro, Le syndicat* (The Syndicate), dates from December 1. The title is an ironic reference to the supposed association of Jewish wealth that was attacking the Army. A number of newspapers shaped the idea of an underground movement bent on freeing Dreyfus and betraying France. In their view, figures such as Lazare, Scheurer-Kestner, Fozinetti, Picquart, and so on, were on the payroll of the Dreyfus family and other wealthy Jewish families. Zola discards the idea as absurd, but in doing so praises the Syndicate if there really is one, as a force for justice, liberty and truth: "A Syndicate to act on public opinion, to heal it of the follies into which the awful press has thrown it, to bring it back to its senses, to its generosity."[57] This article comes closer to Zola's views than the one on Scheurer-Kestner. It displays powerful images: Lazare works for light; Scheurer-Kestner is tortured by the need for truth and justice; Picquart walks on his side; all come from the four corners of the universe, walking on different roads, silent but arriving on the same morning: "A judicial error has been made and as long as it is not repaired, France will suffer, sickly, as from a secret cancer that bit by bit corrodes the flesh. And if, to re-establish its health there are certain parts to cut, let them cut them!"[58]

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 32.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Émile Zola, « Le syndicat, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 42.
[58] Ibid.

Zola's diatribes in *Le Figaro* caused such uproar among the subscribers that fearing a dramatic drop in sales, the Editor-in-Chief, Fernand de Rodays, was forced to put an end to them. Zola was only able to publish a third and final article, *Procès-verbal* (minutes of a proceeding) on December 5. With the opening of a general military inquiry on Esterhazy, Zola seeks to address the entire case in succinct form. His style is no longer that of an artist – *M. Scheurer-Kestner* – or an ironist – *The syndicate* – but of a devoted Dreyfusard. Zola openly attacks the role of the press and the resurgence of anti-Semitism; he ends the article in expectation: "Let us hope that tomorrow's spectacle will give us back our courage and console us."[59] If Zola's contribution to the Dreyfusard cause had only begun, *Le Figaro*'s was fast coming to an end. Never again throughout 1898 and 1899 would its pages carry such denunciations of French society, such passionate calls for justice. On January 22, 1898, not even ten days after *J'accuse*, Saint-Genest would write: "The love of the army is at all the times like the love of the fatherland…I have a right to discard Émile Zola's manifesto."[60] But Zola was quick to look elsewhere for new allies.

With no newspaper willing to publish his inflammatory articles, Zola turned to his editor, Eugène Fasquelle, and issued two pamphlets written as letters, one to the youth, one to France. The *Letter to the Youth* came out on December 14 in response to the student riots outside Scheurer-Kestner's home. Recalling the heroic role of students during the Second Empire – their determined opposition in the Latin Quarter – Zola invokes the recurring images of the Dreyfus Affair: "But the youth is already gangrenous, since its purity, its natural candor, does not allow it to recognize itself in the middle of unacceptable errors, and go straight into what is evident, what is limpid,

[59] Émile Zola, « Procès-verbal, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 52.
[60] Saint-Genest, *Le Figaro*, January 22, 1898.

what is filled with the honest light of plain day!"[61] Anti-Semitism is described as a poison and France's history is exalted in the face of adversity. How, asks Zola, can the country of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the ultimate act of tolerance and emancipation, enter the twentieth century in such a way? The impassioned repetitions of "Youth, youth!" seem to announce the declaratory "J'accuse;" the call for truth and justice with which the letter ends echoing "the truth is on the march, and nothing shall stop it," from a few weeks earlier. On January 7, 1898, Zola issued his second pamphlet, *Letter to France.* At this point Esterhazy was to be judged, but Zola resolved to write a second letter calling for the renewal of France. As the savior of previous writings, he again appears as an intellectual liberator. Impersonating France as a fragile and sickly being, lost in a labyrinth of lies and deceptions, of obscurity and reaction, he calls for it to be "the great France"[62] again, to find itself, to reestablish its honor and glory, to heal and mend.

In analyzing the texts of Zola's involvement in the Affair that preceded *J'accuse* one finds a clear set of motifs. The novelist merges with the social critic, the social critic with the healer. The uproar of *J'accuse* is already there, along with the pleas for light, truth and justice. The echoes of 1789 resonate in the writing, both as political indicators and as evidence of France's potential for good. Zola's combat for Dreyfus was recent, but this did not make it any less ardent. In a few weeks he had gone from slightly doubting the verdict of 1894 to denouncing the obscurity of the age. His entire life's oeuvre, as a monument to social injustice and human iniquity, came to life in the lines of these articles and letters that preceded the acquittal of Esterhazy on January 11.

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[61] Émile Zola, « Lettre à la jeunesse, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 57.
[62] Émile Zola, « Lettre à la France, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 76.

However, it was *J'accuse* that became the definitive version of Zola's fight; the acme of Dreyfusard discourse.

Texts cannot be separated from the events surrounding them. If Zola's articles and pamphlets up to *J'accuse* had caught the attention of the government and public opinion, they did not represent a major threat to the assertion that Dreyfus was in fact guilty and that a retrial was out of the question. All of these documents were no doubt impassioned, but one cannot forget that the legal pathways had yet to be closed. If anything, the last month of 1897 was a highpoint for the few supporters of Dreyfus. Against all odds, and in the face of overwhelming opposition, the Esterhazy trial had become a reality. Whereas a revision of 1894 was legally impossible, a court finding Esterhazy guilty would revive the way for the reopening of the Dreyfus case. Most Dreyfusards had high hopes in the military court that convened on January 10 and 11. If anything, Zola, unlike most Dreyfusards, did not believe in a positive verdict[63] and on January 10 he began to write the famous letter to the President of the French Republic. Part of *J'accuse*'s success may well be that it appeared at the right time. Had Zola waited for the verdict and then decided to act, the impact of the article would have been less powerful. Although the letter was felt as a spontaneous cry at the acquittal of Esterhazy, in reality it had been prepared for quite some time. Its themes were those of Zola's previous writings, the evidence an accumulation of information in the last days preceding its publication. Zola did work in haste, but *J'accuse* must be understood both as a culmination of Zolaesque ideas and as an impulsive belief in the mistake that had been committed.

[63] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 339.

Working for two days, Zola finished the letter during the night of the eleventh and the morning of the twelfth.[64] A number of factors external to the content of the article contributed to its success. Although intended to follow his previous two letters, Zola understood the Affair needed to become a press happening, and that this third letter needed a newspaper. With most doors closed he turned to *L'Aurore*, a left-wing daily that had only been founded in October 1897. Georges Clemenceau, the Editor-in-Chief, had initially, like most others, been unfavorable to a revision. He had accepted Bernard Lazare as a contributor under the condition that he would keep quiet about the Affair. On November 1, 1897, he had written an article asking: "Is it really impossible to finish off once and for all with this story? Dreyfus was judged by his peers, and declared guilty. We must hold the judgment as good until new orders."[65] Like Zola, during November he took a closer look at the Affair, he met with Scheurer-Kestner and he slowly came to see the great iniquity. In the last two months of 1897 *L'Aurore* swiftly converted to the Dreyfusard cause. It was in fact Clemenceau who on the evening of January 12 made two of the key decisions impacting the success of *J'accuse*. First, he changed the title from *Letter to M. Félix Faure, President of the Republic* to *J'accuse*, the recurring statement of the final section. Second, he decided to have 300,000 copies of *L'Aurore*, ten times its usual circulation, printed exceptionally the following day.

Its immediacy, the number of copies sold, the title, all are nonetheless secondary when one addresses the importance of *J'accuse* as the founding text of the Dreyfusard movement. In acknowledging that the legal road had been closed, the letter took up the fight for justice in the public realm; it gave names to the perpetrators of injustice; it delineated the series of mistakes and irregularities committed by the Army and the government; it crystallized the divisions between the Dreyfusards and the anti-

[64] Ibid., 339.
[65] Georges Clemenceau, *L'Affaire Dreyfus: L'Iniquité* (Paris: Mémoire du Livre, 2001), 62.

Dreyfusards. Addressing an open letter to the President of the Republic, perhaps not the most powerful government figure but without doubt the highest State figure, was in itself deemed an audacious act. Zola begins by spelling out the glories of fin-de-siècle France and stating: "But what a stain of mud on your name – I was going to say on your reign – than this abominable Dreyfus affair!"[66] He then tells the story of Dreyfus' condemnation, from the moment the *bordereau* was discovered to the quick conviction of 1894. For Jean-Denis Bredin "he exaggerates the importance of Du Paty whom he wrongfully places in the first rank. He forgets to mention Henry, the principal criminal instrument. He minimizes the role of General Gonse. He doesn't notice the essential responsibility of General Mercier."[67] Nonetheless, Zola did what no one of his stature had done up to that point: tell the story of Dreyfus. Zola mentions names, crimes, irregularities, and more importantly he accuses the General Staff of a "crime, whose abomination grows with every hour."[68] He attacks the resolution of the second war council which set Esterhazy free, and declares it an offense "to exploit patriotism for works of hatred."[69]

Zola repeats the powerful statement "the truth is on the march, and nothing shall stop it,"[70] before ending his letter with the famous interpolations "J'accuse," denouncing Lieutenant-Colonel Paty du Clam, Generals Mercier, Billot, Boisdeffre, Gonse, and Pellieux, Commander Ravary, the war ministry's bureaus and the two war councils, as well as the three writing experts that declared Dreyfus to be the writer of the *bordereau* – Belhomme, Varinard, and Couard. He acknowledges the implications of such accusations under the defamatory press laws and concludes with a call for 'light': "I only have one passion, that of light, in the name of humanity, which has

[66] Émile Zola, « J'accuse, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, ed. Alain Pagès (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2006), 81.
[67] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 341.
[68] Zola, « J'accuse, » in *Combat pour Dreyfus*, 90.
[69] Ibid., 93.
[70] Ibid., 95.

suffered so greatly and which is entitled to happiness."[71] Bredin argues that "Zola [discovered] the very essence of the Affair. He [saw] all the springs of the judicial error, committed, then covered, then maintained…The hierarchical exasperation, the cult of the fatherland and the honor of the corps, he [saw] the clerical passion, as well as the conspiracy of the fooled mob and of the fiery governments, looking at all costs for silence."[72] More importantly, "Zola was the first one – for Bernard Lazare had not been able to give his engagement this dimension – to turn the combat for the revision of the Dreyfus trial into a moral cause, and a republican duty."[73] For Bredin, Zola helped the enemies of Dreyfus recognize themselves. He clarified the Affair, and in so doing simplified the divisions between the two camps. He placed truth and justice, the rights of man and democracy on the side of the Dreyfusards, and left nationalism, Catholicism and tradition on the side of the Army and its supporters.

Was January 13, 1898, then, the day on which the Affair was born? Hardly, Dreyfus had been convicted in 1894, the fight for him had been ongoing ever since, and the fury of anti-Semitism had already made its way through French discourse. What this day did represent was the transferal of the debates from the legal into the public realm. For those who thought the law had declared itself in definitive terms for a second time, *J'accuse* showed that justice did not solely belong to the courts; it was also the task of the French nation. "To all those ready to launch campaigns for justice, human rights and Republican principles; to Nationalist and anti-Semitic groups who [were] to stir up the whole of France in the coming months,"[74] the Affair was born in this text. In response, Zola received some 30,000 telegrams and letters. To some he became the hero willing to sacrifice his comfort and respectability for the case of another man; to others he came to

[71] Ibid., 97.
[72] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 342.
[73] Ibid., 344.
[74] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 151.

embody everything that was naïve and dangerous about the Dreyfusard camp. Zola helped demarcate the borders of the Dreyfusard movement, providing it with an enlightened imagery to evoke and a revolutionary tradition to exalt.

January 13 was not without its drawbacks for the Dreyfusards. Just as *J'accuse* had already sold 200,000 copies, General Billot had Picquart arrested and imprisoned. A military inquiry was to determine on which grounds he could be tried and dismissed. At the same time a heated discussion in the Chamber of Deputies led to a vote of confidence in the Méline Government, with 312 in favor, 122 against and 100 abstentions. Scheurer-Kestner lost his position as Vice-President of the Senate. With most of the public hostile to revision and elections on the horizon, the overwhelming political majority remained loyal to the decision of the military court. The Dreyfusard fight was in fact just about to begin, and in the months that followed, the number of newspapers open to revision remained minimal. On September 16, 1898, the newspaper *Le Rappel* issued a list of newspapers that had been hostile to revision in March 1898 as opposed to September 1898. Out of forty newspapers surveyed in March, ten had been for revision, thirty against. In September this number had shifted dramatically, with twenty six for and fourteen against. In January the situation was all the more precarious. Furthermore, some of the newspapers with the largest circulation remained faithful to the anti-Dreyfusard cause. The Assumptionist daily *La Croix* had a daily circulation of 180,000, not counting its more than 100 local weekly editions.[75] As for *Le Petit Journal*, the 1890s were the height of its popularity with close to a million copies sold per day. Both remained profoundly anti-Dreyfusard to the very end.

[75] Ibid., 212.

If in sheer numbers the anti-Dreyfusards seem to have held the upper hand throughout 1898, the number of intellectuals who rallied behind the cause of Dreyfus increased dramatically after the acquittal of Esterhazy and *J'accuse*. In the two days that followed, two petitions were issued calling for the revision of the 1894 trial. In sum, some 2000 signatures were added "including scholars (Edouard Grimaux, Louis Havet, Paul Viollet, Arthur Guy, Léon Blum, Jean Psichari, Lucien Herr, Anatole France, and from the French Academy, Elie and David Halévy); writers (Pierre Quillard, Jacques Bizet, Marcel Proust, Octave Mirbeau, Charles Péguy); artists and poets (Claude Monet, Eugène Carrière, Ratisbonne, Barbier). Many other intellectuals supported a revision of the verdict of Dreyfus, including the sociologist Emile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Brühl and the writers André Gide (previously an anti-Semite), Stéphane Mallarmé, Jules Renard, Julien Benda and Maurice Maeterlinck."[76] Other prominent figures for revision included Émile Duclaux, director of the Pasteur Institute, Fernand Gregh, Félix Fénéon, Charles Andler, Victor Bérard, Francois Simiand, Georges Sorel, and the historian Gabriel Monod. In *L'Aurore* Clemenceau published the names of the signatories under the heading "Manifesto of the Intellectuals."[77] If many of these figure were not active in the fight for Dreyfus, their prominence in French cultural life nevertheless gave an impulse to the Dreyfusards which had very much been lacking in the last months of 1897.

Before dealing with the development of the Dreyfusard camp it is necessary to resume an account of the developments of the Dreyfus Affair during the rest of 1898. Following *J'accuse* a number of anti-Semitic riots broke out across France – about 70 in

[76] Ibid., 206.
[77] Ibid., 154.

three weeks.[78] They were particularly violent in French Algeria, where Jewish shops were destroyed and Jews physically attacked. The Dreyfusard press was shocked by the verbal and physical violence of this wave of anti-Semitism. In the legal realm, on January 18 General Billot, Minister of War, filed an individual suit against Zola and Alexandre Perrenx, manager of L'Aurore, for libel and complicity. The trial, which was quickly penned *L'Affaire Zola* lasted from February 7 to 23; it was a national sensation with famous court interruptions and major public disturbances. The defense sought to take advantage of the trial to show the irregularities in the 1894 Dreyfus and the 1898 Esterhazy trials. The list of witnesses went over 200 and it included all the figures involved in the Affair during its long duration.[79] The prosecution reacted fiercely and convinced the Presiding Judge, Albert Delegorgue, to limit the trial to Billot's charge. Lucie Dreyfus appeared on the first day, "At the first question…the president [interrupted] the attorney with the formula, that he…thereafter [repeated] hundreds of times: 'The question will not be raised'"[80] On the last day of the trial, after a succession of emotional statements, the jurors deliberated for forty minutes before sentencing Zola to a year in prison and a 3,000 francs fine. The defamation charge was approved with a majority vote of 8 to 4. Following the trial, and inspired by the injustices committed against Dreyfus and Zola, the League for the Rights of Man and the Citizen was created. On February 26 Picquart was dismissed from the Army for serious disciplinary offence and his pension reduced.[81] After presenting the case to an appeals court the judgment of the Zola trial was declared void on April 2 and a new trial was convened for May; but after the competence of the Court to try the case was challenged, the retrial was in fact adjourned until July.

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[78] Ibid., 155.
[79] Ibid., 159.
[80] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 355.
[81] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 168.

In the meantime the Méline government was brought down on June 15 for reasons unrelated to the Dreyfus Affair. Henri Brisson, a radical, formed a new government, and Godefroy Cavaignac became the new Minister of War. Cavaignac, who "illustrated a new conception of radicalism, which mixed a passionate nationalism, a reforming project and the re-vindication of truthful republican virtue,"[82] was determined to crush the Dreyfusard camp, which had gained presence in the press through revelations of irregularities in the Dreyfus case. Calling for the revision and reordering of the Secret Dossier, on July 7 Cavaignac gave a determined speech in the Chamber of Deputies declaring his certainty in Dreyfus' guilt. He read from three letters, two of which were frauds (the letter in which a 'P' was substituted with a 'D', and the forged *faux Henry*). On July 13 Picquart was arrested and sent to La Santé, and on July 18 Zola was again convicted by the appeals court. He fled for England to escape imprisonment, only to return to France a year later.

If July was a low point for the Dreyfusards, it nonetheless set the stage for the revision of the 1894 trial. Throughout August Jaurès published a series of articles in the Dreyfusard newspaper, *La Petite République*, entitled *The Proofs*, pointing out the wrongdoings and lies surrounding the Dreyfus case and the Esterhazy acquittal. The thirteenth of that month, Captain Cuignet, charged by Cavaignac with examining the Secret Dossier, discovered the *faux Henry* to be a forgery. Henry was summoned to Cavaignac's office at the end of the month, where he admitted having forged documents. After taking responsibility and appealing to national security as his prime motive he was transferred to the Mont-Valérien prison. Boisdeffre immediately presented his resignation and on August 31 Henry committed suicide. Fearing a new trial, Esterhazy fled to London via Brussels the following day. On September 3

[82] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 419.

Cavaignac presented his own resignation. These events led to a major shift in public opinion. One by one, newspapers that had been hostile to revision grew convinced that this was now the only way to clear the name of the Army and the State. Lucie Dreyfus issued an appeal for revision that reached the Criminal Chamber at the end of September. Between October 27 and 29 the Chamber reviewed Lucie's appeal request and decided that it was valid; a new inquiry was finally opened. In almost a year the case for revision had gone from a family affair to a matter of State that could only be resolved by an investigation. For Bredin, during 1898 the demarcation of the frontiers between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards was finally fixed.[83]

If Zola gave the Affair its national character,[84] through *J'accuse* and his sensational trial, others continued the public plea for Dreyfus throughout 1898. A distinction must nonetheless be made between those who pursued the legal battle for revision and those who kept the press alert during the developments of the Affair. This second group had a small audience, "The rare journals where they [could] write, such as *L'Aurore*, *Le Siècle*, [did] not amount to much in view of the enormous weight of the anti-Dreyfusard press."[85] And yet, these journalists managed to set the parameters of the Dreyfusard movement. By the end of 1898 it was almost impossible for political, cultural or intellectual figures to stay neutral in face of the Affair. Sides were chosen, ideologies confirmed, and divisions in French society resurfaced through a powerful evocation of different ideals and values.

Key among the Dreyfusards was Georges Clemenceau. We have already come across his contribution to *J'accuse* as Editor-in-Chief of *L'Aurore*. Moreover, his hundreds of articles, occupying more than 3,000 pages, place him "in the first ranks of

[83] Ibid., 468.
[84] Ibid., 375.
[85] Ibid., 383.

Dreyfusard intellectuals, side by side with Lazare, Zola, and Jaurès."[86] Clemenceau, whose career had taken him into politics, had been damaged by a series of attacks during the Panama scandal that cost him his seat in the Chamber of Deputies. Excluded from political life and unable to return until 1902, he instead turned to writing. It is no coincidence that his major contribution to the Affair was not the speeches for which he had once been famous but the hundreds of articles in which he repeatedly exposed the injustices of the different trials. Clemenceau's engagement was that of a journalist combining information with opinion. Unlike the works of Lazare or Jaurès, which sought to illustrate the innocence of Dreyfus in one gesture, Clemenceau's articles were the weekly, sometimes daily attacks of a furious mind which had itself been unjustly accused and excluded from the political arena a few years earlier. But Clemenceau also saw beyond the daily developments of the Affair. In compiling all his articles in seven volumes one can see "the sense of his combat, and of his letter to Alfred Dreyfus on October 15, 1899: 'To fight for you is to fight for France.'"[87]

Supporting Zola throughout January 1898, Clemenceau developed a specific set of issues that preoccupied him. On the twentieth he wrote: "When the rights of an individual are undermined, it's the rights of all that are menaced."[88] The article ends with an evocation of the burning of the heretic Jean Hus: "It will soon be five hundred years since this. The names of regimes change. Human ignorance turns obstinate. Without weakening, let us bring our help to the truth."[89] Coming back to obscurantism the next day in an article entitled *The Crusade* Clemenceau sees a "France of the Revolution against which the entire Papal army, at the present hour, deploys its

[86] Clemenceau, *L'Iniquité*, 7.
[87] Ibid., 25.
[88] Ibid., 209.
[89] Ibid., 210.

battalions."[90] Without even directly addressing the Dreyfus Affair – there is only a mention of a Jew condemned for treason – or the Zola case, Clemenceau writes of the Middle Ages, the Revolution, the government's corruption and anti-Semitism. It is the bourgeoisie which is to blame for the return of clericalism, a bourgeoisie eager to expiate its past faults and come back to the bosom of the Catholic Church. "The Republican bourgeoisie repudiating the Republic of justice by which it was one day dazzled, the free thinking bourgeoisie taking its children from the University to deliver them to the Jesuits,"[91] writes Clemenceau before attacking the Church's envelopment of the French Army. For him the so called defenders of the Army had only degraded France to the rank of a country like Spain. On January 27, following the anti-Jewish riots of Algiers, Clemenceau made a passionate case against anti-Semitism in the article *Death to the Jews*: "The anti-Jewish uprisings in Algiers, where Europeans and Indigenous populations fraternized in murder, fire and pillage show under what thin varnish of civilization hides our barbarity."[92] Attacking the response of the government and society he wrote, "This takes place in French territory, under the Third Republic, with this inscription on the walls: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."[93] For the passionate Republican these events foreshadowed greater calamities, embodying the refusal of an epoch to recognize its injustices. The anti-Dreyfusards seemed to personify the spirit of the time. Detached from the triumphs of Republicanism, the bourgeoisie and the ignorant mob had united behind the forces of reaction. Dreyfus was not only the victim of a judicial mistake or a military plot; he was the sacrificial lamb of an era unable to recognize its ignorance and prejudices.

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[90] Ibid., 211.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 237.
[93] Ibid., 238.

On January 29 he finished his article: "Measure this as the retreat of the French spirit."[94] In a few weeks the Dreyfusards had turned the Dreyfus Affair into a microcosm of French history. What did Clemenceau mean by a "French spirit"? How was the Dreyfus Affair contrary to this spirit? In most of his January and February articles Clemenceau evokes a specific idea of France. In a few weeks, to defend this idea and to defend Dreyfus had become synonymous. It was not only a matter of individual injustice, but a realization of everything that was wrong with France. How could the nation of 1789, how could a Republic based on the Declaration of the Rights of Man, condemn a man unjustly and justify itself behind religion and nationalism? One defended Dreyfus because one was against the Catholic Church and for the separation between Church and State; against discrimination and for universal human rights; against the raison d'État and for individual justice; against militarism and for freedom of action; against Rome and for 1789; against the Bastille and for the Republic. Clemenceau, prominent among the Dreyfusards, pushed through with a verbal impetus that evoked all these themes and identified the anti-Dreyfusards along strict obscurantist lines.

On February 23 he published an account of the last day of the Zola trial. His closing speech summarized these ideas quite forcefully: "It is the negation of the French idea that came out of the Revolution, the idea of the same liberty for all, the idea of tolerance for all."[95] Even though Clemenceau was no lawyer the court made an exception by granting him the right to pronounce the final statement in favor of *L'Aurore*. Suggesting the supposed treason of Dreyfus he stated that "the worst treason…is the treason of the French spirit, of the French spirit which has acquired such a good reputation in the world, of the spirit of tolerance and justice which once got us

[94] Ibid., 247.
[95] Ibid., 271.

the love of all the peoples of the earth. For even if France was to disappear tomorrow, there will remain of it an eternal thing, the sentiments of liberty and human justice that it unraveled in the world in 1789."[96] If he attached France to a specific republican ideology, Clemenceau was also keen to reject another tradition, that of a strong authoritarian State: "Make this respect, absurd as it is in a democracy, of the raison d'État, disappear from our souls. The raison d'État can be seen with Louis XIV, with Napoleon, with the men who hold a people in their hands and the government according to their liking."[97] And then, he proceeded to summarize the main concept of the French State with which the Dreyfusards were to be associated from that moment onward: "In a democracy, the raison d'État is nothing but a contradiction, a vestige of the past. Gambetta use to say that France is a high moral being. I don't deny anything of France, Monarchy or Republic. But I say that the tradition of the raison d'État has had its time and that the time has come for us to attach ourselves to the modern idea of liberty and egalitarian justice….an example for all civilized nations."[98] If Zola had crystallized the divisions made apparent by the Dreyfus Affair, Clemenceau had brought them to a riveting conclusion. The destiny of Captain Dreyfus had been linked to that of the Enlightenment, and the Enlightenment's to France. France was not only a nation demarcated by territorial borders; it was a model for humanity. The end of Clemenceau's speech was met with applause and clamors, but the court was to decide otherwise. On February 23 it found Zola guilty and sentenced him to the maximum sentence for libel. Both inside and outside the courtroom anti-Dreyfusards cheered in support of the verdict. The legal road had again been shut down, but the trial had also been an opportunity to call attention to the Affair, both nationally and internationally. Clemenceau was to continue his fight for years to come, but especially in that difficult

[96] Ibid., 273.
[97] Ibid., 277.
[98] Ibid.

year of 1898 when his constant articles gave hope and guidance to the Dreyfusard movement.

The period between *J'accuse* and the opening of the inquiry on October 29 proved to be the intellectual breaking point of the Dreyfus Affair. The prime objective was to reopen the case of Captain Dreyfus: "It was, and remained so for some. But for many, throughout 1898, the perspective [became] vaster, vaguer too."[99] If a distinction had been rapidly constructed between justice and patriotism, "Justice, the fatherland, Dreyfus [could not] oppose them or separate them."[100] For at the heart of the intellectual developments of that crucial year remained a profound paradox: Dreyfus had been separated from the Affair. Zola may have been tormented by such a case of individual injustice, but for many who rallied behind the Dreyfusards his plea pointed to a general malaise that could only be mended through confrontation. The opposites that were espoused by either camp made their way into political discourse, especially after the May 1898 elections. Bredin argues that "the division of interests and of ideas that ran, in the political world, starting at the end of 1898, and more so in 1899, broadly separating a Dreyfusard left from an anti-Dreyfusard right, took place around the grand oppositions the intellectuals had traced."[101] If the Dreyfusards took the lead in creating a specific language of opposition to the State, the dialogue between the two camps was by no means one-sided. The anti-Dreyfusards developed their own list of ideals. In a few months the two seemed diametrically opposed. To this relationship we must now turn.

On December 31, 1898, almost a year after the publication of *J'accuse*, a group of prominent personalities founded the *Ligue de la Patrie française* (League of the

[99] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 388.
[100] Ibid., 352.
[101] Ibid., 388.

French Fatherland) to assemble and coordinate the efforts of the anti-Dreyfusards. If at the start of 1898 they relied on the vast support of anti-revisionist opinion, their effort could nevertheless not compare with the Dreyfusards' organizational prowess. In fact, they took much longer to coordinate collective action.[102] When their response came, it demonstrated that not all intellectuals and academics were supporters of Dreyfus. The name of the League was a direct response to the Dreyfusard *Ligue des droits de l'homme* founded earlier that year. At the initiative of a few young academics, and under the leadership of Francois Coppée, Jules Lemaitre, and Maurice Barrès, the League gathered the support of 22 members of the Académie Française, several dozen members of the Institut, hundreds of university professors, writers, magistrates, doctors and other members of the liberal professions.[103] An appeal published in the Royalist daily *Le Soleil* bore the signatures of anti-Semitic personalities such as Charles Maurras, Léon Daudet and Gyp (Countess Martel de Janville), while also including the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* Ferdinand Brunetière, the poet Frédéric Mistral, and Jules Verne. Other early supporters were scholars Henri Vaugeois, Louis Dausset and Gabriel Syveton, historians Albert Vandal, Petit de Julleville, cartoonists Forain and Caran d'Ache, and the painters Jean Renoir and Paul Degas.[104]

The text published was in some ways vague. It did not mention Dreyfus or any other figure involved in the Affair. It sought to unite rather than attack, and it briefly described the importance of national cohesion. Acknowledging the seriousness of the political and social tensions evident at the end of 1898 it stated that "it could not continue without fatally compromising the vital interests of the French Fatherland, and notably those which are gloriously held in trust by the nation's army."[105] Aligning the

[102] Ibid., 379.
[103] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 233.
[104] Ibid., 253.
[105] Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics* (London: Longman, 1996), 134.

fate of the Army with that of France the text went on: "Convinced that in so saying they are expressing the opinion of France itself."[106] A few more lines invoked the link between "the traditions of the French Fatherland," and "the progress of ideas and social customs."[107] The closing statement ensured a connection between an unclear past and an abstract future: "To fortify the spirit of solidarity which should unite, through the years, every generation of a great people."[108] The letter is interesting, as much as for what is stated as for what is not. Amidst a conciliatory tone it develops an abstract notion of what it means to be French. Solidarity, union, cohesion, tradition, respect; all are presented as virtues of the "Fatherland." No anti-Semitism, no political attacks, no divisive issues are to be found. Far from *J'accuse* and its legal specificity, the initial open letter from the League was an intellectual act which sought to present a new image of the anti-Dreyfusards. Insofar as Zola and Clemenceau had taken the torch away from the anti-Dreyfusards, the fight was now to recover it. The letter was short but it resonated across French society because of the names that were attached to it. Anti-Semites mingled with artists, academicians with writers. Only one politician, Cavaignac, signed the text. In this sense, the act was portrayed as an apolitical appeal for calm and unity.

In his analysis of the Dreyfus Affair Christophe Charle argues that the petition of the League sought to distance itself from the Henry petition issued by *La Libre Parole*. Drumont had launched an appeal to assist Henry's widow finance a trial against Joseph Reinach – who had written a number of articles accusing Henry of being Esterhazy's main supporter inside the Army. Drumont saw this as an opportunity to gather momentum against the Dreyfusards. The number of donors rose above 14,000 after a month, and many of the contributions sent to *La Libre Parole* were accompanied by

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

virulent anti-Semitic commentaries. When a couple of weeks later Barrès supervised the publication of the League's letter, he wanted the differences between the extremist anti-Semites and the rest of the antirevisionist camp to be clarified. Not only was the text's tone conciliatory, but the very manner in which the signatures were organized was closely supervised in order to evoke a specific idea of France. In the Henry petition "the individuals disappeared behind the sums of money assembled. In the first lists of the League, at least, the signatures are systematically regrouped by corporation, a way of summing up society which is, according to Barrès' organic vision, not a collection of individuals, but an association of professions intertwined between them by common national values."[109] In this sense, the 22 members of the French Academy who signed the petition were placed first because the institution they represented was the oldest in the list, founded by none other than Cardinal Richelieu. The order of the 22 names was not set out according to the extent of each individual's engagement in the Affair, but in relation to seniority and age. Following the academicians were the scholars, artists and doctors, leaving the writers at the end. University members were subsequently organized in alphabetical order without any geographical considerations. This meant that Parisian and provincial faculty members were placed on the same level. Within this clear structure the League sought to create an image of social order which was very much lacking in previous Dreyfusard petitions or in the Henry subscription list: "The promoters of the League of the French Fatherland wanted to initially lead a highly concerted operation, defend order within order."[110] More importantly, they wanted to "distinguish the list from the rather anarchical spontaneity of the Dreyfusards or from the hype of Drumont."[111] For the Dreyfusards each individual had equal weight, a

[109] Christophe Charle, *Naissance des 'intellectuels', 1880-1900* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990), 145.
[110] Ibid., 146.
[111] Ibid.

profession bearing no influence on where a name should appear. The League refrained from what it thought was an anarchical choice.

This material distinction between different petitions is not analogous to the actual configuration and inclinations of the different camps of the Dreyfus Affair, but it can shed light on the fundamental departures the bulk of anti-Dreyfusards took after the publication of *J'accuse*. For Zola, for Clemenceau, even for Jaurès and the Socialists, the case of Dreyfus was significant because it illustrated the injustice inflicted upon an individual. The petitions seemed to mirror this echo of individuality in their 'disorganized' positioning of diverse figures. The outcry of the Dreyfusards was a collective activity but its objective was the liberation of one individual. The fact that such grandiose imagery was evoked in the plea of one Captain is not paradoxical, far from it; it is the manifestation of general Enlightenment ideas that turned the fate of the individual into the test for general justice. If one individual suffered at the hands of the political system then the entire nation suffered with him. Individuals, let alone Dreyfus, or even Henry, play no part in the League's text. The signatories are part of a body that is representative of organic hierarchies within society. And yet, it would nonetheless be unsuitable to argue that the anti-Dreyfusard camp was centered on this notion. Hadn't Drumont and the anti-Semites issued a petition to help restore the reputation of the late Henry? Was their effort not, in spite of its political implications, particular in intent? It is tempting to strike a division between these two seeming subgroups of the anti-Dreyfusard camp. And yet, if the divisions between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards were in no way self-evident before 1898, it would be naïve to argue that they never existed. It is all the same important to acknowledge that one could at once be against the revision of the Dreyfus case and profoundly attached to the judicial entreaties of individuals. To be an anti-Dreyfusard did not mean that one was against individuality

and the Enlightenment; but as 1898 progressed the anti-Dreyfusard bloc created a specific image of itself that was in most ways opposed to the Revolution of 1789. As the text of the League shows, this image was not always clearly defined. Since the Republic could not easily be used to make political arguments, it was thus both the Army and the specificity of the French situation that permeated most anti-Dreyfusard discourse.

For the majority of anti-Dreyfusards it was the concrete case of the Army that resonated the most. France was not structured around the military in the way Prussia had been for the few centuries leading up to the unification of Germany. However, the Army played a pivotal social and ideological role at the turn of the Affair. The 1870 disastrous defeat against Prussia had traumatized the French nation during the first decades of the Third Republic. Throughout the 1870s a number of laws provided the Army with necessary tools to implement reforms, as well as to modernize and reorganize its technologies and structure. The improvements were dramatic, but "this renewal of the Army, this seduction that it [exercised], [could not] dissimulate the profound crisis that [stroke] it, a moral crisis, an intellectual crisis."[112] The Army had long been the embodiment of conservative ideas. Now that the regime had changed it faced new questions: What is the role of the Army in a democracy founded on universal suffrage, a parliamentary system, public schooling, and compulsory military service? What is its mission?[113] In many ways the Army had become the last true State bastion of the extreme right: the royalists, the aristocracy and the anti-Semites desired military careers that would emulate the values they deeply cherished. The ideas that ran through its ranks were the ideas of these groups, and although the Army had been incorporated into the Third Republic as an agent for eventual revenge against Germany, it remained a

[112] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 27.
[113] Ibid., 30.

body detached from Republican values, instead attached to Church, discipline, order and strict social hierarchies.

The Army represented strong anti-Dreyfusard support groups such as Catholics, the old nobility, the royalists, the anti-Semites, and yet, many of its supporters were closer to more moderate sections of the anti-Dreyfusard bloc. Eric Cahm makes an important distinction between what he terms moderate anti-Dreyfusism and extremist anti-Dreyfusism. The first group encompassed many members of the government who saw the antirevisionist side as the most Republican of the two, since it did not seek to weaken the rising Third Republic. The Republican press adhered to this view, along with large segments of the liberal minded bourgeoisie. The second group included the anti-Semitic press as well as anti-Republican thinkers: "The only conviction they shared was that of Dreyfus' guilt."[114] Barrès falls in the second category, along with Maurras and Drumont, but his ideas also influenced the discourse of the moderate anti-Dreyfusards. The League for instance "was thus from the outset a partisan body, and it attempted to combine the incompatible moderate and extremist versions of anti-Dreyfusism."[115] The League had little medium-term success, and both Barrès and Maurras moved on to assemble more extremist anti-Dreyfusards for the creation of the new nationalism of the extreme right.[116] However, it is possible to trace certain Barrèsian themes in the articles and editorials that related to the Dreyfus Affair throughout 1898.

Le Figaro was a classical liberal newspaper. Confident in the country's institutions, it was a proponent of economic liberalism, ideological moderation and order. Zola had published his initial articles in it, but throughout the rest of 1898 the shift was to the moderate anti-Dreyfusard camp. Opposed to disturbances and

[114] Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics*, 88.
[115] Ibid., 136.
[116] Ibid., 139.

revolutions from both left and right, *Le Figaro* was equally hostile to anti-Semitic disturbances – "French society was proud to be considered a school of perfectionism, and Paris was proud to pass for the household of the world,"[117] – and to Dreyfusard disorder: "It is the social revolution that surfaces, it is the fight against capitalist society, against the old society that we are."[118] If at first the newspaper was strongly anti-Dreyfusard, anti-Semitism and radical nationalism are nowhere to be found on its pages. With the discovery of the forged documents, Henry's suicide, Esterhazy's exile, and so on, it became more neutral in its positions, keeping faith in the Army and lamenting the divisions in France. The shift is apparent in Cornély's weekly editorials, although some passages seem to echo Barrès in their nationalistic splendor: "For the peoples who are fortunate enough that military discipline be the prolongation of national discipline, the army will remain the conservatory and the school of application of the nation's virtues,"[119] or a few months later on the Army, "It is what is purest and strongest in France. Those who attack it are crazy. Their insanity consists of their wanting to render the entire military corpus, the very institutions, responsible for the mistakes of certain individuals."[120]

The lines between moderate and extremist anti-Dreyfusism are thus sometimes blurry. And yet, anti-Semitism seems to be the defining factor between the two. If one ventures into *La Libre Parole*, to which we will turn in the following chapter, extremist anti-Dreyfusard discourse departs significantly because of its virulent anti-Semitism. If this is perhaps the defining distinction between these two sub-groups, we must turn to Barrès and Drumont in order to understand in which ways anti-Semitic discourse and its underlying implications sheds light on the fundamental divisions of the Dreyfus Affair.

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[117] Cornély, *Le Figaro*, January 12, 1898.
[118] Cornély, *Le Figaro*, January 24, 1898.
[119] Cornély, *Le Figaro*, July 8, 1898.
[120] Cornély, *Le Figaro*, September 1, 1898.

Chapter III
The State and the Individual: the Case of Dreyfus

Hannah Arendt was only eight when World War I broke out in the summer of 1914. Many summers later, in 1950, she completed her grand work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In the preface to the first edition she refused to invoke a lost springtime: "We can no longer afford to take that which is good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain."[121] Arendt was 44 years old when she wrote these words, and like millions of others had lived through "two world wars in one generation, separated by an uninterrupted chain of local wars and revolutions,"[122] and the beginning of the Cold War. As a Jew she had to flee Germany in 1933, moving around Europe before reaching New York in 1941. Even though *The Origins of Totalitarianism* remains a seminal work of political philosophy, its outlook is also deeply embedded in the collapse of European sanity during the first half of the twentieth century.

As Arendt writes in the preface to the first edition, "This book has been written against a background of both reckless optimism and reckless despair. It holds that Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal; that both are articles of superstition, not of faith."[123] Because "everything seems to have lost specific value, and has become unrecognizable for human comprehension, unusable for human purpose,"

[121] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1976), ix.
[122] Ibid., vii.
[123] Ibid.

Arendt concludes we cannot escape the burden of the twentieth century. Progress? Doom? What is this medal Arendt refers to? Why does her analysis of the origins of anti-Semitism – one that is deeply engaged with the historical significance of the Dreyfus Affair – start in this way? One of the leading political thinkers of the twentieth century, Arendt's thought is not easily classifiable.[124] Although at heart she was a liberal thinker concerned with the rule of law and the protection of individual rights, she was also skeptical of individualistic tendencies in the practice of politics: "Her conception of politics is based instead on the idea of active citizenship, that is, on the value and importance of civic engagement and collective deliberation about all matters affecting the political community."[125] As she looked back on the failures of European liberalism Arendt did not see an accident of sorts, but rather the worst expression of the system's failures.

Arendt was troubled by the problem of modernity. By modernity I understand "an intellectual tendency or social perspective characterized by departure from or repudiation of traditional ideas, doctrines, and cultural values in favour of contemporary or radical values and beliefs (chiefly those of scientific rationalism and liberalism)."[126] If this definition can be applied to numerous ideological and intellectual movements, it is nonetheless important to strike a division between modernity as an understanding of the world and modernity as a historical period that has increasingly become more difficult to define. The importance of the term rests on its ideological connotations, on the fact that it can be used and has been used to advance ideas and policies of a particular nature throughout the past two or three centuries. It would be unwise to select

[124] Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, "Hannah Arendt" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, posted July 27, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Oxford English Dictionary, 2008 ed., s.v. "modernity."

an exact moment in history when modernity began, but 1789 has consistently been identified as the year in which its political dimension materialized. The French Revolution was, like all events in history, the product of certain conditions and developments. Even though the long period preceding the Revolution had prepared the ground for the intellectual developments of the Enlightenment and the social mutations of the 18th century, in the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, "In 1789 the French engaged in the greatest effort that any people have ever embarked on, in order to cut in two, so to say, their destiny, and to separate by an abyss what they had been up to that point from what they presently wished to be."[127]

Modernity is the age of the modern man, and the modern man is the product of the French Revolution. He is a rational being equal to all others, void of all social, racial, ethnic, religious, or geographical differences. He is an abstraction in two fundamental ways. First he is a being whose life depends on the eradication of all categories, so that his picture does not depend on an external sense of rootedness but on an internal definition. Because all men are born equal man is an abstraction. Second, he is always changing and for this reason he is always modern. To be modern is to live in the present, where all past categories can and should be effaced. Modern man is abstract because he lives beyond himself; he asks how he can be internally unique and he rejects what makes him externally ordinary. He is first and foremost an individual, and only then perhaps the member of a family, community, social class, nation, religion, or church.

The premodern world stands in opposition to the idea of the individual as a universal category that surpasses all other categories. In the world preceding the French Revolution human beings were members of a kingdom united under God and King; they

[127] Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 43.

belonged to a social class which in its restrictive nature acted almost as a caste; they lived where their ancestors had settled and they worked the land that their children would live on; they obeyed the order of things and prayed for a good afterlife. What they didn't do was ask who they were and what they could become. The possibilities in the premodern world were as limited as they are endless in the modern world. To speak of the separation between these two worlds must not entail the clear division between two historical eras. On the contrary, as the seeds of modernity begin to grow premodernity appears invincible. As the modern emerges out of the earth, the premodern fights to keep it under. If anything, the modern age is characterized by the conflict between these two states. For example, the Congress of Vienna sought to set back the clock of history. In the aftermath of the French Revolution ghettos were once more created, Napoleonic legislation repealed, and privileges reinstated. Vienna was a reaction to modernity, but modernity eventually began to win its battles. In this ongoing process individuals are born and social barriers begin to crumble. But the victory of modernity, the belief that a human being can imagine and project himself onto the world, brings along a general malaise. Communities are shattered, the family loses its predominance, fortunes are made and lost, and manners slowly wear away. Reactions to these changes result in a reconfiguration of modernity. Since the premodern world can never be recovered the enemies of modernity find new ways to realize their political ambitions. They use modern methods or adopt modern ideologies but they ultimately only dream of halting the advance of progress. Their attack is centered on the individual – as both an abstract category, and as an actual social and political foe – because he is responsible for the erosion of older structures such as the family and the community.

In Arendt's work these questions are crystallized against the background of anti-Semitism during the 19th century, Imperialism between the end of the 19th and the

beginning of the 20th, and Totalitarianism with the advent of Nazism and Stalinism.[128] For Arendt "modernity is the age where the past no longer carries any certainty of evaluation, where individuals, having lost their traditional standards and values, must search for new grounds of human community as such."[129] This is the problem of modernity. Arendt argues that this conflict can only be understood by studying the degeneration of the Nation State, the ultimate guarantor of the modern world. If the concept of the individual is an intellectual expression of modernity, then the citizen is the political result of this notion. The two are different but they are both based on abstract universalistic notions of being. Even though the process of modern European Nation State building preceded the French Revolution, it nonetheless benefited from the changes that 1789 brought along. In a new world of no privileges or communities, in which centralization and universal laws rule over citizens, the most important cornerstone of the modern State has been set up. The State is a power structure that governs over a population and a territory. Internally it needs the recognition of its citizens and externally the recognition of other states. It must be legitimate, both in the respect it creates for itself and in its use of force. The modern State requires the individual modern citizen, since without him it is subject to older power structures such as the family, the Church or the community. But the individual also needs the State, for in order to truly become a modern being he must first become a citizen. With equal rights he can exercise his individuality in a manner that would have been impossible under the old power structures.

When one looks at the French Revolution these abstract concepts gain shape. The abolition of privileges included in the principles of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* gave the State the power to collect taxes from all its members,

[128] These are the three parts into which the book is divided.
[129] Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, "Hannah Arendt" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

but it also meant that any citizen could become an officer in the French Army. Careers open to talent meant careers open to individuals no longer subject to societal constraints and political restrictions. Men were now allowed to express their interior capabilities and particularities.

An analysis of the changes brought about by the French Revolution would not be complete without first addressing Alexis de Tocqueville's *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. Written in 1856, this work combines history with political theory in a way that makes the transformation of France during the revolutionary tide of the 1790s quite transparent. The object of the book was to "understand why this great revolution, which was at the same time being prepared in most of the European continent, erupted here rather than elsewhere, why it emerged out of the society that it was to destroy, and finally why the old monarchy should have fallen in such a complete and sudden manner."[130] Long before Arendt, Tocqueville reflected on the world that had emerged out of 1789: "Men being no longer attached to one another by any links of castes, of classes, of corporations, of families, are but too inclined to worry only about their particular interests, always tending to envision only themselves and to retire in a narrow individualism where all public virtue is suffocated."[131] He concluded that "our fathers did not have the word individualism that we have forged for our usage, because in their time there were in effect no individuals."[132] Arendt completed her work with a discussion of loneliness and individual isolation – the preconditions and results of totalitarianism she argued. Almost a century before Tocqueville had pointed out the

[130] Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, 47.
[131] Ibid., 51.
[132] Ibid., 176.

dangers of cultivating a glacial private life that surpasses our sense of civic participation.[133]

Like *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *The Old Regime and the Revolution* is framed by political theory but fundamentally concerned with historical inquiry. Tocqueville provides an analysis of the pre-1789 world and compares it to the world created by the Revolution. He argues against many false notions and historical misunderstandings, but his central case is that the French Revolution was not a break with the past but rather a strengthening of certain tendencies particular to France – key among these the empowerment of the State – and an abandonment of practices that had become impediments in the practice of government (feudalist structures, corporations and privileges). In fact, "The idea of forming only one class of citizens would have appealed to Richelieu."[134] This can help explain why the French Revolution knew no frontiers: it advocated an ideology that was universalistic in practice. If throughout the Enlightenment changes had been made toward the centralization, simplification and rationalization of the monarchical and autocratic European kingdoms, in a few months the Revolution accelerated the tide of reform and finally put an end to the practices of the past. Tocqueville argues that under the Old Regime the "unity of the nation [was] already transparent; legislation uniform,"[135] but the old provinces of France, some of which were older than the monarchy itself, were only abolished by the Revolution and instead a system of eighty three departments was established.[136]

In the first chapter of book three Tocqueville addresses the political influence the Enlightenment's *philosophes* exercised after the mid eighteenth century. Occupied with questions of governance, they "all think that it is necessary to substitute simple and

[133] Ibid., 51.
[134] Ibid., 65.
[135] Ibid., 154.
[136] Ibid., 149.

elementary rules, founded on reason and natural law, for the complicated and traditional customs that rule the society of their time."[137] Witnesses to the inequities of their century, aware of the excesses of feudalism, shocked by the backwardness of their surroundings, the majority of them imagine a better world constructed around coherent systems of thought: "They took disgust in ancient things and tradition, and they were naturally led to wanting to rebuild the society of their time after an entirely new plan, that each of them traced to the unique light of his reason."[138] In this fight for a new world the Catholic Church stood as a remnant of an obscurantist past based on instinct rather than reason, on persecution as opposed to inclusion. "It stood principally upon tradition,"[139] and to those who despised the past it was also an expression of an authority superior to individual reason, founded on hierarchies and mysticism. Tocqueville argues that under the Old Regime the Church was the most important political power and that the Revolution transferred many of its prerogatives to the State. Those who carried out the Revolution were believers, but not in the authority and sanctity of the Church: "They believed in themselves. They did not doubt the perfectibility, the might of man; they were also passionate about his glory, they had faith in his virtue."[140] Tocqueville admires their engagement and their valor but he wonders whether this new religion was not also a new form of blindness and error.

The attack on institutionalized religion was unique, not so much in character as in how it was paired with the abolition of the old political order. In most other political revolutions up to that point, Tocqueville argues, those who had attacked the established order had left religious institutions untouched, and those who had reformed religion had not interfered in the system of government. The French Revolution was unique because

[137] Ibid., 230.
[138] Ibid., 232.
[139] Ibid., 245.
[140] Ibid., 251.

it simultaneously attacked the Church and the old State structures. In this sense "the human spirit entirely lost its hold; it no longer knew what to expect or where to stop, and what was witnessed was the appearance of revolutionaries of an unknown species, who took audacity all the way to folly."[141]

But what new order did the Revolution create? Was the State truly transformed, and if yes, how so? Tocqueville's vision of the post-revolutionary world highlights the central conflict between premodernity and modernity. His conception of the individual is understood in the context of the emergence of the modern State. To create new men the Revolution had to create a new state of things, and to do so it had to destroy the old order for a new human being to emerge. And yet, the modern State did not merely grow out of the void created by the Revolution. Tocqueville's central question is why the Revolution came about. How did it change France? But more importantly, who benefited from its consequences? Rather than point to a social class or group, Tocqueville argues that the Revolution was fought against all empowered classes and institutions as a way of asserting the absolute authority of the modern State. The administration and the centralized organization of Louis XIV's reign had made this process possible, and now the Revolution necessarily appeared as the next political goal. If the absolute monarchy was carried away in its own attempt to strengthen its grip on power it is only because it chose its allies poorly, angered its traditional supporters and misunderstood the tide of 1789. Before the individual emerged as both an intellectual concept and a social model, before the National Assembly declared the citizen as a universal abstraction and a person entitled with rights and responsibilities, the State was already in place. When Tocqueville's central argument is taken to its ultimate consequences it becomes evident that the State put in place by the French

[141] Ibid., 252.

Revolution was not pulled out of midair but rather perfected from the older model. The State was there before the people, when there were only monarchs and subjects, not peoples.

The new State knows no boundaries: "In reality, there are no limits to its rights or checks as to what it can do; it does not only reform men, it transforms them."[142] With the authority of the Church finally stalled, its power "does not directly descend from God; it is not attached to tradition; it is impersonal: it is no longer called king, but State; it is not the heritage of a family; it is the product and the representative of all, and must check the right of each under the will of all."[143] Made up of indistinct citizens the State becomes the expression of all and none, its interests not the agglomeration of all interests but the expression of a so-called raison d'État. To Tocqueville "this particular form of tyranny that is called democratic despotism," entails no more "hierarchies in society; no more marked classes, no more fixed ranks; a people composed of individuals almost alike and entirely equal."[144] And above them, a leader.

It is not for us to judge whether such a notion of the State can be translated from political theory into practice. The history of modern Europe may well prove the opposite. The notions of individuality and statehood on which the Revolution operated excluded enormous segments of the population, key among these women. Most revolutionaries envisioned a new man, not a new woman. But what matters for our purposes is that such conceptions came to be linked with the events of 1789; that the State emerged as an apparatus based on new ideals that refuted old forms of authority; that particular groups such as the Jews were granted citizenship based on these ideals; that the reactions to the abstractions of the period sought to link the liberation of these

[142] Ibid., 260.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

groups to the fate of revolutionary ideals; and that these ideals came under increased attack in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For Arendt "the great challenge to the modern period, and its peculiar danger, has been that in it man for the first time has confronted man without the protection of differing circumstances and conditions. And it has been precisely this new concept of equality that has made modern race relations so difficult, for there we deal with natural differences which by no possible and conceivable change of conditions can become less conspicuous. It is because equality demands that I recognize each and every individual as my equal, that the conflicts between different groups, which for reasons of their own are reluctant to grant each other this basic equality, take on such terribly cruel forms."[145] Arendt touches on perhaps the most crucial contradiction encountered by the revolutionaries of 1789: in its attempt to create a new society made up of equal citizens, the State ignored the different groups that made up French society.

With the emancipation of the Jews, the Revolution, "by its universalistic proclamations and the cult of Reason that illustrated it for some time,"[146] could bring back the "'Jewish question' – that of a particularism contrary to assimilation and, in addition, of a religious particularism contrary to the new national religion."[147] In the debates on the eligibility of Jews for citizenship that followed the proclamation of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* the Count of Clermont-Tonnerre made the position of the new order in regards to the Jews quite explicit: "The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals. They must be citizens….there cannot be one nation within another nation."[148] The Sephardim were

[145] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 54.
[146] Winock, *Édouard Drumont et Cie.*, 83.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, "Speech to the French National Assembly on December 23, 1789," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 115.

recognized as citizens on January 28, 1790, followed by the official Emancipation Decree on September 28, 1791. The communal autonomy that the Jews had enjoyed since the Middle Ages was abolished on the grounds that it was incompatible with the modern State.[149] The Jews were thus granted political equality, but this did not result in social equality: "Deeper, older, and more fateful contradictions are hidden behind the abstract and palpable inconsistency that Jews received citizenship from governments which in the process of centuries had made nationality a prerequisite for citizenship and homogeneity of population the outstanding characteristics of the body politic."[150] Jews were forced to abandon the ghettos in exchange for equal status, but this equality was not based on the practical realities of the Nation State. The Revolution declared that all men were equal but in reality the Jews remained the object of deeply rooted anti-Semitism. Their gradual entrance into French society was not accepted as the natural realization of the Enlightenment, but as a direct violation of French unity. If the ghettos now stood open and the walls of French nationhood were gone, nationalists believed that the French family would be weakened.

In this sense "the Dreyfus Affair brings into the open all other elements of nineteenth-century antisemitism in its mere ideological and political aspects; it is the culmination of the antisemitism which grew out of the special conditions of the nation-state."[151] For Arendt the failure of integration was the result of circumstances particular to nineteenth-century Europe and alien to any abstract notions of nation and citizen. In the first place the representatives of the Enlightenment disliked and distrusted the Jews.[152] They were viewed as elements of reaction, remnants of an aristocratic order, supporters of mysticism and backwardness. This hostility on the part of what later

[149] Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, ed., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 118.
[150] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 11.
[151] Ibid., 45.
[152] Ibid., 46.

became the French left was in some ways still present at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. Part of the Jews' inability to integrate into French society may have been due to the long animosity held by those who were supposed to be their closest allies. To read Zola is to forget that at first Dreyfus did not receive the support of the French left, and that if this later changed it was primarily the result of the realization that much more than opinions were at stake in the debates between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. As the Affair became a national crisis, as it moved from the legal to the public realm, as it gained in political intensity, the ideological stakes were finally crystallized.

The attack on the Jew that gained popularity before and during the Dreyfus Affair was a new form of political reaction, a "calculated assault upon every single individual of Jewish origin."[153] More importantly, a "passion-driven hunt of the 'Jew in general,' the 'Jew everywhere and nowhere,' cannot be understood if one considers the history of antisemitism as an entity in itself, as a mere political movement."[154] To Arendt, modern anti-Semitism emerged in part out of the old religious anti-Semitism, and in part as a reaction to the nation building tactics of the modern State. Political equality was in many ways responsible for the nonpolitical nature of Jews during the nineteenth century, but it also resulted in a rise in social inequality. In theory the Jew who became a citizen ceased to be a Jew. In practice quite the opposite took place: the Jew became a political symbol and an object of Counter-Enlightenment political attacks. As an emancipated figure who had dared to reinvent himself, he was deemed a dangerous cosmopolite, a being foreign to the concept of the nation, detached from the roots of the country, unknown to French nature.

This abstract notion of the Jew was repeatedly used to describe specific subjects. For most anti-Semites the Rothschild family's fortune seemed to represent the prompt

[153] Ibid., 87.
[154] Ibid.

empowerment of Jewish finance in the post-revolutionary era. The family's German origins as well as its impressive successes in banking were perfect points of attack. The Rothschilds had left the ghetto, moved to France, built up a bank, and created a system of wealth detached from land ownership. They were constantly blamed for France's economic hardships and their name became attached to a strong power myth. In November 1891, for instance, thirty deputies asked for the expulsion of the Rothschild family from France.[155] As political symbols the Rothschilds were but an example of how notions of nationhood affected particular conceptions of Jews in nineteenth-century France.

The emergence of the modern State during the post-1789 period cannot be separated from the development of nationalism, both as a new intellectual conception and as a powerful political ideology. In order to understand the importance played by nationalism during the Dreyfus Affair it is first necessary to confront its origins. Immersed in the Enlightenment as both a reaction to its universalism and as a product of its re-conceptualization of the individual, nationalism is central to an understanding of the conflict between modernity and premodernity on the one hand, and the creation of the modern State with its universal category of the citizen on the other. The Nation State described and analyzed by Hannah Arendt is but the ultimate manifestation of all these intellectual abstractions. But nationalism is also a concrete political movement, and as a study of Johann Gottfried Herder's ideas shows, it is central to a particular conception of the world, of history and of the role of the individual in the modern world.

For Isaiah Berlin, Herder was a pivotal figure of European Counter-Enlightenment, a broad movement characterized by a "rejection of the central principles

[155] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience,* 257.

of the Enlightenment – universality, objectivity, rationality, and the capacity to provide permanent solutions to all genuine problems of life or thought."[156] Born in 1744, Herder's ideas became central to the development of German Romanticism. He was hostile to all-encompassing systems of thought, and as a result his philosophy is profoundly unsystematic. Common themes run through his oeuvre, key among them his objection to universalism and his interest in the particular, the diverse, the unique, the irreducible. Berlin argues that although his ideas were embedded in the context of the Enlightenment they were also a reaction to its cosmopolitanism: "He believed in kinship, social solidarity, *Volkstum*, nationhood, but to the end of his life he detested and denounced every form of centralization, coercion, and conquest, which were embodied and symbolized…in the accursed state. Nature creates nations, not states."[157] The State dehumanizes, conquers and controls. It crushes the particularities of an area and ignores the culture of a people. Men are not made to be citizens, they are instead endowed by nature with certain characteristics intrinsic to their time and place: "They should live in natural units, that is, in societies united by a common culture."[158] The State robs us of ourselves for it imposes an alien concept of the world on human life; it destroys the organic order of society; and it corrupts the internal nature of a people.

Herder's understanding of the individual is diametrically opposed to the notions on which the modern world is constructed. Man is great for what he is, not for what he may be. No man is alone, for he "builds on what has come before, which turns into and wants to be nothing but the foundation of the future – thus speaks the analogy in nature, the talking image of God in all works!"[159] Our humanity is not expressed in the free

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[156] Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 19.
[157] Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1976), 158.
[158] Ibid., 163.
[159] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*, trans. and ed. Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), 31.

development of each individual member of a state but in the plurality of national and regional cultures. For Berlin, Herder's defense of pluralism against universalism is "perhaps the most revolutionary" of his views: "Men, according to Herder, truly flourish only in congenial circumstances, that is, where the group to which they belong has achieved a fruitful relationship with the environment by which it is shaped and which in turn it shapes."[160] Only when the individual is integrated into the community of men can he exist as a man and live happily. Confronted with the most fundamental philosophical questions – "What is the best life for men? And more particularly, What is the most perfect society?"[161] – man can only find the answers in the organic setting of his time. Solutions are thus contingent on temporality and geography.

Berlin argues that to Herder "the notion of the perfect civilization in which the ideal human being realizes his full potentialities is patently absurd: not merely difficult to formulate, or impossible to realize in practice, but incoherent and unintelligible. This is perhaps the sharpest blow ever delivered to the West, to which the notion of perfection – the possibility, at least in principle, of universal, timeless solutions or problems of value – is essential."[162] His rejection of the modern State is in this sense all the more coherent. The belief that men can be turned into individual citizens with the capability to fully determine their destinies and happiness under one benevolent State is absurd because it considers humanity as an abstract and unchanging perfectible body. The citizen is always the same since he depends on the internal will of the individual and the absolute power of the impartial State. Even if the State evolves or the individual is another, the objective remains fixed: to improve the human condition. But what if the citizen as a political construction is misleading? If men are not equal in their aspirations and realities how can they be politically equal? How can happiness always be the same,

[160] Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 206.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid., 212.

always mean the same? And the State: is it not in fact a mechanical construction, an abstract notion that disparages human happiness? By forcing the human spirit to emerge does it not in fact crush it? What good are individuals, what is the object of the citizen when there are no men?

Herder was aware of these questions even before the French Revolution broke out. In *Another Philosophy of History*, a work published in 1774, he argued for the uniqueness of each historical epoch and culture. History was not a logical progression into a better future; modern man not a more developed kind of human being. Herder writes "that no people ever remained or could have remained what it was for long, and that each one, like any art and science and what not in the world, had its period of growth, of blossoming, and of decline…that finally in the world, no two moments are ever the same,"[163] and that to think of the world in universal terms is to reject more profound forms of connectedness: "The ideas of a universal love of mankind, peoples, and enemies elevated and the warm feeling of affection for one's father, mother, brother, children, and friends infinitely diminished!"[164] Like Tocqueville after him he pointed to the dangers of the modern world: "Freedom, sociability, and equality, such as they are germinating everywhere now, have brought about many evils through their thousand-fold abuse, and they will continue to do so."[165] In sharp opposition to the modern conception of the individual, Herder's view is that human beings are infinitely small in the larger history of humanity, that one man's aspirations and dreams are less important than his belonging to a small part of the human condition. "What am I supposed to say about the great book of God that extends over all the worlds and times, when I am barely a single letter in that book and when, looking around, I can scarcely

[163] Herder, *Another Philosophy of History*, 25.
[164] Ibid., 52.
[165] Ibid., 88.

see three more letters?"[166] he asks at the end of the essay. A human life is a letter, a fragment as it is. How can a letter attempt to write words, chapters, titles? A letter is by itself meaningless, but combined with other letters it can form words and sentences.

The words and sentences give meaning to individual letters in the same way that families, communities and nations give human beings a sense of rootedness. Berlin writes that for Herder "art, morality, custom, religion, national life grow out of immemorial tradition, are created by entire societies living an integrated communal life."[167] More importantly though "men, if they are to exercise their faculties fully, and so develop into all that they can be, need to belong to identifiable communal groups, each with its own outlook, style, traditions, historical memories and language."[168] It was Herder who set in motion the idea that nations are a product of nature, that they are the manifestation of centuries of shared experiences and memories, the ultimate realization of a shared language. As an organic being man belongs to these organic forms, but more importantly he belongs to a nation. The nation is understood as a premodern body that precedes the modern State, the rise of individualism, the creation of the citizen, and the universalism of the Enlightenment. Cosmopolitanism is dangerous because "as a world citizen, and no longer a citizen of Athens, you must naturally lack a view on what you ought to do in Athens, a secure sense of what you are doing, and a feeling of joy about what you have accomplished."[169] The Enlightenment meant that "before, wisdom was always narrowly national and therefore reached deeper and attracted more strongly; but how widely it casts its rays now!"[170] To Herder nations are the proper agents of human expression.

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[166] Ibid., 97.
[167] Berlin, *Against the Current*, 11.
[168] Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, xxii.
[169] Herder, *Another Philosophy of History*, 80.
[170] Ibid., 58.

Herder has been repeatedly classified as the father of German nationalism. His ideas were adopted by generations of political thinkers and philosophers, not least the intellectual precursors of Nazism. And yet, this history is largely the product of misappropriations and misunderstandings. The nation Herder envisions is one rooted in community and culture, not race and war. His propositions are those of an eighteenth-century early romantic and not, as is sometimes argued, a late nineteenth-century nationalist theorist. In fact "his nationalism was never political, and his personal politics simply had no room for aggression, violence, and disrespect."[171] Berlin makes the case that "Herder was no nationalist: he supposed that different cultures could and should flourish fruitfully side by side like so many peaceful flowers in the great human garden."[172] But in dealing with Herder's thought we cannot restrict ourselves to the immediate consequences of his ideas. Needless to say, Herder was not a nationalist in the sense that is now attached to the word. Neither was he a racist or an anti-Semite. But if his conception of humanity is carried to its ultimate implications, if the journey traveled by his ideas is followed, if his concepts of *Volk* and nation are understood as corner stones of later political developments, then his philosophy becomes historically informative when tracing the ideologies of certain major anti-Dreyfusard figures such as Maurice Barrès. In the first section of *Another Philosophy of History* Herder writes: "Prejudice is good in its time: it makes men happy. It pushes peoples together at their center, making them stand firmer upon their roots, more flourishing in their way, more virile, and also happier in their inclinations and purposes. The most ignorant, prejudiced nation is in this sense often the first: the age of dreamy wanderings and hopeful journeys abroad is already sickness, flatulence, bloatedness, premonition of death!"[173]

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[171] Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin, introduction to *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), xxxvi.
[172] Berlin, *Against the Current*, 11.
[173] Herder, *Another Philosophy of History*, 29.

This passage could well have been written by Barrès in the decade preceding the Dreyfus Affair. Herder understands prejudice as a form of self-identification which is based on the recognition of the foreigner, of the 'other'. A nation understands itself in opposition to other nations around it. Herder wrote this essay in an age when French was spoken by the elites of Germany, and when all that came from France was deemed better than what originated in Germany. His concern was thus to promote German cultural activity. But the passage must have been understood very differently in the late nineteenth century. To trace the influence of Herder is to discover a different understanding of the nation, but one that is fundamentally concerned with the same preoccupations. As Berlin argues, "The seeds of nationalism are unmistakably present in his fervid attacks on hollow cosmopolitanism and universalism (with which he charged the French *philosophes*); they grew apace among his aggressive nineteenth-century disciples."[174] Like Herder, the anti-Semitic thinkers of the late nineteenth century were deeply disturbed by modernity, by the loss of bearings and norms, of customs and traditions. They feared the erosion of national feelings and habits, the abandonment of the countryside and the local community, and the blurriness of capitalist society. If Herder had advocated a focus on language and culture to safeguard human dignity, men like Barrès and Drumont were now determined to stop the tide of modernity in order to create a different human race. In their efforts to solve the problem of modernity they turned to the dilemma that had preoccupied them for a century: the Jewish question.

As we have seen, anti-Semitism sharply increased in the 1880s. When Dreyfus joined the Army, France was being devoured by an intense campaign aimed at purging

[174] Berlin, *Against the Current*, 11.

society of all Jewish elements. Before addressing the ideas of anti-Semites such as Barrès and Drumont we must turn our attention to Jean-Paul Sartre's *Reflections on the Jewish Question*. Written in the autumn of 1944, Sartre's essay addresses that question which engaged the energies and hostility of Dreyfus' generation: the intellectual meaning of anti-Semitism. Sartre argues that "anti-Semitism is a free and total individual choice, a global attitude that one adopts not only in respect to the Jews, but of men in general, of history and society; it is at once a passion and a conception of the world."[175] Different anti-Semites are anti-Semitic in different ways, but they all share a common vision of the world, an understanding of what human beings are and of what the political community should look like. Sartre spells out this vision in the first of three chapters. He argues that the Jew is a symbol of all that the anti-Semite rejects, that "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him,"[176] and that this vision is more important than what the Jew may actually be or wish to be. In other words, a Jew's Jewishness is not determined by him, it is contingent on a negative categorization. This is why the Jew can never fully assimilate into society, why he cannot be French or German, why he cannot stand for what he wants, why – finally – he can never be rooted in the nation.

Sartre looks at particular instances in which the Jew is conceptualized and excluded. In regards to capitalism and competition "the true Frenchman rooted in his province, in his country, carried by a twenty century long tradition, benefiting of an ancestral wisdom, guided by customs, does not need intelligence. What shapes his virtue is the assimilation of qualities instated by the labor of a hundred generations on the objects that surround him – property. But it follows that it is the inherited property,

[175] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris : Gallimard, 1954), 19.
[176] Ibid., 15.

not the one acquired."[177] Because the Jew is not rooted he is therefore a universal being. This means his relationship to language is different than a Frenchman's: "Perhaps the Jew speaks a purer French than I do, perhaps he knows more about syntax, grammar, perhaps he is even a writer: it doesn't matter. This language, he has spoken it for only twenty years and I have for a thousand years."[178] Sartre understands the historical origins of anti-Semitism. His argument goes to great length to show how the opinion that an anti-Semite forms of the Jews is not conditioned by his interaction with them but by his rejection of certain ideas.

More importantly, the anti-Semite does not form his opinions individually. His expression of them is always in a group, always in defense of others, always as a joint rebellion against an abstract notion of the individual.[179] This is why anti-Semitism joins people, why it can be used to mobilize society, and why in the case of the Dreyfus Affair it resulted in the mingling of social classes: "Proust showed, for example, how anti-Dreyfusisme brought the Duke closer to his coachman, how due to their hatred of Dreyfus, bourgeois families forcefully opened the doors of the aristocracy."[180] Before Arendt, Sartre pointed out the great tragedy of integration and assimilation. Even though Jews gained individual rights, they were unable to join the social community and they remained distinct within the political realm. The Jew "is the slave of no one: a free citizen in a regime that authorizes free competition, no social dignity, no State appointment is forbidden to him; he will be decorated with the Legion of Honor, great lawyer, minister."[181] But Sartre tries to go beyond the social dimensions of the Jewish question. Since "the rationalism of the Jews is a passion: the passion of the

[177] Ibid., 25.
[178] Ibid., 27.
[179] Ibid., 34.
[180] Ibid., 32.
[181] Ibid., 86.

Universal,"[182] the irrationalism of the anti-Semites is the passion of the particular, in which "the *true* France, with its *true* values, its *true* tact, its *true* morality,"[183] remains alien to the Jew. For Sartre, the advocate of a universal philosophy, the fate of Jews is linked to the fate of humanity. The emancipation of the Jew derives from the belief in the individual worth of the human being, not in the attachment to old inhumane forms of understanding: "Anti-Semitism, in one word, is fear in the face of the human condition. The anti-Semite is the man who wants to be a pitiless rock, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt: everything but a man."[184]

Sartre's analysis is particularly relevant when one looks at the ideas of anti-Semitic anti-Dreyfusards. Stephen Wilson argues that "as French antisemites were well aware, they were participating in a phenomenon, which had European dimensions, but French antisemitism has also its own particular history."[185] This history may lie outside our research but it is important to acknowledge that the rise of anti-Semitism in the decade before the Affair was by no means without precedents. Religious anti-Semitism, with its long history throughout Europe, accused Jews of having crucified Christ. More recent tragedies and catastrophes fit into this model, including the French Revolution, the war of 1870, the occupation of Rome by the Italian Kingdom, the Paris Commune, and the rise of the Third Republic.[186] Religious anti-Semitism found new strength in the century following the French Revolution,[187] not least because of the belief that Jews had instigated and carried out the fall of the monarchy as a way of acquiring new rights and privileges. Whereas in other European nations anti-Semitism retained its traditional

[182] Ibid., 118.
[183] Ibid., 89.
[184] Ibid., 57.
[185] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 170.
[186] Winock, *Édouard Drumont et Cie.*, 42.
[187] Ibid., 43.

religious component, in France it merged with contemporary political discontent and "thus preserved elements from popular traditional culture, but recast them into forms that suited the modern context of literate and national democratic culture."[188] France bequeathed Europe the first anti-Semitic racial theorist in the figure of Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, whose *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-1855) was poorly known in France up to the end of the nineteenth century but gained great acceptance in Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century.[189]

More important than the revival of Gobineau was Herder's influence on French intellectuals. Zeev Sternhell argues that Herder's ideas played a decisive role in the shaping of Michelet, Renan, and Taine, all three major French intellectual figures of the time. From Herder they took two main concerns: a historicist approach to human nature and a belief in the primacy of the nation. In historicism they adopted an underlying belief in the particularization of human events, that is to say a rejection of fundamental unchanging principles and an embrace of local conditions and peculiarities. History could not be understood as a logical progression of events ruled by general principles, but as the product of differing circumstances subject to time and place. Historicism was thus a rejection of the permanence of human nature, an attack on reason, and a "revolt against the idea of man."[190] This conception of the world is all the more informative when placed alongside Sartre's analysis of anti-Semitism. In order to claim that the anti-Semite wants to be anything but a man, Sartre must have a notion of what it means to be a man. But what if his universalization of the problem is contrary to human realities, to particularities, to the changing nature of man from one place to another, from one century to the next? In the historicist conception of man that French intellectuals such as Michelet took from Herder one finds a premodern understanding of the world, one at

[188] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 606.
[189] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 47.
[190] Ibid., 17.

odds with Sartre's modern vision. Michel Winock argues that Counter-Enlightenment figures who espoused Herder's ideas "don't believe in Man…they believe in particular human groups – in national and religious singularities."[191]

Thus the nation became the last rampart against the cosmopolitanism and universalism of modernity: "Herder gave Europe the idea of the irreducible individuality of the nation that finds within itself its own way of life, above all universal law."[192] In the French context the nation was the result of a long history of political integration, centralization, and cultural homogenization based on the institutionalization of the French language. As we have seen with Tocqueville, this process accelerated during the course of the eighteenth century and was strengthened by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire. Whereas in most of Europe nationalism emerged as a movement of unification, in France it was propelled by fears of political disintegration, cultural decadence and economic decline. Albert S. Lindemann argues that France's economic weakness was for many a source of anguish: "From its position as the second industrialist power in Europe early in the century, France dropped to fourth place, passed by both Germany and Russia by the eve of World War I. The deceleration of France's economy in the 1880s, from a 1.6 percent growth rate in the previous decade to 0.6 percent, alarmed many French patriots."[193] French population growth also slowed down during the second half of the nineteenth century. More importantly, perhaps, were the effects of the long period of political turmoil that had struck France since 1789, resulting in a loss of confidence in the State's ability to maintain stability and order. All these factors helped give French nationalism its makeup. More than a political movement, nationalism, as it was experienced in France during the Third Republic, was an ideological conception of the French nation and the

[191] Winock, *Édouard Drumont et Cie.*, 207.
[192] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 20.
[193] Lindemann, *The Jew Accused*, 65.

world. France was understood as the result of a long tradition that included the glories of the past – Joan of Arc, Saint Louis, Louis XIV – and the realities of the present – a uniform language and a specific 'French' landscape. In this sense French nationalism was very similar to other nationalisms that emerged during the nineteenth century.

Sternhell writes that "it is the idea of a mission invested in the nation, of peace and civilization, the dream of the grandeur of the fatherland, rooted in a profound feeling of cultural superiority, the idea of a people elected by providence to conduct humankind, thus the idea of an essential identity between the national interest and the good of humanity that help explain Michelet's enthusiasm for Herder,"[194] and to a certain extent Barrès' interest in Michelet. The crisis of the Third Republic was first a social, economic and demographic crisis, but it quickly became an identity crisis as well. By the time the Dreyfus Affair broke out, a number of currents and preoccupations had merged into a new understanding of France. In opposition to the Enlightenment's rationalism and universalism, to the advent of the modern citizen and the modern State, to the notion of individuals united by equality and liberty, a new intellectual disposition began to take shape. Influenced by the ideas of Herder, shaped by the political realities of France, immersed in a conflict with the modern world, suspicious of the latent changes in French society, it sought to reinvent what it meant to be French, to live in the French nation, to embody French ideals. In the war against 1789 a number of intellectuals abandoned universalism as a way of recovering the French spirit: "The nation, finally, was no longer that ensemble of citizens from the first years of the French Revolution, but a body, a great family gathered around its churches and cemeteries, communing in the cult of its ancestors, ruled by a new moral."[195] It was only during the Affair that these ideas fell into place, that the divisions between modernity and

[194] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 29.
[195] Ibid., 35.

premodernity were fully expressed, that, finally, France entered its deepest identity struggle since the Revolution. Only when placed in a larger philosophical and historical context does the Dreyfus Affair present us with an understanding of its significance. If Dreyfus had a greater effect on France than the Panama scandal or Boulangism it was because his case presented the entire nation with the same critical questions that had surfaced in 1789.

With the Dreyfus Affair, historicism and nationalism merged into an actual political position. As far as Zola and Clemenceau shaped the Dreyfusard discourse into a coherent defense of the individual, anti-Dreyfusards such as Barrès and Drumont claimed a position as protectors of the French nation. Their anti-Semitism fused with their nationalism, the two inseparable since "antisemites were, first of all, against the Jews, but, secondly, they were against the Jews, because they were for France and the French."[196] Even though the anti-Dreyfusard camp gathered supporters of different political inclinations it must be stressed that its radical wing – made up of nationalists and anti-Semites – was "able to maintain a relatively common front, and, more importantly, presented a relatively homogenous ideology."[197] In general terms the ideology of anti-Semitic anti-Dreyfusards rejected the modern world and contrasted it with a vision of an "Old France," in which "modern change and mobility were measured against a static view of past society; modern disorder, diversity and relativism were set against order, hierarchy and absolute values."[198] And yet, neither Drumont nor Barrès preached a return to this "Old France": "Not only was Barrès prepared to accept the present; he was also ready to admit the faults of the past."[199] In the same way that their anti-Semitism was not of the older religious form, the solutions they offered and

[196] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 379.
[197] Ibid., 382.
[198] Ibid., 613.
[199] Michael Curtis, *Three Against The Third Republic: Sorel, Barrès, and Maurras* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 83.

the methods they employed can only be understood as reactions to modernity, that is, more as modern manifestations of a premodern ideology than as reactionary views.

Theirs was a different proposition to Maurras', who "was the classic 19th century, as distinct from the modern, counter-revolutionary. His desire was to return to what he thought was the peak of French civilization, the 17th century, and his view was that life ought not to have moved on from that period."[200] If the Counter-Enlightenment views of Barrès and Drumont were similarly opposed to the reactionary nature of Maurras', they were distinct in their philosophical conception of the world. The thought of Barrès is more subtle and congruous than Drumont's. The former was an influential intellectual figure; a novelist, thinker and political theorist. The latter was "undoubtedly a third rank writer, but a demagogue of the first order!"[201] Barrès "does not peddle the kind of crude biological racialism and anti-Semitism that Drumont turned into an industry."[202] Even though both figures developed different forms of anti-Semitism, their ideas can be understood as parts of a general malaise with the modern world, and as an ultimate reaction to the progress of the Enlightenment.

Like Émile Zola for the Dreyfusards, Maurice Barrès was a pivotal figure for the anti-Dreyfusards. For Sternhell he situated himself as the first anti-Dreyfusard intellectual.[203] Born in 1862, he arrived in Paris in 1883 to make a living as a writer and politician. Elected as a Boulangist deputy for Nancy in 1889, he quickly formulated a distinct political discourse adjusted to anti-bourgeois anxieties and nationalist sentiments: "Barrès is, with Drumont, one of the first writers and publicists to

[200] Ibid., 266.
[201] Winock, *Édouard Drumont et Cie.*, 36.
[202] J.S. McClelland, ed., *The French Right (From de Maistre to Maurras)* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 26.
[203] Drouin, *L'Affaire Dreyfus de A à Z*, 121.

understand the mobilizing force of anti-Semitism."[204] With his ideology, anti-Semitism becomes a political action "capable of rallying all social classes and of expressing in a clear and cutting manner the refusal of the Enlightenment, of emancipation, and of ideological modernity."[205] But Barrès is a more complicated figure than we would like him to be. As Sternhell has shown in *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, there were in fact important connections between the French right and socialism in the years preceding the Affair.[206] Through his disillusionment with modernity Barrès "considers the social problem as the capital problem of the modern world, a problem which by its very amplitude cannot remain constrained within national limits."[207] In this sense, socialism is a legitimate universal movement; a pragmatic response to exploitation and iniquity. Barrès admired Jaurès and the Socialists for taking up the cause of the common man. Indeed, he "invents, during his second electoral campaign in Nancy, in 1898, the concept of 'national socialism,'"[208] in reference to an ideology that intertwined local specificity with global concerns, national anxiety with international action.

His anti-Semitism fit entirely within his disdain for the rising bourgeoisie. When Barrès attacked the ideals of 1789 he not only turned his back on the Enlightenment, he also deliberately highlighted the connections between Jewish emancipation and national degeneration. Jewish finance, the "Jewish Syndicate", Jewish infiltration in the French Army, all these issues were signs of the shifting economic forces at play in France. Barrès' attack on the bourgeoisie was centered on Jews, and it made the explicit argument that Jewish empowerment after 1789 was the sole result of destructive economic changes. Unlike other anti-Semites who equated capitalism with Judaism, Barrès provided a left-wing understanding of the French Revolution that seemed to

[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 205.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid., 15.

repeat the ideas of Marx: "Since 89, the nature of oppression has hardly changed: what has changed is the identity of the oppressors."[209] As a member of Boulangisme in the late 1880s Barrès rallied popular support against the bourgeoisie and the legacy of the Revolution. Interestingly, for the centennial of the Revolution in 1889 he celebrated Jacobinism as a force for change which had sought to overthrow an older form of oppression: hereditary aristocracy. The problem with the Revolution was that it had placed another privileged caste in power: the modern bourgeoisie. Like the revolutionaries of 1789, 1830, 1848, and 1871, who had tried to reform the system, a new brand of Frenchmen was needed to overthrow the existing economic order and finally put an end to the travesty presented by the Enlightenment. These clear pockets of socialism meant that during the 1890s Barrès professed great admiration for Jaurès.[210] This is as much an indication of the eclecticism of French socialism in the years preceding the Dreyfus Affair as it is of the intricacies of analyzing the political thought of Barrès.

Although Barrès consistently moved to the right in the decades that followed, eventually embracing Catholicism as a political response, at the turn of the Dreyfus Affair he was still very much a political combination of left-wing socialism and right-wing anti-Semitism. In fact, "In the Dreyfus Affair, the ideas of Barrès mature."[211] Blum, who early on tried to convince Barrès to join the Dreyfusards, had great admiration for this confident enemy of the Jews and the Enlightenment. As late as 1928 Blum wrote "his memory, as much as his person, have remained close to me."[212] For him, the ideas of Barrès, for all their antagonism, could be used by other movements since they did not correspond to any personal conviction or specific thought system.

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[209] Ibid., 186.
[210] Ibid., 203.
[211] Drouin, *L'Affaire Dreyfus de A à Z*, 123.
[212] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 12.

Sternhell argues that such a view ignores the complexities of Barrèsian thought, as well as the serious political consequences his ideas had for later generations of French politicians and thinkers up to Vichy.[213] Although the thought of Barrès gained in intensity during the decades that followed his arrival in Paris in 1883, it had early on emerged as a coherent ideological response to modernity. For Michel Winock it is even possible to think of the Barrès years as a distinctly vital episode in French Intellectual History.[214] But what were Barrès' ideas? How did they affect anti-Dreyfusard discourse?

The involvement of Barrès alongside the anti-Dreyfusards should in no way be shocking. In December 1894 Barrès used Dreyfus as a symbol of corruption at the heart of the French Republic. Liberal democracy and Judaism had already given birth to the Panama scandal; now it was high treason inside the Army. "That Dreyfus is capable of betrayal, I deduce from his race,"[215] he wrote in 1894. Although Barrès' anti-Semitism was inseparable from his political beliefs, it is important to understand his anti-Semitic discourse as a product of a long philosophical tradition, concerned with notions of statehood and citizenship. It is difficult to conclude which came first: his instinctive anti-Semitism or his philosophical nationalism? In either case, an analysis of his ideas can only enlighten our grasp of his political involvement in the Dreyfus Affair.

Barrès started off with a specific notion of the individual. In his three volumes from the 1890s entitled *The Cult of the Self* he elaborated a Nietzschean view of the individual as a being at odds with modernity. Alienated from a changing world the individual revolts and refuses to conform to his environment. In this situation the Self is the only aspect of human existence that can provide a tangible and credible response to the problems of the individual. In this search the Self determines its enemies: the others,

[213] Ibid., 15.
[214] Michel Winock, *Le siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997).
[215] Drouin, *L'Affaire Dreyfus de A à Z*, 123.

the barbarians. Out of this antithetical situation there emerges a realization that the contemporary world is an "artificial world in which the ladder of values is the fruit of incertitude and arbitrariness, since the certitudes that were those of the preceding generations have disappeared with them."[216] Amidst this vast chaos, alongside this existential uncertainty, the Self must confront the non-Selves that surround it. The Self must be stronger than the others, and it can only affirm itself through violent confrontation. In this battle with the non-Selves, with the barbarians as it is, "One must vanquish or disappear."[217] The Self is thus not separated from the world since its very existence depends on its engagement with its surroundings. To be free is to confront this exterior reality and thus affirm the supremacy of the Self above all other Selves.

Sternhell remarks that the connections with Carl Schmitt's political thought are indeed striking. The distinction between friend and enemy which Schmitt saw as the foundation of political activity is a key Barrèsian distinction.[218] Barrès became the intellectual father of French nationalists, Schmitt the legal theorist of the Nazi regime. The conception of the Self may have remained a pseudo-individualistic notion of strife and being, but Barrès used it as the cornerstone for a broader, more concrete political philosophy. The Self cannot exist by itself; in the fight with other Selves it must distinguish between those it identifies with, and those it rejects because of their differences. The Self must discover that it is impossible to be isolated from others: "To be free can be resumed as understanding the factors that condition the individual and to accept them."[219] The Self exists within an artificial world that must be confronted, whereupon other Selves are encountered. From this confrontation it discovers similar Selves conditioned by the same past. The Self is a product of its environment, of the soil

[216] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 83.
[217] Ibid., 85.
[218] Ibid., 14.
[219] Ibid., 88.

it inhabits and the Selves that have come before it. The living and the dead coexist alongside a long chain of similar experiences. The barbarians are those who don't belong to the same conditioned chain. For "the aspirations and the instincts of the individual are enmeshed in the past and to know the law of his being and realize it, it is the law of the collective and national being that must be discerned and adored."[220]

Within this philosophical conception the individual must constantly question what it means to be part of a collective of similar individuals. It must know its past and cherish it, as well as reject alien influences that may destroy the organic qualities of the Self, developed throughout centuries. Tradition becomes "the certitude with which to escape from nihilism, death, destruction, and decomposition."[221] The collective acts as a purging edifice that must caution against alien voices such as cosmopolitanism, internationalism, universalism, and in logical progression Judaism. Transposed into the French setting the ideas of Barrès have dramatic consequences for those whose past is not fundamentally intertwined with the past of the Self's collective. The individual identifies his place in France; it knows the nation's history and traditions; it recognizes its local churches, its rivers and fields, its food and language, its shape; and the Jew doesn't belong in this setting. He is a non-Self, an alien barbaric force that must be repelled: "On the level of the collectivity, this method will form the foundations of anti-Dreyfusisme: the national organism will have to be purged of strangers such as Zola, of the Jews….To follow its destiny, this organism must abandon itself to the forces of its instinct and let the law of the race speak."[222] Barrès, the theoretician of nationalism, became the organizer of the anti-Dreyfusards. Zola had created an image of the movement but Barrès responded with his own ideology, thus influencing anti-Dreyfusard discourse throughout the Affair. Whereas for many anti-Dreyfusards the

[220] Ibid., 90.
[221] Curtis, *Three Against The Third Republic*, 106.
[222] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 92.

important question was if Dreyfus was guilty or not, for the leading voices of the movement the Affair developed into a symptomatic case of modern France's ills.

Barrès' conception of the individual is strikingly different to the Enlightenment's. Whereas "Kant had begun to regard liberty as the first principle of morality, and the theory of the social contract as the only political philosophy compatible with such a conception of morality,"[223] Barrès offers a pre-modern understanding of the individual as a product of a cultural and historical context. The Self may initially present itself as a free agent capable of action, but by arguing that it can only exist in the world through association with other Selves, through a rejection of equality, through a suspension of liberty, it in fact ceases to be an individual and becomes part of a larger whole.[224] Its existence, its meaning, its place in the world, all is determined by its association with other similar Selves. The concept of the individual on which modernity is founded is rejected and replaced by a modern philosophical system that aims to restore a premodern understanding of man, one where the individual only has meaning in the social and political collective.[225]

At the heart of this issue lie the central conflicts of the modern State in relation to its citizens: "What is the true nature of social relations? How does a group of human beings become a society? What do the bases of collective existence consist of? What is the nature of the relations between the individual and the collectivity and, by consequence, what are the foundations of political legitimacy? What is it that allows men to develop the minimum of solidarity that renders life together possible? What is it that gives meaning to life in society? The most urgent question, the most immediate is assuredly the one that requires a response to the question: 'What is a nation?' Is it an ensemble of individuals with equal rights, as the French Revolution intended it in its

[223] Ibid., 19.
[224] Curtis, *Three Against The Third Republic*, 64.
[225] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 44.

very first years, or a body formed by history, by culture, by religion, by ethnicity?"[226] In 1898 the French were busy with the case of one individual cast far away from the territory. Dreyfus, the "barbarian" Barrès and his followers had excluded from France, wrote to his wife: "'I want to wish that I'll still have a minute of happiness on this earth, but that which I don't have the right to doubt, is that justice will be made; it is that justice be rendered to you, to our children. I will thus say have courage and have confidence.' Justice, the Fatherland, Dreyfus [could not] separate or oppose them."[227]

It is important to remember the individual suffering of Captain Dreyfus. However, his case still resonates not for the particular injustice it exposed but for the fundamental questions it raised. The questions laid out by Sternhell must have followed Zola as he sat down to write *J'accuse*, and they must have made their way into the thought of Barrès as he decided to lead the anti-Dreyfusards. The Affair was not just an excuse for larger political and ideological problems to be resolved; it was the very litmus test by which these issues were debated. Barrès and Jaurès may have vaguely remained on common ground, but the Affair highlighted how dramatically distinct were their visions of France, statehood, and humanity.

The thought of Barrès "represents the willingness to overcome the banality of the bourgeois world, the materialism of industrial society, the platitude of liberal democracy; it is the willingness to give a new meaning to life."[228] In Barrès one finds the trajectory of Herder's thought: "Man is a tree in search of roots, for which land is necessary, as well as sun and water. The land is France, the sun is its grandeur, water its civilization and language."[229] But not all trees can be rooted in the same land, or else no water will be left and the sun will no longer be felt. For Barrès this is precisely what the

[226] Ibid., 20.
[227] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 352.
[228] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 58.
[229] Sarah Vajda, *Maurice Barrès* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000), 162.

French Revolution carried out; the dissolution of society and the loss of a real future. This is the great tragedy of his time,[230] and "Dreyfus is but the representative, the symbol, of the forces of evil that destroy France."[231]

Although Barrès published *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme* in 1902, once the debates of the Dreyfus Affair had largely subsided, the essay provides an important model of his ideas on nationalism and anti-Semitism. In the section entitled "I judge Dreyfus as a Symbol in relation to France," Barrès writes: "If Dreyfus is a traitor, to release him would be an action of minimal importance; but if he is more than a traitor, if he is a symbol, the case is altered: now it becomes the Dreyfus affair! Stop there! The triumph of the Dreyfusard camp, the camp which supports Dreyfus as symbol, would put into power those men whose intention it is *to remake France in the image of their own prejudices*. And as for me, I want to preserve France. The whole of nationalism is contained in that opposition."[232] Barrès became an anti-Dreyfusard because he understood himself as a nationalist. What mattered was not the guilt of Dreyfus but the interests of France. Barrès articulated a conception of morality fundamentally opposed to the Kantian universalism espoused by the Dreyfusards. The question was not legal but ideological, not particular but national. It thus concerned the image of France, her future and integrity.

Since the Jews had to be excluded from the French nation envisioned by Barrès, Dreyfus could not be tried according to universal maxims of truth and justice. Barrès also attacked the Dreyfusard intellectuals' grand expectations of the French nation: "Absolute justice is beyond them. It may exist, but only in heaven. What French courts

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[230] Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français*, 385.
[231] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 395.
[232] Maurice Barrès, « Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme, » in *The French Right (From de Maistre to Maurras)*, ed. and trans. J.S. McClelland (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 167.

can give is French justice, a relative justice."[233] The question was not whether Dreyfus had been judged rightly in accordance with universal maxims, but rather if his condemnation served the interests of the French nation. Since Jews were alien to France, and Dreyfus was a Jew, it followed that he had been rightly judged. Like the army officers who had followed instinct and prejudice over evidence during the arrest of Dreyfus, Barrès and his supporters deduced Dreyfus' guilt from his being Jewish. This is what Barrès meant when he said he knew Dreyfus was a traitor simply because of his race. The logic of Barrès' argument is profoundly anti-rational since it rejects facts and evidence. It claims that because Jews are guilty of belonging to France (their citizenship is in itself a crime), and since Dreyfus is Jewish, he is therefore guilty. J.S. McClelland writes that "stated baldly, Barrès's argument may seem crude. It may be, but the journalistic genius of Barrès brings to it a real force. The fundamental assumption is psychological. What we are, what is most important in us is something we cannot fully comprehend. It is subterranean, dark, mysterious and terrifying. Moral and political precept derive from this source."[234] In view of the influence exercised by Barrès, this irrationalism cannot be discarded from any analysis of the Dreyfus Affair.

Édouard Drumont (1844-1917) was equally engaged in the rejection of universal morality. Immersed in anti-Semitism, Drumont believed it to be the prime lens through which the modern world could be observed and understood. His anti-Semitism was "coarse and plebeian, so that coupled with the civilized, literary and aristocratic anti-semitism of Barrès, the anti-semites covered the whole market, by catering for all possible tastes."[235] Drumont was a minor journalist until he published *La France juive* (Jewish France) in 1886. The long two-volume book was an instant success – 100,000

[233] McClelland, *The French* Right, 25.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid., 85.

copies were sold in the first two months – and by some counts one of the bestselling books in the history of French publishing before World War I.[236] In the preface to the 115th edition Drumont wrote: "When a nation feels a certain commotion in front of a literary work, it is that the writer has all of a sudden formulated the secret thought that many did not even acknowledge for themselves."[237] Drumont conciliated in anti-Semitism "counter-revolutionary thought, Catholic tradition, and a populist and socialistic anti-capitalism."[238] *La France juive* is long (over 1000 pages) and repetitive, filled with contradictions and catchy phrases. It is more an exercise in rhetoric than a philosophically or historically informed essay. The contrast with Barrès is striking, but the desire to exclude the Jew from French society is based on the same preoccupations and realizations.

In the introduction Drumont states that "the only one who has benefited from the Revolution is the Jew. All comes from the Jew; all returns to the Jew."[239] The Jew can now leave the ghetto and amass a fortune, travel and live where he pleases.[240] Like Barrès, Drumont evokes the French past and the French dead; he claims a specific tradition – the Crusades, the Battle of Bouvines, Saint Louis, Henry IV, Louis XIV[241] – and stresses the idea that "if our parents devoted themselves, fell on the battlefields, it is so that there be a France like there is an England and a Germany, so that our children pray like their fathers prayed, and have a faith that upholds them in life."[242] About a fourth of the book is dedicated to the history of Jews from their first settlement in France up to the Revolution, and the rest focuses on the century up to the 1880s. It quickly becomes clear that the objective of Drumont is not to trace a pseudo-history of

[236] Lindemann, *The Jew Accused*, 83.
[237] Édouard Drumont, *La France juive : essai d'histoire contemporaine (Tome Premier)* (Paris : Marpon et Flammarion, 1887).
[238] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 45.
[239] Drumont, *La France juive*, ii.
[240] Ibid., 18.
[241] Ibid., 61.
[242] Ibid., 138.

Jews and anti-Semitism, but to focus on the recent history of Jews, that concerned with the period following the Revolution. "Where is the Jew during the Revolution?"[243] asks Drumont. On the wait, ready to lay his roots in a country that is not his, preparing for an invasion and happy to take advantage of the era's confusion.

The Jew of *La France juive* is a fixed being whose nature does not evolve or change. He is always Jewish, always adapting to the circumstances, but always ready to profit from the hardships of others. He combines a disdain for religious charity, traditional bonds and the history of France. Bredin clearly defines Drumont's vision: "Errant, the Jew is, by nature, without nation. Merchant, he is far from the soil. By destiny, or by malediction, he is 'international'. He likes money, no war. He feeds on intelligence, no instinct... This land is not his. These dead are not his."[244] Drumont may have created a caricature, but the consistency of his program propelled him into the front ranks of journalism during the 1890s. For in spite of his contradictions, Drumont's importance lies both in the enormous success he had – as a writer, journalist and politician – and in his ability to connect anti-Semitism to general anxieties about modernity: "Anti-semitism appears as a reaction in the face of the fear of modernity."[245] Winock argues that Drumont was the first who turned anti-Semitism into a global explanatory system.[246]

Following the enormous success of *La France juive*, Drumont founded the daily *La Libre Parole* (The Free Word) on April 20, 1892, with the subheading "La France aux Français" (France for the French). *La Libre Parole* was not the first anti-Semitic newspaper in France but it became extremely successful due to its sensationalism and consistent attacks on specific Jews. The journal "played a leading part in launching the

[243] Ibid., 297.
[244] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 44.
[245] Winock, *Édouard Drumont et Cie.*, 33.
[246] Ibid., 38.

Panama scandal in 1892, an affair, like that of the Union Générale, which capitalized on popular prejudice against 'Jewish Finance' and political corruption."[247] Bredin writes that "without *L'Aurore* and Zola, Dreyfus would have perhaps stayed in prison. But, without Drumont and *La Libre Parole*, would he have gone to it?"[248] It was *La Libre Parole* that launched an aggressive campaign against the presence of Jewish officers in the Army before the Dreyfus Affair broke out; it was again *La Libre Parole* that carried out a campaign calling for the resignation of General Mercier, probably cornering him into ordering an acceleration of the Dreyfus investigation and trial; and *La Libre Parole* was also behind the revelation that made the arrest of Dreyfus known to the public; finally, it was *La Libre Parole* that dedicated its pages to the general defamation of Jews and pointed attacks on Dreyfus.

In its 1898 New Year's address to its readers, just two weeks before the acquittal of Esterhazy and the publication of *J'accuse*, *La Libre Parole* read: "The Jewish regime appears to all as it is, as it has always been, that is to say as the negation of all ideals, of all fatherlands, as the very negation of the right of each to existence, as the exploitation of the work of all for the profit of a few."[249] On January 12, the day of Esterhazy's acquittal, a cartoon showed Dreyfus on an island, dressed with a German helmet, and surrounded by his brother Mathieu, Scheurer-Ketsner, Reinach, and Zola – all crying and surrounded by caricatures of crying Jews. The next day Drumont published his own *J'accuse* – against the Dreyfusards – addressed to Félix Faure, President of the French Republic: "What safety do you want there to be for a State that lets its military chiefs be denounced, every morning, like idiots, crooks, miserable men capable of condemning an innocent man without any proof."[250] On the 20th Albert Monniot echoed the ideas of

[247] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 173.
[248] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 700.
[249] *La Libre Parole*, January 1, 1898.
[250] Drumont, *La Libre Parole*, January 14, 1898.

Drumont and Barrès: "Patriotism, nationalism, are the very basis of anti-Semitism: it suffices to be a good Frenchman to wish to see France purged of those elements that sicken its blood and atrophy its brain."[251] An article by Gallus on February 13 entitled "The Intellectuals and Decadence" did not directly mention Jews but it articulated a premodern vision that can be linked to anti-Semitism: "The present is made of the past; nothing is erased, everything is superimposed; nothing dissipates, everything accumulates. Those things submerged under the ashes will reappear more glaring. They are there; they sleep under our steps until the fatal resurrection."[252]

Drumont and his collaborators continued their attack on Jews, Dreyfusards and Dreyfus day in, day out. Drumont also linked the Jew to the concept of the individual: "The Jew, whose inexorable 'I' excludes all that is not him, lives outside of this collectivity."[253] Interestingly, *La Libre Parole*'s understanding of economics reveals a pre-capitalist notion of wealth: "How did these people, who had nothing a hundred years ago, could have the millions, the hotels, the castles, the woods, the field, if they had not stolen them from those who possessed them?"[254] It followed that a Jewish officer in the Army had in fact taken the place of a real French officer. With a circulation of 100,000 during much of 1898 and 1899 *La Libre Parole* was by no means the most successful daily – *La Croix* had a circulation of 170,000, *Le Petit Journal* over a million, *Le Petit Parisien* over 700,000, and *Le Journal* about 450,000 – but it sold more than the centrist *Le Figaro* with 40,000 and the Dreyfusard *L'Aurore* with 25,000.[255] The importance of the newspaper lay in its ability to mobilize anti-Semitic feelings in a unified attack that targeted Dreyfusards as Jews, and Jews as Dreyfusards. To be French, to be patriotic, to be moral, one had to be against Dreyfus.

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[251] Monniot, *La Libre Parole*, January 20, 1898.
[252] Gallus, *La Libre Parole*, February 13, 1898.
[253] Drumont, *La Libre Parole*, May 23, 1898.
[254] Drumont, *La Libre Parole*, March 21, 1898.
[255] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 694.

Drumont left the editing board of *La Libre Parole* in 1898, soon after he won the election for Deputy of Algiers. He remained a Member of Parliament until his defeat in the reelection campaign of 1902. The newspaper never recovered the success it enjoyed during the late 1890s, but its influence inspired a generation of anti-Semites. In the 1930s, Henry Coston, an anti-Semitic journalist and collaborator during the German occupation, founded a daily with the same name and ideological tendencies. Not only with Drumont can one find links between the Dreyfus Affair and Vichy. The son of Commander du Paty du Clam – the infamous officer in charge of Dreyfus' arrest – was no less than Charles du Paty de Clam, head of Jewish matters under Vichy from February 1944 onward.[256] When Charles Maurras, who lived until 1952, was condemned as a collaborator at the end of World War II he cried "It is Dreyfus' revenge."[257] More importantly, Vichy's initial anti-Semitic measures excluding Jews from French society put into action what Drumont, Barrès and other anti-Semites had advocated forty years earlier.

But the comparison must stop there. Vichy was not the Third Republic, the 1940s were not the 1890s, Laval was not Barrès, deportation and extermination were not exclusion and expulsion. It would be easy, even dangerous, to strike a teleological argument as self-explanatory for the horrors of the occupation. The Jew described by Barrès and Maurras may well be the Jew described by Goebbels,[258] but this is as far as intellectual history, or history for that matter, can take us in explaining the Holocaust. To delineate a clear progression from Devil's Island to Auschwitz would be a logical aberration, not because the Holocaust cannot be understood, but because it cannot be reduced to the 'natural' result of historical developments. As Wilson concludes: "If the

[256] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 740.
[257] McClelland, *The French* Right, 31.
[258] Ibid.

Vichy episode underlines the strength of latent antisemitism in French society, it also affirms, as we have argued, that extraordinary circumstances were required to translate antisemitism from the realms of ideology and fantasy to those of law and action, and that the wholesale slaughter of Jews, while it may have been generally acquiesced in through fear, was rarely advocated by French antisemites in concrete terms."[259] Intellectual history deals with texts and ideas, and tries to delineate their development throughout history. But *La France juive* or *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme* cannot explain how anti-Semitism evolved from a heated debate to a burning persecution.

The interest lies elsewhere; in the significance of the developments of 1898. As far as "the attack on the Revolution in the nineteenth century centred on the connection between eighteenth-century political thought and the Revolution itself,"[260] anti-Dreyfusards such as Barrès and Drumont embodied a general suspicion of modernity. The antagonisms of the Revolution, the contradictions of French history, the dangers of the time, all were linked to a conflict between two world visions. As far as we can go in striking a dividing line between the Dreyfusard and the anti-Dreyfusard camps, the truth is that in many cases the contradictions cannot be resolved: "A Bonapartist like Paul de Cassagnac or an anti-Semite like Octave Mirbeau joined the Dreyfusards, in opposition to most of their kind. An aesthete like Barrès, the youthful maître, broke with most of his disciples in joining the antirevisionist group."[261] And yet, when one looks at the debates that enveloped the Dreyfus Affair it quickly becomes clear that they went beyond conceptions of statehood and justice, that they transgressed the political and the ideological, that they were not only about an accused standing against a State.

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[259] Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 741.
[260] McClelland, *The French* Right, 16.
[261] Curtis, *Three Against The Third Republic*, 36.

Epilogue

On June 3, 1899, the Supreme Court of Appeal annulled the verdict of the 1894 court martial and ordered a new trial to take place in Rennes. After more than four years at Devil's Island Dreyfus returned to a France torn between two camps, and immersed in philosophical, political and ideological battles. Unlike the 1894 trial, the Rennes trial was public and generated great amounts of publicity. After 25 public sessions during the month of August the Court declared Dreyfus "guilty with extenuating circumstances" on September 9. The news shattered the Dreyfusards. Zola, who had returned from exile in England with great expectations, published the article *Le cinquième acte* (The Fifth Act) in *L'Aurore*:

> I am in terror. It is no longer anger or vengeful indignation, the need to cry out against crime and to demand its punishment in the name of truth and justice; it is terror, the sacred terror of the man who sees the impossible being realized, streams running back to their sources, the earth tumbling into the sun. And at what I cry out is the distress of our generous and noble France, it is fear of the abyss into which it rolls. We had imagined that the Rennes trial was the fifth act of the terrible tragedy we had lived through the last two years…How have we been deceived; a new turn of the wheel has taken place, the most frightful of all…The trial at Rennes was only the fourth act. Great God what will be the fifth? Of what new sorrows and suffering will it be composed? To what extreme expiation will it throw the nation? Is it not so?[262]

But France was too tired for a fifth act, its political elites too fearful of more "sorrows and suffering," and Dreyfus morally and physically unfit to continue yet another fight for justice. On September 19, as Scheurer-Kestner died of cancer, President Loubet issued a pardon for Dreyfus. The 1900 Paris Universal Exhibition signaled that the Affair had come to an end as a moment of national consciousness. In 1902 the left won the Legislative elections and Clemenceau was elected Senator. That

[262] Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History*, 282.

same year Zola died at his home asphyxiated by fumes escaping from the chimney. Meanwhile, Dreyfus returned to his family and continued to fight for the revision of his sentence. In March 1906 a new government including several Dreyfusards – Clemenceau among them – was formed, and on July 12, 1906, the Supreme Court of Appeal finally reached a ruling over Dreyfus: it annulled the Rennes trial, and pronounced his rehabilitation and innocence. Dreyfus was awarded the Legion of Honor and his reintegration into the Army took place at a small ceremony in the *École militaire* on July 21, almost 12 years after his arrest.

Alfred Dreyfus retired from the army the following year, but when war broke out in 1914 he enlisted in the 7th artillery division. In 1918 he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in the reserves. He died on July 12, 1935, at the age of 75. Interestingly, in view of the republican symbol Dreyfus had become for many, he was buried in the Jewish section of the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris on July 14.

Conclusion

Although concerned with the Dreyfus Affair as a source of historical inquiry, this thesis is fundamentally the articulation of an intellectual vision. If this vision may have appeared transparent to the reader, its foundations must presently be explored. Like any essay in intellectual history this project is the result of clear choices: Zola over Jaurès, Barrès over Maurras, Herder over de Maistre, Tocqueville over Nietzsche, and so on. The direction of the research and the general conclusions that have been extracted from the Affair would have been very different had another course of inquiry been followed. But it is also the case that "the history of ideas is not the story of a succession of great philosophers, where one system of ideas and theories begets another,"[263] or where thinkers can be randomly selected to articulate different positions or opinions.

The logic behind intellectual history is at all times historical. It follows texts within contexts and thinkers alongside events. Like the general historian, the intellectual historian looks at documents with a chronology in mind. He cannot take texts and ideas out of their context, just as the general historian cannot use a document from a different time and place to reach conclusions about a specific period. Like the general historian, the intellectual historian must make assumptions. In the same way that the former sees a connection between the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, and the abolition of privileges on August 4 of that same year, the latter can trace how the thought of Hegel influenced the young Marx. In both cases the connections are the result of deductions that necessitate general knowledge about the period in question, and not obvious conclusions to be drawn naturally. Intellectual history, like all history, is the articulation of these connections in a coherent manner.

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[263] Roger Hausheer, introduction to *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, by Isaiah Berlin, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), xxiv.

This project underwent a change of direction in the middle stages of the research. The initial objective was to investigate the debates of the Dreyfus Affair through a survey of major newspapers. Time limitations meant I could only look at a narrow number of dailies spanning a short period of time. This initial phase yielded three important conclusions. First, I slowly began to formulate an opinion on the divisions between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. The language and imagery deployed indicated that the stakes were important, and that the debate went beyond the traditional right-left political divide. I also realized that newspapers sometimes remained repetitive and simplistic sources that showed few signs of development in face of the Affair's events. This second conclusion was interlocked with a general sense that on its own the press would remain limited as a tool of intellectual inquiry. In order to grasp the significance of the Affair I had to look elsewhere and start asking specific questions.

My grasp of the conflict between newspapers as different as *L'Aurore* and *La Libre Parole*, coupled with a reading of secondary sources, led me in a different direction. Zeev Sternhell's *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français* allowed me to understand the complexities of Barrès' thought, arming me with the tools to grapple with his anti-Semitism. The different questions that emerged out of this second phase – Was anti-Semitism central to the Affair? Was there a clear divide between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards? What role did intellectuals play in the press? What role did intellectuals have in the shaping of the debates over Dreyfus? – led me to the most important question: Why did the Dreyfus Affair become so important?

In trying to address the relevance of my own research I looked at the relevance of the Affair under the Third Republic. The Affair seemed to present France with crucial options. Many of these pointed in the direction of the debate over the nature of

the modern State; a question as relevant in 1898 as it is today. Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards were at odds over the place of the individual within the larger political community. In this reading, which I still hold to be of some relevance, the conflict is between supporters of individual justice on the one hand, and defenders of a strong State on the other. But this conception of the Affair leaves out too much: the virulent anti-Semitism, the debates over nationalism, the conflict with the heritage of the French Revolution, the different conceptions of the individual.

Up to that point, the main limit of my research was that as an intellectual history thesis it had failed to address the history of those currents that surfaced with such intensity during the Affair. In order to answer why Dreyfus mattered so much I had to go back to the sources of the conflict. If Zola and Barrès evoked particular ideas and distinct visions of history, I needed to crystallize these divisions against the background of nineteenth century French intellectual thought. Whereas Zola, Clemenceau, Barrès, and Drumont were all obvious choices due to the key role they played during the Affair, Tocqueville, Herder, Sartre, and Arendt were not.

Tocqueville and Herder were the most obvious of the four readings. In the case of Herder I was prompted to approach his ideas after reading Sternhell's analysis of his influence on French intellectual thought. As for Tocqueville, a study of the French Revolution seemed incomplete without him. As twentieth-century thinkers, Sartre and Arendt posed more initial complications. And yet, their analysis of anti-Semitism and its place in the modern world quickly proved relevant in dealing with extreme anti-Dreyfusards. Slowly but surely the Affair began to make more sense. The diatribes in the newspapers were no longer the exaggerated rhetorical exercises of a few figures; the secondary sources were no longer extrapolating on a mere legal affair; anti-Semitism

began to make more sense as a political force; and the conflict between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards became larger, more relevant, more powerful.

In the introduction to a collection of essays by Isaiah Berlin, Roger Hausheer writes of the history of ideas: "Its central preoccupation consists in a large-scale extension of the ancient injunction 'know thyself' to the collective historical whole, the civilization or culture, in which the individual self is embedded, and of which it is in no small measure a product."[264] The Dreyfus Affair has been consistently used to emphasize different questions and problems. Insofar as it can be analyzed within a larger intellectual frame, it can provide us with insight into our own questions as a way of knowing ourselves. By placing the Affair within a conflict over the place of man in the modern world I have tried to demonstrate how the Dreyfus Affair can still be of relevance to our understanding of the present. In one sense the story belongs to the Third Republic, to its tensions and contradictions, to fin-de-siècle irrationality and fragility. In another, however, it also speaks for the modern era. At its heart lie problems which have not been resolved: What is the place of the individual in the modern State? What does it mean to be an individual in a Nation ? Are Nation States viable? But perhaps more importantly, what is the place of human beings in the modern world? As Bredin argues, the Dreyfus Affair can be understood as the product of a revolt against modernity.[265] At the heart of this question opposites are crystallized, and our understanding of both the Affair and the modern world is filtered through a prism of contradicting visions.

And yet, these conflicts cannot ultimately be categorically opposed. If politically and philosophically they can only be spelled out through oppositions, historically they must refute such a position. Even Barrès the polarizer holds words of synthesis: "I well

[264] Ibid., xxiii.
[265] Bredin, *L'Affaire*, 43.

know that Dreyfusisme and anti-Dreyfusisme should be incorporated into a superior type….coordinate, if possible, these contradictory elements in a common ideal."[266] Dreyfus, like France, was inhabited by these "contradictory elements." This is perhaps the final lesson of the Affair. Above its divisions it embodies the problem of modern man: the difficulty of making individual choices and taking sides. In some ways our disproportionate interest in the Affair is perhaps no more than a gesture longing for more serious times.

[266] Vajda, *Maurice Barrès*, 168.

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