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"Vitalité": Race Science and Jews in France 1850-1914

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“Vitalité”: Race Science and Jews in France 1850-1914

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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Abstract

Race science is built on ideas of division and categorization. In the historian's quest to tell the story of race science, certain frameworks have been used that can greatly inhibit our understanding of this fraught topic. The impulse to study race science in the framework of the nation-state has led to certain misconceptions and lends itself to a historical narrative wherein racist concepts stop at artificially imposed borders. In addition, the national framework detracts from the individual's contributions and instead lumps these contributions together on the level of the nation-state, thus opening the door for judgments about whole nations being more or less responsible for race science.

In this work, I explore contributions to race science pertaining to the "Jewish race" (which I have simplified to the phrase "Jewish race science") made by individual French writers and scholars. These contributions have been overlooked at times by historians who look to more notorious examples, such as those made by German race science theorists; in failing comprehensively to examine all significant contributions to race science, historians have often inhibited their own ability to understand Jewish race science fully. If such a historical field is to be understood, one must be aware of the full range of development of Jewish race science, both in terms of geographical scope and scholarly focus. By bringing attention to Jewish race science contributions made in nineteenth-century France, it is my intention to broaden the understanding of this field and to help bring about a new approach to the field that is less reliant on the nationalist framework in its evaluation of the nature and impact of race science.

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I

A Sampling of the Historiography of Jewish Race Science

“Small, rather feminine mouth. False teeth of expensive quality. Ears small, with large lobes, indicating some Jewish blood. Hands small, well-tended, hirsute. Feet small. Racially, subject is probably a mixture of Mediterranean with Prussian or Polish strains.” So read James Bond's dossier on the French villain Le Chiffre.¹ One does not expect to come across a description of a French Jew that hits upon so many of the accusations that race science has leveled against Jews in a somewhat frivolous espionage potboiler. The quote is quite fascinating and one could spend a considerable amount of time deconstructing it. The effeminate mouth, indicates the stereotype of a Jewish man as being effeminate.² False teeth mean that Le Chiffre's real teeth have fallen out due undoubtedly to disease or decay. The phrase “Jewish blood” implies the idea that it will out in some physical manifestation. The “hirsute hands”—a subtle reference to what common parlance might call a “throwback.” A racially mixed person, not of a pure race.

The dossier continues to hit other Jewish stereotypes such as Le Chiffre's “large sexual appetites” and his knowledge consisting mainly of “accountancy and mathematics.”³ To top the whole thing off, Le Chiffre is working for communists and is

¹ Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale* (Las Vegas: Thomas & Mercer, 2012) 14.

² John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors & Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 7.

³ Fleming, *Casino Royale*, 14. Le Chiffre's sexual appetites being noted as one of his villainous attributes is particularly interesting to note in light of James Bond's rather well known sexual history.

loyal to absolutely no one but himself. Many people may have heard these attributes and accusations before: the effeminacy, the inability to hide “Jewish blood,” a lack of loyalty, and, what was most likely the nail in the coffin for Fleming’s readers in the 1950s, communist. Where do these stereotypes and accusations come from?

It is not the intention of this paper to answer the question of the origins of these Jewish stereotypes but instead to help broaden the discussion of Jewish race science.⁴ My contention is that examining the contributions to Jewish race science that were made by some in the French scholarly community in the time period between 1850 and 1914 can lead to a more complete understanding of the different ways in which race science developed. There is a history not being told, but not out of a conspiracy of silence; rather, the field of Jewish race science has been divided into national frameworks that only serve as an impediment to analysis. This impediment is the extrapolation of the form of race science that developed in one nation—almost always Germany—and applying it to all others, resulting in a historical discourse that can exclude differing interpretations of the field of race science and make the mistake of discounting valuable sources that do not fit into the extrapolated form. By comparing France with other nations, such as Germany, we as historians can make the mistake of dismissing the former in our rush to explain the later, more notorious historical events of the latter.

One thing to bear in mind when evaluating this history is that European countries were not sealed away from each other with no exchange of ideas. This exchange of ideas

⁴ I will be using the phrase “Jewish race science”, by which I mean race science as pertains to the Jews, using Jews as its subject.

is already present in older historical narratives of Jewish race science that present such figures as Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau and Édouard Drumont, contributors to Jewish race science who will be discussed in later chapters, as feeding the antisemitic ideals that would eventually fuel the National Socialist regime. The flow of ideas, however, is not a one-way street from France to Germany or vice versa. While undoubtedly different cultures would give unique properties to ideas of race, the national historical framework only serves to create a sense that scientific thinkers or whole communities were somehow cut off from each other due to national boundaries. For instance, much has been written in the historical case of the German scientific community's contributions, but even so, these works do not fail to mention the influence and works of Ernest Renan, Gobineau, and Drumont.⁵ We must fill in the blanks, the histories that have not been as thoroughly studied, such as the French contributions to Jewish race science, in order to show how these ideas move, change, leave, and come back to communities and people.

There has been a great deal of work concerning the role of antisemitism in French society, and antisemitism will indeed play a role in this work.⁶ However, it must be made clear that antisemitism is not the same subject as race science and is not specifically the focus here. All of the contributions to Jewish race science that I will examine are based on prejudices, whether positive or negative, in their portrayal of the idea of the Jewish

⁵ Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).—This is an example of a title that uses these men as precursors to the Jewish race science and antisemitism that was adopted by National Socialists and used to justify genocide.

⁶ It is a scholarly decision to write it as “antisemitism” as opposed to other forms this word takes. This paper will only use alternative spellings of antisemitism in direct quotations.

race. Jewish race science is not necessarily antisemitic in nature. The insistence of race science to categorize and therefore separate certain groups of people may strike the contemporary reader as inherently hostile; this is not the case. While Jewish race science was used by some who wished to segregate Jews from the rest of society, for our purposes it is more important that Jewish race science was used to define a unique, specifically Jewish identity. Whether or not this identification was given a positive or negative light depends on the contributor.

What does race mean during the time period we are about to discuss, 1850 to 1914? Race was an interdisciplinary framework that provided a means for understanding real or perceived differences among people. Far from being just a physical or biological category, it also covered the “social, political, cultural, and psychological” aspects of a designated group.⁷ In other words, for those who considered race a significant category, one’s race explained and engendered everything—appearances, thoughts, actions and interactions. Race science was a vehicle for analogy; ideas of race relied heavily on comparison.⁸ All aspects of one’s culture, society, and biology were used by race science theorists to make these analogies clearer. Gobineau, for instance, thought race went so far as to explain all of history and indeed, the future: “I was gradually penetrated by the conviction that the racial question overshadows all other problems of history, that it holds

⁷ Elazar Barkan, “Race and the Social Sciences,” *The Cambridge History of Science, Vol. 7: The Modern Social Sciences*, ed. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 696.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521594424>.

⁸ Nancy Leys Stepan, “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” *Isis* 77, No. 2 (Jun., 1986) 263. <http://www.jstor.org/stable232652>.

the key to them all, and that the inequality of races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of its destiny.”⁹

John M. Efron defined race science as “the study of human difference on the basis of supposedly ‘demonstrable’ anthropological, biological, and statistical proofs.”¹⁰ This definition is incomplete. Indeed, given the complexity of the term “race,” it is understandable that race science cannot be so easily pinned down. Those contributing to race science would not confine themselves to anthropology, biology, and statistics. The contributors of Jewish race science came from a variety of disciplines, such as Gobineau, who used ideas of race to produce works of history. Social sciences such as history would be used as a means of examining and defining the Jewish race. Without this expansion in our terminology, a vital part of the racial discourse in France and with it, part of our understanding, would be lost.

Race science relied on certain vagaries in order to function. Marrus, in his own discussion of contributors to Jewish race science, makes the point that “vagueness was considered not a fault of terminology, but of inadequate knowledge about the mysteries of the human spirit.”¹¹ In this way, race scientists were able to use their weakest attribute (the fact that no one had a good definition for who belonged to what race exactly and how these races were distinctly separated) to make it clear that, with further study, the truth of racial categories would be revealed. Science would have to “progress” further in

⁹ Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915) xiv. Originally published in 1854.

¹⁰ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 5.

¹¹ Michael R. Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971) 14.

order to reveal the truth of racial facts that were already known but were not properly backed up with scientific evidence at the time they were being presented.

Examining the French “nation’s” contribution to race science, which has at times been overlooked, will, I believe, help break down the nation-state-based analytical framework and take a step towards a discourse that no longer needs nations as a frame of reference—a discourse no longer broken up into categories such as “German race science” or “American race science.” The entire racial science discourse in a country cannot be overlooked if we are to examine the complete history of race science. France should be of particular interest to us as it is the home of Gobineau who is cited by a vast number of historians who have delved into this particular subject. Modern French history also provides the historian a useful context within which to examine how racial science could be seen as useful in understanding cultural difference. In 1791, the Jews in France were legally emancipated, thus legal equality was granted to all French citizens.¹² However, the gap between legal and social reality would be revealed throughout the course of the nineteenth century for the Jews in France.¹³ This legal equality was followed by a push towards a homogenized national identity, leading to conflicts over issues such as acculturation and identity. These factors serve to make the discussion of the Jewish race science discourse in France a topic that can give us greater understanding of why race science appealed to people and how pervasive it became.

¹² Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History From Antiquity to the Present*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 82.

¹³ *Ibid.*

It should be made clear to contemporary readers that "There is not, nor was there ever, anything even remotely resembling a Jewish "race.""¹⁴ The Jewish race is a concept born of scholarship but has no basis in biological reality. There would be no real way by which one could even begin going about defining such a category. It is the equivalent of trying to define the "French race" and the "German race." The Frenchman, the German, and the Jew are not natural categories that were discovered by race science. Trying to define who was a member of a given race at a biological level was a problem that many would try to solve but would find quickly the impossibility of such an endeavor. While many of our race scientists were quick to explain that Jews are not of the French race, they are not nearly as quick to explain who exactly counts as being French.

One of the most important recent works on the contributions made by Jews to Jewish race science is John Efron's book *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors & Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*. Efron examines "modes of intellectual resistance to prejudice" and aspires to reverse historical narratives that portray Jews as passive victims.¹⁵ He contends that Jews were not only participating in the racial dialogue, they were simultaneously *creating* that dialogue through their contributions to race science. "In late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe, access to knowledge allowed Jewish scientists to engage the dominant discourse about race and the so-called Jewish question as well as to mount a sustained campaign of self-defense, self-assertion, and

¹⁴ Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1964) 327.

¹⁵ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 1.

ethnic identity building.”¹⁶ In addition, Efron proposes that the relationship between non-Jews and Jews is analogous to the relationship between Europeans and the people Europeans colonized. There are interesting parallels between the way in which French society dealt with the population of their colonies and the way in which French society dealt with French Jews, which will be discussed later in this paper.

On initial reading, Efron’s account of the subject of some Jews participating in racial discourse may seem taboo—after all, Jews as a group have been persecuted again and again on the basis of “race.” His work does not imply that since the Jews participated in the race science discourse that they are partly responsible for later atrocities that used race science for their basis. Instead, the contributions Jews made to race science are presented as an example of sharing the power that racial discourse had in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Just as in the colonial historical narrative “no longer do Western participant-observers possess an unchallenged voice when it comes to describing the ‘Other,’ non-Jews are able to describe themselves and take themselves out of the context of ‘the Other’.”¹⁷

While the examination of the Jewish race science discourse of Germany, Britain, and Israel is quite in depth, Efron does not give the same consideration to the situation in France. While there is nothing objectionable about a historian choosing to limit the scope of his or her work, Efron goes out of his way to explain why he dismisses the French situation, thus opening the door to criticism. He makes the claim in the introduction to his

¹⁶ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 3.

¹⁷ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 2.

work that, “In sum, the Jewish racial question was posed in France only occasionally, and was rarely answered by the Jews of that land.”¹⁸ Efron argues that in France, since Jews had been legally emancipated since 1791, they felt no real need to be alarmed by antisemitic tracts or Jewish race science in general.¹⁹ Efron’s description of the situation of Jewish race science in France is objectionable for two reasons. First, he dismisses the discourse on Jewish race science in France on the basis of how “rare” he perceives it to be, thus implying that the worthiness of a subject of historical study is directly linked to the “size” of the subject. This problem of size is directly linked to problems with the national framework discussed above. For Efron, the German community possessed a “larger” Jewish race discourse, making the French race discourse negligible in comparison. Since Efron finds the “size” of Jewish race discourse in Israel and Britain to be comparable to the German situation, they are included in his study. In his work, Germany ends up serving as a model for how race science developed and that model is applied to assess the state of other discourses on race.

The second objection to Efron’s assessment of the French situation is that his understanding of the emancipation of the Jews in France is simplistic and does not take into account the difficulties that Jews faced even after their legal emancipation.²⁰ Efron presents us with an understanding that French Jews were so comfortable in their legal standing that they saw no reason to react or be involved in Jewish race science. I argue

¹⁸ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 11.

¹⁹ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 10.

²⁰ Terms like emancipation and citizen are problematic as their definitions were being formed as they were issued to various people during the course of the French Revolution.

that, based on sources that will be examined in the coming chapters, Jews were secure enough in their legal and social standing in French society that they felt comfortable engaging and contributing to Jewish race science.

In search of more on the nineteenth century French Jewish experience, we turn to Michael Graetz's work, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*. The main focus of Graetz's book is the impact that Jewish intellectuals had on French history and society. He explores those Jews who ascribed to such ideologies as Saint-Simonism and delves into the creation of the Alliance Israélite Universal.²¹ It is, Graetz argues, from these smaller intellectual movements that organizations such as the Alliance were born and transformations of the French Jewish community were able to take place. Graetz sees the nineteenth century as a time of dramatic change in identity for French Jews—the community as a whole had to redefine itself and individuals found new ways of relating to the community.

Graetz's model of the Jewish community during the nineteenth century is what he refers to as a relationship between “the ‘Periphery’ and the ‘Center’.”²² The “periphery” is defined as follows:

Intellectuals no longer defined their ties to Judaism through the intermediary of traditional concepts, such as respect for the Torah, the synagogue, the community, or the consistory. The symbols of the Jewish establishment had no great meaning for them. They represented a particular phenomenon in the modern history of Jews, namely, the 'periphery.' This periphery continued to relate somehow to the center, but only in ambiguous, fragile, and contradictory ways.²³

²¹ Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 1, the Alliance; 6, Saint-Simonism.

²² Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 6.

²³ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 7.

This model, while interesting to contemplate, has its drawbacks. First, in order to have a “periphery”, one must have a “center”—implying that this center exists in the first place. Graetz does not define the “center” in any concrete terms, only alluding to a more mainstream community that he can never fully place. Does holding onto Jewish traditions make one part of the “center?” Is participating in the larger Jewish community a requirement for membership in the “center?” If so, how much participation is required? These are only a few of the questions that come to mind as one contemplates who belongs to the “center.”

The “periphery” may be even harder to explain than the concept of a “center.” Does ascribing to a particular ideological movement or participating in a not so popular discourse automatically relegate one to the periphery? It is easy to agree with the assessment that Jewish identity was not easily defined during the nineteenth century, which Graetz tries to illustrate throughout his work. In the relatively rapidly changing situation that the Jews in France found themselves in, where Jews were able to choose from a myriad of different paths than they possessed previously, how did one decide who was Jewish and who was not? The two-category model that Graetz presents does not allow for the nuances of identity on the level of the self or the group. No matter how broad the “periphery” becomes, in Graetz’s scheme, it still only allows for one to fall into the “periphery” or the “center.”

The willingness of Graetz to analyze the smaller movements and discourses in the French Jewish community is important. Many books and articles have been written about

the larger trends that French Jews experienced during the nineteenth century, but the smaller trends help us understand a larger reality: that the French Jewish experience during this time was incredibly complex, with different ideologies aiding in its development. Jewish race science did not have to be a major trend in order to be important.²⁴ Even if one could say it only exists in the “periphery,” it was still a field where French Jews and non-Jews alike were compelled to confront notions of identity. While the role of an ideology such as Saint-Simonism in Graetz’s book is somewhat exaggerated (for instance he compares its influence in France as being on par with liberalism in England and nationalism in Germany), his examination of the “periphery” and intellectual discourse brings up several examples of the discourse on Jewish race science.²⁵ In particular, Graetz looks at the work of Ernest Renan and Jules Carvallo, both of whom I will discuss in more detail in coming chapters.

Was Graetz’s discussion of Jewish race science only the rare instances that Efron alluded to in *Defenders of the Race*? Or was it possible that the Jewish race science discourse in France was not quite as limited as Efron would have us believe? Mitchell B. Hart, in his article, “Race Science, Social Science and the Politics of Jewish Assimilation,” looked at the broader subject of Jews writing about the Jewish race and gave no implication that this phenomenon was necessarily limited to only a few

²⁴ One has to ask how “large” a discourse needs to be to count as a major trend. Do we base this on the number of examples we have of contributions to Jewish race science? In all of my research I have failed to see a real discussion on how we categorize racial science movements, large to small.

²⁵ Though discussed in different sections in the book, (Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 241.) gives one example of both Renan and Carvallo’s work.

countries. Many of his specific examples, such as Arthur Ruppin, are German, but nowhere does Hart claim that this discussion was the exclusive possession of Germany. Even if there was only one lone voice amongst French Jews writing on the subject of Jewish race science, it still needs to be heard. One voice would indicate that, among other suppositions, not all Jews in France felt so comfortable in their positions after emancipation that they complacently let others impose their views on the Jews as a group.

Efron and Hart both agree on the point that contributions made by Jews to Jewish race science are not merely reactionary.²⁶ The picture may appear at first glance to be one in which non-Jewish contributors to race science come out swinging and Jewish contributors are merely defending themselves; however, as we will see in later chapters, the history of Jewish race science is much more intricate. As Hart explains, the story is no longer one where Jews are the “objects” of race science before becoming “victims.”²⁷ Yes, Jews were later systematically murdered under a regime that used race science in order to further its genocidal goals, but, as we will soon see in the case of French contributions, race science was not formed with a necessarily murderous intent.

“Science did not speak of Jews univocally,” Hart wrote.²⁸ There were differing opinions by Jews and non-Jews alike as to what exactly made one a member of the Jewish race. Race scientists were particularly focused on which attributes were assigned

²⁶ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 7. Mitchell B. Hart, “Racial Science, Social Science, and the Politics of Jewish Assimilation,” *Isis* 90, No. 2 (1999): 274.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/237050>.

²⁷ Hart, “Racial Science,” 268.

²⁸ Hart, “Racial Science,” 269.

to the Jewish race. If race science cannot speak of Jews univocally, if it is made up of different conclusions, different forms of analysis, how can we study race science by only looking at a few of those conclusions and analyses? Hart continued his article by explaining that the fact that racial discourse did not have one definition of Jewishness, the Jewish race, or specifically Jewish attributes opened the door to Jewish scientists who could form their own conclusions based on the same science that was available to those with an antisemitic bent to their work.²⁹ By studying the work of Jewish contributors to Jewish race science in France, we add a rich new dimension to the race science discourse, one that sheds more light on the French Jewish experience, as well as notions of Jewish identity in France.

The last book in this short historiographical survey is one that is familiar to most historians of race science and considered a “classic” in the field: *Towards the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* by George L. Mosse. The reason for ending this survey with Mosse is that his *Towards the Final Solution* presents a history of racism that emphasizes an ideological framework rather than a national one, allowing us to “zoom out” for a moment. As a historian who focuses primarily on the German experience, Mosse does use his work to speak of the case of German racism but includes a broader examination of race science and antisemitism in other countries, including France. The idea of race was seductive to many people, as Mosse states in his book: “Racism transcended the ordinary utopia by turning myth into reality. The world racism created

²⁹ Hart, “Racial Science,” 271.

was realized because racism willed it so, despite the fact that it lacked any basis in historical, social, or political reality.”³⁰ The reason that non-Jews and Jews could use the same ideas to come to very different “scientific” conclusions about the Jewish race is precisely because racist ideas reflect societal prejudices and expectations, not demonstrable facts. This would not stop some contributors to Jewish race science, as we will soon see in the course of this history, from attempting to create demonstrations or measurements of differences in race.

The drawback of Mosse’s work is that he sees the history of racism as teleological, culminating in the Final Solution.³¹ History rarely, if ever, has clear beginning or end points. To assume that a history of racism, or even more specifically, antisemitism, “ends” with the Holocaust inhibits our ability to understand historical trends. We may refer to the genocide of six million Jews as a demonstration of virulent antisemitism of the time, but we must be careful not to assume that this marks the end of the destructive ideology used to justify mass murder. Similarly, it would be a mistake to assume there is a clear “progress” (i.e., development) of antisemitism throughout the nineteenth century that eventually leads to the Holocaust.

In this short historiographical survey we have seen that Jewish race science in France was overlooked by Efron who deemed it too “rare” to be included in his own study. However, Efron also attempted to expand the definition of the “colonized” as a way of explaining the complicated relationship between the society of various nations

³⁰ George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, (New York: Howard Fertig, 1978) xiii.

³¹ Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, xi.

and the Jews within those societies. Graetz attempted to present us with a sweeping and all-inclusive model of the French Jewish experience but this model ultimately suffers from limitations produced by his own categorization. Graetz's examination of more minor intellectual discourses, however, does shed light on the nuances of the French Jewish experience. Hart speaks of Jewish race science in Europe in general, with an emphasis on more German examples, speaking little of the situation in France, which he alludes to only briefly. His recognition of Jewish contributors to race science as not purely reactionary helps shed light on the complexity of Jewish race science. Mosse's work aids our understanding of how racism appealed to so many and how the power of prejudice could reshape the world in the eyes of those who subscribed to racist ideologies into exactly what they already believed the world was.

It is not my intention to prove or disprove the "rarity" of Jewish race science in France, as that does not do much to further our historical understanding of the subject, but rather to shed light on how Jewish race science in France was developed by its contributors. In addition, understanding this discussion of race will also further our knowledge of issues of Jewish identity and self-understanding. The contributions to Jewish race science in France from Jews and non-Jews will also serve to expand definitions of race science to include works from additional disciplines, such as history.

When studying the history of race science, a science that relies so heavily on the concept of categorization, a historian might inadvertently fall into the habit of categorizing people in such a way that it obstructs historical understanding on the part of the reader. While it would have been a fascinating intellectual exercise not to identify the

contributors as Jewish or non-Jewish, the reader might be cheated of the reality of the Jewish voice in race science in France. The voices vary greatly, and a positive reading of the Jewish race does not necessarily indicate that the contributor himself is Jewish. I only use identification in order to give credit to the French Jewish voices engaged in this discourse and not as a means of further separation. “French” and “Jewish” are not opposites; one does not begin where the other one ends. France’s Jewish population had a largely integrated experience and, I contend, Jewish race science saw a similar integration of Jewish and non-Jewish voices.

The first chapter has been an introduction to some of the issues that this paper seeks to address. The second chapter will look specifically at non-Jewish examples of contributions to Jewish race science in France. The examination of these contributions will demonstrate a pattern of belief over reason. For these contributors, race is the given; no matter what their works reveal about the ideology of race or the questions they ask, these contributors will not let go of the belief that there are definable races. In addition, these contributions will also refute any idea that the antisemitic ideas put forth by some of the contributors during the nineteenth century had a clear progression or arc. What will become clear is not all non-Jewish contributors to Jewish race science were necessarily antisemitic.

The third chapter will be an examination of the Jewish contributions to Jewish race science in France. These contributions will demonstrate a similar commitment to the idea of a Jewish race on the part of some of the Jewish contributors. Questions of identity and self-understanding will be looked at in a way that allows for the nuances of

individuals. Equally important is the examination of the role of acculturation in Jewish race science. Jews were highly integrated into the larger French society; with this integration came participation in intellectual discourses, and specifically for this paper, the discourse of race science. This participation was not just a reaction, it was a mark of how deeply Jews had integrated into French society. The fourth and final chapter serves as the conclusion. In it we will look back on the work as a whole to demonstrate to the reader issues of categorization, identity, and national frameworks.

II

Non-Jewish Contributions to Jewish Race Science

This chapter will be focused on some of the non-Jewish contributions to Jewish race science in France between 1850 and 1914. The four contributors we will be looking at are Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, Alfred Legoyt, Ernest Renan, and Édouard Drumont. As previously mentioned in the first chapter, these four contributors believe quite firmly in the ideology of race, so much so that it was, at times, more important for them to hold onto the belief in definable races than confront certain irregularities in race ideology. While these contributors sought to establish a clear definition of the Jewish race, they had to avoid specificity; assigning individuals and attributes of the Jewish race became separate questions. In the work of these four contributors, attributes were much more easily assigned. It was the question of who belonged to the Jewish race that would remain elusive.

We will evaluate the work of these four men in roughly chronological order based on publication date because the order illustrates the point made in the introduction about the ostensible “progression” of antisemitism in race science. The reader will clearly see that antisemitism in race science did not go along any established path and could not be described as escalating despite Mosse’s attempts to draw a clear line from mid-nineteenth century thinkers such as Gobineau to the Holocaust.

Before we delve into these contributions, a brief overview of France in the nineteenth century will be necessary. French academia and scientific discourse was, by

the latter half of the nineteenth-century, well-established.³² As the scope of scientific endeavors and the number of scientific institutions rose steadily during the nineteenth century in Europe, so did the number of individuals who were educated in the sciences.³³ The sciences, both natural and social, were more accessible and gradually becoming a greater part of everyday life, touching upon many facets of society and culture. We see this in the work of one of the early French pioneers of modern science fiction, Jules Verne. He helped capture the imagination of readers with tales of innovations, such as Captain Nemo's famous vessel, the *Nautilus*.³⁴ In a world that was becoming more globalized as the century moved on, the use of sciences or "scientism" to understand the world helped people to understand the rapid changes (urbanization, industrialization, globalization, and colonization) taking place in Europe and the rest of the world. Categorization was a key element in nineteenth century natural and social sciences, and this categorization lent itself well to the growing debate on races.³⁵

³² Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 1.

³³ Noah J. Efron, *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007) 167.

³⁴ Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, The Mysterious Island, Journey to the Center of the Earth, Around the World in Eighty Days*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1994), translator not mentioned in edition. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* was originally published in 1870. Though submarines were already in existence, one of the *Nautilus*' abilities did not yet exist. Even when Verne was not writing in the realm of the then fantastic (i.e. *the Earth to the Moon*), his books featured new innovations that presented exciting prospects, such as the completion of the railway "section between Rothal and Allahabad, on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway" in his novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, et al, 988.

³⁵ Barkan, "Race and the Social Sciences," 696.

Scholars of race science did not solely hail from France; many scholars throughout Europe were fascinated with the science of race. It seemed particularly important during the nineteenth century as issues of nationalism, imperialism, and xenophobia created pressure by the society who created them to also define them.³⁶ Who is a member of the nation? What is a nation? How does one justify imperialist visions? Why were there certain kinds of people who looked different from Europeans? These were some of the very real questions that scholars and race scientists alike were trying to answer. The answers they found could help clarify the confusion of racial categories, establish who was a citizen of a nation, and more importantly, what rights and social standing each category was to be allowed.

Jews were a particularly difficult problem for race scientists. Some of the Jewish race scientists attributed certain physical, mental, cultural, and other characteristics to the so-called Jewish race, but those characteristics could not be universally applied.³⁷ The French Jewish community can be difficult to define simply because of the difficulty surrounding trying to decide who was Jewish and what made them Jewish. As Marrus writes, “The end of the nineteenth century imposed a vaguely racial definition of Jewishness which was largely accepted by Jews and non-Jews alike, and which defined the quality of being Jewish in a manner distinct from religious belief or cultural identification.”³⁸ Religious belief and cultural identification were matters of choice.

³⁶ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 1.

³⁷ Raphael Patai and Jennifer Patai, *The Myth of the Jewish Race* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989) 203.

³⁸ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 3.

Though others would try to impose certain definitions of “Jewishness” on the group as a whole, and in some cases, arguably, succeeded, French Jews could still make choices regarding whether or not to accept those definitions.

As European society in general turned to the sciences which promised progress and a thriving future, many saw science as the answer to a variety of problems that society faced. Scientism was rampant; for many in the nineteenth century, application of the scientific method could only hold truth. The demonstrable proofs came in a variety of flavors, such as through the use of statistics, or the (in)famous measurement of skulls. These demonstrable proofs tended to reflect the hand of those performing the measurements or compiling the statistics. In a review of Alfred Legoyt’s “The Vitality of the Jewish Race in Europe”—a work of statistics on the Jewish race—by Michael Lévy, a Jewish scholar who will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter, Lévy commented that the mission of statistics is not just finding the facts, but indeed, interpreting them.³⁹ These interpretations never wandered far from the expectation of the interpreter, a problem not limited to the field of race science. “Self-deception is a problem of pervasive importance in science... Time and again, an experimenter’s

³⁹ Michael Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” *Annales d’Hygiène Publique et de Médecine Légale*, trans. Kendra Hendrickson, 20 série, t. XXV (Paris: J.-B. Baillière et Fils, 1866) 5. <http://m.hathitrust.org/Record/001879414>. All works translated by myself unless noted otherwise.

expectation of what he will see has shaped the data he recorded, to the detriment of the truth.”⁴⁰

It is important to make clear that though race was an important and pervasive ideology in the nineteenth century, “a belief in the reality of a race did not mean that any other race was necessarily superior to the other,” as Mosse argued.⁴¹ Categorization did not automatically equal a ranking system. Though some of the early racial writings definitely give an air of hierarchy (notably Gobineau’s, as we shall soon see), there was not always a sense that one race was necessarily better than another. Many people would identify themselves even now as being a member of a certain race but are not themselves racist. In the nineteenth century as well, though many might have espoused views that we might look back on and identify as racist, the same people might not have believed in the theory of inferior and superior races.

As scholars during the nineteenth century explored subjects of nations and races, new ideas emerged that would come to help them explain their ideas in a more “scientific” light. Graetz asserted that, “The more the positivist historicism approach took hold among intellectuals, the more important the notion of ‘race’ appeared. It was a useful reference for anyone wanting to insist on the specificity of nations without locating himself on a supernatural plane.”⁴² However, many of Graetz’s examples are from the work of Ernest Renan, who was himself a devout Christian, and was not, based on texts

⁴⁰ William Broad and Nicholas Wade, “Self-deception and gullibility,” *The Ethical Dimensions of the Biological Sciences*, ed. Ruth Ellen Bulger, Elizabeth Heitman, and Stanley Joel Reiser, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 80.

⁴¹ Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 123.

⁴² Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 241.

that this paper will soon be analyzing, overly concerned with separating himself from a “supernatural plane.” In fact, given Graetz’s lack of clarification for how he defines “supernatural,” one could easily argue that other contributors to race science, for instance, Alfred Legoyt, whom we will look at in greater detail momentarily, eluded to attributes of race that were unable to be explained by science in science’s state at the time. As we have already seen, it was widely accepted that race science suffered from “inadequate knowledge about the mysteries of the human spirit”—implying, at least in part, a somewhat supernatural basis for the science.⁴³

For some, such as Édouard Drumont, a notorious antisemite, the Jews could not be French. They simply did not belong to the nation. Joseph-Arthur Gobineau asserted that as a separate race, the Jews made up their own nation and though they did not have a land now, they once did.⁴⁴ In Gobineau’s theory, which will be discussed in further detail in a moment, categories of race, nation, and land, were inseparable. The French considered themselves a modern and scientific people, whereas, for those who did not feel that Jews could be French citizens, the Jewish race was found distinctly wanting in all areas scientific and creative.⁴⁵ Drumont, for instance, was not willing to allow the Jewish race the slightest bit of credit: “The Semite has no creative ability; instead the Aryan invents; not the slightest invention has been made by a Semite.”⁴⁶ For Drumont,

⁴³ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 14.

⁴⁴ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 59.

⁴⁵ Efron, *Science and Judaism*, 167.

⁴⁶ Édouard Drumont, *La France Juive*, Revised ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 1912) 9.

Jews were not only not French, but they had nothing to contribute to the larger French society.

Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau is perhaps the most well-known race scientist of the nineteenth century. He was born into a family of royalists, who were loyal to the Bourbons and hated the changes brought about by the French Revolution.⁴⁷ Though he styled himself as a “Count,” the title was not actually his to inherit.⁴⁸ He was horrified by the rapid social changes of the nineteenth century; of particular repugnance to him was the belief that the lower classes were in control of the state.⁴⁹ One can see why someone who thought of himself as one of the upper echelon would not be thrilled with the rapidly expanding middle class during the nineteenth century.

Gobineau would eventually hit upon a theory of the development of history and society that helped explain the changes he saw: race. In the 1850s he penned *The Inequality of Human Races*,⁵⁰ which set forth his ideas about race and categorization in general, and his views of the Jewish race in particular. The role of classism in Gobineau’s line of thinking is worth keeping in mind during any analysis of his work. As Michael D. Biddis explains in his biography of Gobineau, “Here we need to remember that Gobineau’s racism originates from his revulsion against a society that had rejected the virtues of nobility and that his social pessimism begins as fundamentally a matter of class

⁴⁷ Michael D. Biddis, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau*, (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970) 11.

⁴⁸ Biddis, *Father of Racist Ideology*, 13.

⁴⁹ Dwork and Jan Van Pelt, *Holocaust*, 20.

⁵⁰ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, viii.

consciousness.”⁵¹ In this examination of his work, we will focus on his linkage of land and race, the myth of Jewish timelessness, and fears of the degeneration of the races through mixing.

Gobineau's opinions were not as outright antisemitic as one might be led to believe by how frequently he is mentioned in histories of antisemitism and the Holocaust. This is not to say that he is constantly praising the Jewish race, on the contrary; he made many disparaging remarks on the subject of their imitative and parasitical nature.⁵²

Gobineau linked their moments of success with the times in which Jews are in possession of a land of their own:

Modern travellers know what a great deal of organized effort was required from the Israelite farmers in order to keep up the land's artificial fertility. Since the chosen race ceased to dwell in the mountains and the plains of Palestine, the well where Jacob's flocks came down to drink has been filled up with sand, Naboth's vineyard has been invaded by the desert, and the bramble flourishes in the place where stood the palace of Ahab. And what did the Jews become, in this miserable corner of the earth? They became a people that succeeded in everything it undertook, a free, strong, and intelligent people, and one which, before it lost, sword in hand, the name of an independent nation, had given as many learned men to the world as it had merchants.⁵³

In Gobineau's analysis, land was tied to race, and he implied in the quote above that a flourishing of the race meant a similar flourishing in the land. Once the Jewish race left,

⁵¹ Biddis, *Father of Racist Ideology*, 105.

⁵² Alain F. Corcos, *The Myth of the Jewish Race: A Biologist's Point of View*, (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2005) 54.

⁵³ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 59. Gobineau's view of history also appears to include a rather biblical understanding of ancient times. Biblical anthropology was by no means a minor movement in the social sciences. For more see George W. Stocking, Jr, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

the land is overtaken by sand, losing, in Gobineau's rather vivid description, all of its vitality. While the Jewish race held their land, they were clearly warriors as they lost their independence "sword in hand." How else could a race be labeled as strong unless they were also soldiers and therefore able to keep their land for so long? It is also noteworthy that Gobineau mentioned that Jews had produced as many learned men as merchants. He praised their intellectual achievement, but he used the well-known stereotype of the Jew as a merchant or banker to illustrate the point of what the Jewish race once was.⁵⁴

Despite Gobineau's presentation of the earlier portrait of a strong, warrior Jew flourishing in Palestine, he asserted that the Jewish race has always been the same. "The modifications it [the Jewish type] has undergone are of no importance and have never been enough, in any country or latitude, to change the general character of the race...the Semitic face looks exactly the same...."⁵⁵ The mythical timelessness of Jewish physicality is a concept that would reappear in other contributions to Jewish race science, as we will soon see, though Ernest Renan and others would dispute it. What is fascinating about this myth of timelessness is that Gobineau is writing at a time when Jewish identity is most definitely and obviously changing, which will be discussed in the following chapter. As Jews became more acculturated and integrated into French society, there appeared a need to explain how separate and physically different they were.

It is little surprise that a work entitled *The Inequality of Human Races* not only outlines categories of race but also establishes hierarchies among those categories.

⁵⁴ Corcos, *The Myth of the Jewish Race*, 54.

⁵⁵ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 122.

Central to Gobineau's argument was that "the idea of an original, clear-cut, and permanent inequality among the different races is one of the oldest and most widely held opinions in the world."⁵⁶ It is clear that Gobineau did not think of himself as alone in this opinion, which was reinforced by the writings of antisemitic authors and journalists in France and Germany.⁵⁷ Jews, unsurprisingly, are cast as one of the inferior races by Gobineau, due to his aforementioned opinions of them as parasites who produce nothing of substance. However, Gobineau does not explain how exactly the races are divided—there are no definitions for who belongs to what race. This problem of definition will appear again throughout all the contributions this paper will look at.

Gobineau's view of history as being determined by race led to his theory of the nineteenth century as an era of decline: the degeneration that France and all of Europe was threatened with was due to inferior races mixing with superior ones.⁵⁸ Not all race scientists would feel the same on the subject of the mixing of races, but Gobineau is decidedly against what he called "interbreeding":

The word *degenerate*, when applied to a people, means (as it ought to mean) that the people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins, continual adulterations having gradually affected the quality of that blood.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 36.

⁵⁷ Corcos, *The Myth of the Jewish Race*, 53.

⁵⁸ Linda L. Clark, *Social Darwinism in France*, (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1984) 36.

⁵⁹ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 25.

It is clear that Gobineau feared the loss of purity in the blood of the people, since, in his view, the entire civilization could collapse if blood continued to be intermingled between the different races.

Yet another fascinating aspect of Gobineau's theory of decline through blood intermingling is the role of class. One example from *The Inequality of the Human Races* cites how class distinctions are drawn immediately when one race is conquered by another:⁶⁰ in this case, the inferior, conquered race becomes the lower class. His claim was that it was only if the conqueror class preserved its race and did not mix with the lower class (i.e., the inferior race) that the superior race could hope to hold onto power.⁶¹

Though Gobineau is well-known to historians of race science, there is some debate about his actual prominence. In his *Towards the Final Solution*, Mosse is quick to point out, that many of Gobineau's ideas are unoriginal and drawn from others, calling him "a synthesizer" but does discuss the notable influence of Gobineau.⁶² Stephen Jay Gould goes so far as to call Gobineau "the granddaddy of modern scientific racism" in his work *The Mismeasure of Man*.⁶³ On the other hand, Efron thought that the role of Gobineau's work in the field has been greatly exaggerated and was pleased with Mosse's assessment of Gobineau's work, as it did not credit Gobineau as the progenitor of racist ideology.⁶⁴ Linda L. Clark writes that Gobineau was not as widely read in France, even

⁶⁰ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 28.

⁶¹ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 31.

⁶² Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 51-60.

⁶³ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, Revised and Expanded ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 49.

⁶⁴ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 187, fn 31.

though a second edition of *The Inequality of Human Races* was published in 1884. His influence was wider in Germany, a key point in both her and Mosse's assessment of how influential Gobineau was in racist thought.⁶⁵ However prominent he may or may not have been for the scientific and academic communities in France, Gobineau theory of race gives us several points to consider moving forward.

Gobineau's theory of race reflected certain fears about sexual taboos concerned with "interbreeding" people from different, as he saw them, races or classes, which he thought led to the degeneration of superior races. The way in which class is integrated into his theory of race feeds into his ideas about a natural hierarchy. Gobineau's theory also included a description of the Jewish race which placed it firmly in the category of one of the inferior races. He ascribed to them a timeless quality, a sense that the Jewish race had been the same since ancient times. Gobineau also linked race and land together, which implied heavily that when a race thrives, so does the land.

A much more positive image of the Jewish race was put forth by Alfred Legoyt. Legoyt was a very successful statistician, until the end of the Second Empire in 1870, he headed the *Statistique générale de la France* and was the perpetual secretary of the Paris Statistical Society.⁶⁶ As part of his position in government, Legoyt organized the census of France in 1856, 1861, and 1866.⁶⁷ During the nineteenth century, emigration from

⁶⁵ Clark, *Social Darwinism in France*, 148.

⁶⁶ François Weil, "The French State and Transoceanic Emigration," *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation*, ed. Nancy L. Green and François Weil, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007) 120.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

France was a popular issue as those opposed to emigration felt that it weakened the population when native “Frenchmen” left the country.⁶⁸ Legoyt did not share this opinion.⁶⁹ This tells us that Legoyt was not as concerned with issues of a “weakening” population as someone like Gobineau was.

In his 1865 work, “The Vitality of the Jewish Race in Europe,” he turned to, predictably enough, the realm of statistics in order to draw his conclusions about the Jewish race. The piece began by designating the history of the Jews as being one of the “major episodes of modern civilization.”⁷⁰ Legoyt, like Gobineau, has a fascination with the very history of the Jewish race, and Legoyt uses a combination of history and statistics in order to explain certain supposed attributes of the Jewish race. One major factor of the Jewish race, for Legoyt, was, “Their stubborn fight and victory against relentless persecution, motivated by both religious hatred and the desire to take ownership of their immense wealth.”⁷¹ Legoyt saw the Jewish race as one that has and will continue to survive.

From the quote above we can assume that, like others, including many antisemites, he saw the Jewish race as a particularly wealthy. Despite his expressions of admiration, Legoyt evidently relied uncritically on stereotypes. While Legoyt attributed this wealth to a number of historical factors, and “admirable and healthy” ideas, these

⁶⁸ Weil, “The French State,” 119.

⁶⁹ Weil, “The French State,” 120.

⁷⁰ Legoyt, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 3.

⁷¹ Ibid.

generalizations were still based more on popular prejudices than reality.⁷² For most people, wealth could be considered a boon, but the wealthy stereotype can also lead to ideas that Jews' supposed financial influence would lead to trouble or to manipulations of powerful people or governments.⁷³ As we have already seen from an earlier quote from Édouard Drumont, some would attribute the success of any member of the Jewish community as having been ill-gotten gains.

What did Legoyt see as the reason for the Jewish race's ability to survive? He referred to it as "some energetic vitality, greater than that of these [outside] races."⁷⁴ This vitality was attributed to some kind of "force" that the anthropologists of his time had proposed.⁷⁵ And here is where we see a glimpse of a concept alluded to earlier: that there were concepts of race that had not yet been verified by scientific thought, but written of as though there would be proof of such concepts. This "vitality," which gives the aura of an almost supernatural force, was the reason Legoyt thought that Jews had a history of surviving and the "privilege" of acclimatizing "on all points of the globe."⁷⁶ Science could perhaps not yet explain this vitality but it was an observable phenomenon for

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 79-109. In chapter three, "Rothschild, King of the Jews," Graetz examined both the positive and negative aspects of the mythology surrounding the Rothschild. These myths revolved around the well-known wealth of the Rothschild.

⁷⁴ Legoyt, "De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe," 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid. To be clear, Legoyt does not actually name which anthropologists he is referring to in particular.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Legoyt. How else could you explain a race with such a long history of suffering that still, in some cases, clung to its traditions and religions, and was still a distinct group?

According to Legoyt, this vitality was an advantage for members of the Jewish race, one that they had over “indigenous populations, probably by preserving them from dangerous influences that relate to climate, soil, and the hygienic and moral conditions of the country where he lives.”⁷⁷ One wonders if a war or struggle were to break out among the races, such as Gobineau feared might happen, what outcome Legoyt would have predicted, given his conclusion about a Jewish advantage over “indigenous” races.

Legoyt’s study went on to look at the populations of Jews in different countries and regions of the world. In France, he reports that 2.2% of the population “belonged to the Israelite religion.”⁷⁸ This is significant because his report is seemingly based on those that identified themselves as *religiously* Jewish. He has no additional numbers that mention identification of a different sort. While his work revolves around this concept of a Jewish race, Legoyt does not appear to have any other basis of identification other than that of religion. Jews might have identified themselves as racially or culturally Jewish but not religiously so. As we have discussed, the definition of who was part of a race, especially that of the Jewish race is a subject that was undecided by contributors to race science and at times, outright avoided. There is an absence of definition in the case of Legoyt, though his attempt to identify the Jewish race through religious identification at least goes somewhat further than we saw in the case of Gobineau.

⁷⁷ Legoyt, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 3.

⁷⁸ Legoyt, “De la Vitalité de la Race Juive en Europe,” 7.

Later in this study of statistics, Legoyt delved into the subject of insanity and suicide among the Jews, particularly to answer the question of whether suicide rates among Jews were higher than those among adherents of other religions.⁷⁹ He introduced the section by first lamenting the lack of official documents concerned with the movements of the Jewish population in general. Legoyt asserted that as a direct result, general conclusions about the cases of insanity and suicide among members of the Jewish race were very difficult to make. The question that Legoyt wanted to address was whether or not “a difference of religion (which for the Jews is further complicated by a question of race) exerts any influence on the frequency of this disease.”⁸⁰ What Legoyt does not seem to consider is how the alienation that could drive an individual to suicide could be caused by his or her rejection by mainstream society based on religious affiliation. His statistical analysis looked at different European cities; the situation for Jews differ greatly in this time period between cities such as Paris and Vienna. These statistics are lacking in consideration of societal differences, legal status, economic status, and other important categories. A chart determining whether or not a member of a certain religion is more likely to commit suicide tells us very little about the individuals who make up those numbers.

Moreover, these statistics are only suicides where the victim was religiously identified as a Jew. Legoyt himself mentioned that the case is further complicated by the fact that, as Legoyt contended, Jews do not just have the religious factor to contend with,

⁷⁹ Legoyt, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 21.

⁸⁰ Legoyt, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 21-22.

but a racial one as well. The comparisons with other religions such as Catholicism is problematic even from his own standpoint as no one considered Catholics to be a race as well. His conclusion that Jews have generally fewer suicides in comparison with the Protestant and Catholic populations is intriguing, but he can only speculate on what that conclusion means outside of a chart.⁸¹ “Greater development of religious feelings? Greater moral force, a greater ability to fight against the strong tests of life? A strong attachment to the family and domestic hearth? All hypotheses are permitted.”⁸² And indeed, they would have to be given the vague parameters of context and identity.

In his work, Legoyt has attempted to come up with a means of identifying the Jewish race, but cannot come up with anything more than a religious definition. Legoyt’s statistical work also tackled the question of suicide rates among the Jewish race. His findings showed that they were not more likely to commit suicide than members of other religions, however, his statistical findings were fraught with problems, not least of which was as Legoyt admitted, that he did not consider members of the Jewish religion to be strictly the same categories as other religions, due to, as he saw it, the racial component to their identification. Legoyt’s statistical work also lacked means of individual nuance, so the reader would have no way of knowing if suicides that did occur had to do with religion or other factors such as class or mental health.

We now move away from statistics in order to look at the work of Ernest Renan. Renan was a scholar whose work is not relegated to one particular discipline though a

⁸¹ Legoyt, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 22.

⁸² Legoyt, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 23.

great deal of his work dealt with history and linguistics.⁸³ Renan's work reflected a preoccupation with a racist ideology; his work on history, like Gobineau's, was also framed in terms of race.⁸⁴ In this analysis of Renan's work, we will see a continuing reluctance to actually confront a precise definition of the Jewish race. In addition, we will see that he did not consider the Jewish race as pure or possessing the timeless quality that Gobineau attributed to them.

Ernest Renan was quite vocal in his disagreement with some of Gobineau's theories. He did not believe in the concept of pure races and went so far as to say that such labels could easily be used by politics in a very dangerous manner by applying to groups whatever label seemed most convenient.⁸⁵ He was firm in his position that there was no pure Jewish race, and claimed that "it is my conviction that in the Jewish population as it exists today there is a considerable element of non-Jewish blood."⁸⁶ This, however, did not stop him from believing in the idea of race, despite his assertion that all races were mixed. He avoided the question of determination when it came to writing about different groups of people, specifically, one can assume, because he would have been hard-pressed to come up with any real means of biological identification. Renan stated a belief that Semites and Aryans were physically similar (presumably based on

⁸³ Joan Leopold, "Ernest Renan (1823-1892): From Linguistics and Psychology to Racial Ideology (1840s to 1860s)," *Historiographia Linguistica*, Vol. 37, Issue 1/2, (2010) 31. Communication & Mass Media Complete, EBSCOhost.

⁸⁴ Leopold, "Ernest Renan," 47.

⁸⁵ Dwork and Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust*, 21.

⁸⁶ Ernest Renan, "Judaism: Race or Religion," *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, trans. Robert Pick, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 309.

skin color), and together constituted the white race.⁸⁷ Even with the supposition that Semites were part of the white race, one gets the feeling from Renan's work that he does not hold them in the same regard as he is quick to denigrate the Semitic race, as he refers to it.

As Renan did not believe in the concept of pure races, one might presume that his work would reflect a more egalitarian view than Gobineau's. However, Renan was very clear that he subscribed to a hierarchical view of human races. As he states, "The Semitic race, compared to the Indo-European, truly represents an inferior composite of human race."⁸⁸ The Indo-Europeans, while mixed just as the Semites are, are made up of different, much more racially superior ingredients than the Semites. This was not so much a physical inferiority but a mental one. "Can you imagine an Aristotle or a Kant arising from among the Semitic peoples?" Renan asked.⁸⁹ He made it quite clear that he was unable to imagine such a phenomenon; any works that might be used to demonstrate any intellectual or artistic exercises on the part of the Jews are summarily dismissed. The Book of Job, for instance, represented their "poverty of imagination," because God never gave an adequate explanation to Job for his actions.⁹⁰

When we look at some of Renan's theories of history, we see a somewhat contradictory attitude. The Semitic peoples are mental inferiors, incapable of matching the achievements of some of the other races, but Renan feels that their history is well

⁸⁷ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 12-13.

⁸⁸ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 215.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 217.

worth studying. “For a philosophic mind, that is to say for one engrossed in the origins of things, there are not more than three histories of real interest in the past of humanity: Greek history, the history of Israel, and Roman history.”⁹¹ Renan asserted that these three civilizations were responsible for modern civilization and, in the case of the Israelites, credited their religious fervor with calling forth ideas of social justice:

They were fanatics in the cause of social justice, and loudly proclaimed that if the world was not just or capable of becoming so, it had better be destroyed—a view which, if utterly wrong, was very fertile in results, for, like all the doctrines of despair, such as the Russian nihilism of the present day, it led to deeds of heroism and brought about a grand awakening of the forces of humanity. The founders of Christianity, who were the direct successors of the prophets, spent their strength in an incessant call for the end of the world, and, strange to say, did in reality transform the world.⁹²

His reading of history suggested a people who fulfilled their purpose with the advent of Christianity. The credit Renan does give the ancient Israelites for their “grand awakening of the forces of humanity” is not extended to modern Jews. Renan believes that the Jews who regard the ancient Israelites as their ancestors are under a “curious ethnographic apprehension.”⁹³ Renan himself says that his history of Israel will be “distasteful to two classes of persons: first of all, to the uncompromising Israelites,” as they will be dissatisfied with an outsider writing their history.⁹⁴ From this passage, perhaps Renan

⁹¹ Ernest Renan, *History of the People of Israel: Till the Time of King David*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896) vii. Translated by John Henry Allen.

⁹² Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, viii.

⁹³ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, xiv.

⁹⁴ Ibid. The other class of person who Renan believes will be dissatisfied with his historical work are those “narrow-minded persons who have the French defect of not allowing that it is possible to write the history of times concerning which one has not a series of material facts to relate.” Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, xvi.

was aware of Jewish scholars and their criticisms involving works written with the Jews as their subjects.

While Renan and Gobineau demonstrated their less than enthusiastic opinions of the Jewish race, I would argue that they did not reach the level of venomous antisemitism that our next figure attained. Édouard Drumont was an author and regular contributor to *Le Monde*, a Catholic publication.⁹⁵ His antisemitism was bound up in religious animosity and perceptions that Jews were taking over parts of French society, such as the banking system.⁹⁶ Drumont's infamous *La France Juive* (1886) couched its argument in racial terms. While a figure like Alfred Legoyt has less easily discerned biases, Drumont's are unavoidable, but the historian's task is to analyze his antisemitism to see how his ideas about the Jewish race enable us to view the landscape of Jewish race science in France with sharper focus.

Unlike Gobineau's *Inequality*, *La France Juive* was widely read in France and sold over 100,000 copies in its first year.⁹⁷ Drumont's work is an expression of antisemitic fears that the Jews had taken over France, hence the title of the book. Drumont opened his first chapter with the following bald statement: "We must, at the beginning of this study, try to analyze this particular being, who lives so completely different from other beings: the Jew."⁹⁸ In Drumont's eyes, there is no "Other" quite like the Jews. Indeed, his language gives them the air of being somehow not quite human. The

⁹⁵ Michel Winock, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and Fascism in France*, trans. Jane Marie Todd, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 86.

⁹⁶ Winock, *Nationalism*, 88.

⁹⁷ Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 140.

⁹⁸ Drumont, *La France Juive*, 3.

racess are distinct and separate for Drumont, besides being quite easy to tell apart from each other.

In a book well known for its antisemitic sentiments, Drumont also took time to discuss the Aryan race as well. Drumont praised the Aryan race, which he saw as being in “sole possession of justice, the sentiment of liberty, and the conception of Beauty.”⁹⁹ Aryans are responsible for all that is good in the world: poetry, agriculture, and brave acts of war.¹⁰⁰ Drumont does not address any sources that would disagree with his thesis; he does not seem the least bit concerned with facts, even though as a Catholic, he must have been familiar with the Hebrew Bible in the form of the Old Testament, which would seem to contradict his assertion that Aryans were the only people with a sense of justice and a conception of, at least, literary beauty.¹⁰¹ Indeed, he seemingly forgot both the various mentions of agriculture and the liberal use of poetry also present in the Hebrew Bible.

As one might suspect of Drumont’s worldview, Jews are, of course, the possessors of the evils of the world and are “mercantile, greedy, intriguing, subtle, and cunning.”¹⁰² They are creatures of deception, at every turn trying to undermine the Aryan race. His ideas about conspiracies on the part of the Jews would be echoed in future

⁹⁹ Drumont, *La France Juive*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Drumont, *La France Juive*, 9.

¹⁰¹ Edouard Drumont, “Jewish France,” *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, trans. J. Green, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 316.

¹⁰² Drumont, *La France Juive*, 9.

antisemitic tracts.¹⁰³ His language and fears are expressed, just as they were with Renan, in terms of race rather than religious prejudice. Though he is by no means the originator of antisemitism in France, this examination of his work does require a look at the broader question of antisemitism in France.

France's reputation for being less racist than other nations tied up in the idea that the French were also less antisemitic than other countries. His historical narrative seems to originate from around the time of the Franco-Prussian War, during which antisemitism was labeled by some in French society as a “German disease” that was infecting the citizenry.¹⁰⁴ It is rather difficult to say that antisemitism was brought over during the Franco-Prussian War. The Franco-Prussian War has been historically credited for a surge of antisemitic sentiment in France during the latter half of the nineteenth century, possibly related to rumors circulated about a Jewish “stab in the back.”¹⁰⁵

Some might see Jewish race science, especially those contributions that are mainly concerned with the negative aspects of the Jewish race, as a scientific justification that antisemites could use. Antisemites, however, did not appear to be in any special need of “proof” for what they are said or believed, since antisemitic accusations generally had very little basis in reality. Jewish race science could easily be used by antisemites, but it was not necessary to their overall agenda; quite simply, Jewish race science gave scientific credence for conclusions that antisemites had already come to themselves. The

¹⁰³ For example, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, first published in 1903. <https://archive.org/details/TheProtocolsOfTheLearnedEldersOfZion>.

¹⁰⁴ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 275.

move to the use of science reflects, of course, the fascination with science during the nineteenth century that we have already discussed. Science was a part of so many different facets of life that it is unsurprising that antisemites adapted its use to their own devices.

Gobineau, Renan, and Drumont were by no means the only people writing in France on the Jewish race, nor were their accusations merely repeated by others. Many attributed a pathological hysteria to Jews, whom they thought of a distinctly “effeminate race.”¹⁰⁶ The comparison of men of a lesser race with women of a superior race is not unusual in the field of race science.¹⁰⁷ This “effeminate” quality served to lessen the males of one race and make them far less of a threat since women were (and still are, to some extent) considered weaker physically and mentally. The mental state of the Jews was considered quite precarious and they were seen as highly susceptible to nervous disorders.¹⁰⁸

René Verneau, who was a professor of anthropology at the Museum d’Histoire Naturelle, wrote,

“He is only distinguishable by his lack of cleanliness, his cupidity, his obsequious character...Everywhere their morality is summed up in the idea that the world belongs to the people of God. Whatever infidels possess have been taken from the Jews. The latter are within their rights to recover it by deceit since they cannot do so by force.”^{109 110}

¹⁰⁶ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 7.

¹⁰⁷ Stepan, “Race and Gender,” 262.

¹⁰⁸ Barzun, *RACE*, 193.

¹⁰⁹ Rene Verneau, 25 April, 1852 – 7 January, 1938, 12

¹¹⁰ Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 274.

On close examination, Verneau has suggested that other than a general lack of cleanliness and a “shady” disposition, Jews are physically indistinguishable from other people. He also explains the Jews’ ostensible deceitfulness, which stems from their belief that they are the chosen people and therefore the world belongs to them.

Jews may not have always been cast in a negative light by race scientists but the descriptions tended towards the extremes. As Sander Gilman argues, “Jews are either mad, ill, and immoral or brilliant, healthy, and virtuous.”¹¹¹ Could “brilliance” be related to Jews’ ostensible mental instability? The concept of genius—implied by “brilliance”—implies that Jews as a group do not have a “normal” state of mental health: either they are suffering from various nervous disorders or they are having fits of genius. “The Jews” are grouped into what Sander Gilman describes as a “unitary category with notions of ‘health’ and ‘illness’.”¹¹² It is in this environment that Jews contributing to Jewish race science would have to work. An environment of, at times, extreme opinions, of outright hostility; an environment where fully acculturated Jews, whether or not they primarily identified as Jewish or French, were sometimes cast as figures of ridicule.¹¹³

In this chapter we have focused on the work of four non-Jewish contributors to race science, Gobineau, Legoyt, Renan, and Drumont, besides looking briefly at a few other examples. We have seen that all four subscribed to the idea of race, even though

¹¹¹ Sander Gilman, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) 33.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Marion A. Schmid, “The Jewish Question in *A la recherche du temps perdu* in the Light of Nineteenth-Century Discourses on Race”, *Neophilologus* 83, No. 1 (January, 1999) 34. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1004313813982>.

they had different ideas about what form that idea took. None of these contributors gave a precise definition to the Jewish race; either they avoided the question altogether, or gave only a cursory definition, as was the case in Legoyt's work, where the only identifier for the Jewish race he presented us was that of religion. Despite this imprecision, all four were firmly committed to the idea that there was in fact a distinct Jewish race. In addition, we saw that antisemitism did not have a uniform relationship to Jewish race science, nor did antisemitic attitudes necessarily intensify with the passage of time. While Gobineau's *Inequality* leaves little doubt that he harbored prejudices against the Jews, Legoyt's work reflected a much more positive outlook on the Jewish race, one that full of praise for both their present position and their history. Renan's work, which followed these two works chronologically, illustrated a rather paltry view of the present state of Jews, though he was clearly fascinated with the race of ancient Israelites. Drumont's contribution to Jewish race science was rife with antisemitic fervor. With these points in mind, we will now turn to the Jewish contributions to Jewish race science in France.

III

Jewish Contributions to Jewish Race Science

In this chapter we will look at contributions to race science by French Jews from 1850 to 1914. Our examination will include a review of Legoyt's "The Vitality of the Jewish Race in Europe," examined in the last chapter, several articles from the *Revue des études juives*, and the work of Jules Carvallo. This analysis will focus on issues surrounding identity for French Jews during this time period, as race, scientifically described, served as one form of identification for some Jews in France. While Efron posited the theory that Jews in France were so integrated that they did not bother to engage in the question of the Jewish race, the sources reveal that the level of integration of the Jews in France made it possible for Jewish scholars to feel comfortable engaging in the discourse of race. Before examining some of the Jewish contributions to Jewish race science, we will first look at some of the larger issues that the Jewish community was dealing with during the nineteenth century.

Since their emancipation, French Jews had gradually become more and more acculturated. It is important to make a distinction here between acculturation and assimilation. Assimilation implies that Jews were not given a choice in the matter and that once assimilated, they left behind all religious and cultural ties to appear more "French." This was not the case. The process of acculturation was a voluntary one, one in which French Jews could actively participate in. As one historian explained, "Jewish communal leaders and intellectuals were equally concerned with proving to the broader

French society that the Jews were in fact fully capable of acculturation.”¹¹⁴ While some French Jews did cut ties with their Jewish communities, others actually became more deeply involved with the Jewish community.

The French Jewish community, as mentioned before, began to disperse and acculturate with the larger society around them. These Jews wished to maintain a distinction between their community and the rest of French society. As Birnbaum argues, “Throughout the nineteenth century, they maintained their ‘Jewishness’ and strongly rejected mass out-conversion, self-hatred, and intermarriage.”¹¹⁵ In other words, despite attempts at a homogenous national identity, there were still for some Jews, distinctive Jewish identities—whether they were cultural, religious, or racial.

Acculturation meant participation in the larger society. Many Jews in France thought they could easily take on the French national identity without jeopardizing their identity as Jews—one facet of what Phyllis Cohen Albert called “an additive, rather than substitutive, acculturation.”¹¹⁶ There were, however, some Christian Frenchmen who felt that Jews could not be labeled as French: that Jews could not acculturate because they had no real ties to France. As one antisemitic writer pointed out, “For us, *la patrie* is our

¹¹⁴ Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth-Century France*, (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008) 17.

¹¹⁵ Pierre Birnbaum, “Is the French Model in Decline?” *Jewry between Tradition and Secularism, Europe and Israel Compared*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Thomas Gergely, and Yosef Gorny, (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 14.

¹¹⁶ Phyllis Cohen Albert, “Israelite and Jew: how did nineteenth-century French Jews understand assimilation?” *Assimilation and community: The Jews in nineteenth-century Europe*, ed. Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 90.

soil and our ancestors, the land of the dead. For them, it is the place where their self-interest is best-pursued.”¹¹⁷ Antisemites argued that the only ties Jews possessed were blood ties to each other and therefore were naturally (one might go so far as to say biologically) incapable of being loyal to the French nation.¹¹⁸

Because the concept of assimilation appeared attractive to the French, it found expression as a governing principle, if not practice, during most periods of French Colonial history.”¹¹⁹ Thus the French found themselves in an awkward position. By supporting assimilation (or acculturation), they were theoretically creating a more harmonious environment by spreading French culture, French education, and the French language itself to all people whom the French government ruled. If people considered themselves French and behaved accordingly, they were less likely to make trouble for the French. This policy was not exclusive to the colonies: “France’s policy towards its cultural and ethnic minorities was one of cultural assimilation...In so far as the national tradition saw political and cultural unity as closely linked, any demonstration of separate identity, whether Breton, Provençal, or Jewish, was considered a threat to national unity.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 35.

¹¹⁸ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 10.

¹²⁰ Dominique Schnapper, “*Israélites and Juifs: New Jewish Identities in France*,” *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, ed. Jonathan Webber, (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994) 171.

Despite extensive assimilation, French Jews remained, to some, as outsiders. As historian Michel Winock explained, “To be French, people were told at the time, meant above all not being Jewish.”¹²¹ The outsider treatment included accusations that the French Jews were behind any kind of misfortune. One example of this is the infamous Dreyfus Affair, sparked by the conviction of Alfred Dreyfus for treason in 1894.¹²² Despite evidence of a high-level cover up and the eventual overturning of the conviction, antisemites in France clung firmly to the belief that Dreyfus was in fact guilty of treason.¹²³ While historians such as Paula Hyman have shown that the eventual outcome in fact only confirmed the confidence that French Jews had in their government, the willingness of both the public and the legal system to condemn an innocent man because of his Jewish background has disturbing implications about French society as regards the Jews.¹²⁴ With these issues concerning identity, acculturation, and integration in mind, we turn now to our Jewish contributors to race science.

We are fortunate in the case of Legoyt’s work as we have a review that was published in the *Annales d’Hygiene Publique et de Médecine Légale* in 1866, from a Jewish individual named Michael Lévy to examine. Lévy raised serious questions about the use of statistics in the introduction to his review. If “facts are reflected in the figures” then one should take a long time to look over and question these numbers because the

¹²¹ Winock, *Nationalism*, 57.

¹²² Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 27.

¹²³ Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 28.

¹²⁴ Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 34.

interpretation can end in errors or truths.¹²⁵ The origins of the numbers, along with the reasoning behind the conclusions both need to be examined because otherwise, views “false or hazardous” may be reached.¹²⁶ From this review alone we learn that there is not an unquestioning belief in statistical data on the races, or for that matter, in general. Numbers may not lie, but what Lévy is worried about is that those that interpreters of those numbers most certain can or at best, be seriously misled.

Despite what we might have expected, after expatiating on the dangers of statistics, Lévy goes on to praise Legoyt, stating that he is presenting “the most labor intensive and most integrated statistics in France.”¹²⁷ Thanks to the work that Legoyt has done, Lévy argues that the government has a “starting point for the desired social hygiene.”¹²⁸ “Social hygiene” is a difficult phrase to define, precisely because of its vagaries. It was a way of looking at society that encompassed both an emphasis on popular fears of certain diseases (especially those acquired “socially,” i.e. syphilis) and the more widespread fear of the ever-changing and vague problem of degeneration.¹²⁹ Social hygiene was meant to fight the many health concerns of the general population. Lévy does not give us any examples as to how he thinks the government should translate this information into social hygiene policies.

¹²⁵ Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe”, 5.

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe”, 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, 53.

Lévy adhered to the theory of a Jewish race, and his review explained the properties of race as he understood them. “Every human race has an organic and dynamic specificity,” one which carries with it all manner of “abilities and immunities.”¹³⁰ This in turn makes each representative of that race different from those of other races, even though they may live in the same environment.¹³¹ He was in agreement with Legoyt as far as the “vitality” of the Jewish race and noted that another scholar named Larrey had considered the Semitic race “the most perfect.”¹³² It seems understandable to us that Lévy would praise so highly a scholar whose work does not seem at all hostile to Jews as a group. However, despite his early stated concerns about the interpretation of statisticians, Lévy does not seem overly concerned that Legoyt’s interpretations may be colored by a personal set of opinions or beliefs. There seems to be little doubt on his part that Legoyt “has a healthy appreciation of the facts.”¹³³

We move now to more Jewish voices on the subject of race. As previously mentioned, the nineteenth century saw rapid changes in Jewish identity. “All over Europe, Jews had obviously taken part in the great nineteenth century movements for social and scientific ‘progress’—ranging from socialism to psychoanalysis—out of proportion to their numbers.”¹³⁴ Jews all over Europe were getting involved in the sciences. Where a Jewish individual might have felt tied down or restricted in a more

¹³⁰ Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 7.

¹³¹ Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 7.

¹³² Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 9.

¹³³ Lévy, “De la vitalité de la race juive en Europe,” 8.

¹³⁴ Stephen A. Schuker, “Origins of the ‘Jewish Problem’ in the Third Republic”, *The Jews in Modern France*, ed. Frances Malino and Bernard Wasserstein (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985) 154.

traditional community, that same Jewish individual might come to see in science opportunities to pursue different avenues of thought. Science could conceivably help to reconcile a problem that many Jews faced in this modern era: one might have renounced all religious and cultural ties yet still think of oneself as a Jew.

It becomes clear that for Jews the physical tie was largely an afterthought, an attempt on their part to validate in a scientific way what their experience and emotions told them was true—that there was some basic Jewish identity. Jews expressed this feeling of Jewish identification by resorting to the familiar vocabulary which biology had recently provided.¹³⁵

It is little wonder that in a world where many people saw such designations as national and race as “natural” categories, the use of these natural categories were used as one way of determining a basic identity. In the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair, one Jewish individual wrote that, “I have felt the need to connect myself to an exciting whole, to a past, to a tradition. The past I have discovered, sleeping really in the very depths of my being, is the past of my race.”¹³⁶ Race was one possible expression of identity. In this understanding of Jewishness, one might lose ties to the Jewish community or the synagogue, but one could not abandon who one really were. Identity, for many people in the nineteenth century, was not something that could be changed, a property that also described racial designations. For those contributing to race science, science could confirm truths that Jews had already formed about themselves, just as it confirmed what antisemites already believed about Jews.

¹³⁵ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 26.

¹³⁶ Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 36.

This process of forming a racial identity was made easier by the fact that race scientists were unable to fix a definition of the Jewish race—such as what attributes the Jewish race possessed; nor were they in agreement about where the Jewish race fit into the hierarchy of all races.¹³⁷ As we saw, Gobineau labeled the Jewish race as inferior but Legoyt’s work implies that he thought the race was among the superior. Without any established “facts,” Jews were able to contribute their own ideas to the image of the Jewish race.¹³⁸ This included, as we will soon see, a new light cast on the “timelessness” of the Jewish race and even, in the case of Jules Carvallo’s work, a sense of racial superiority. In other words, the unique characteristics of the Jewish race were not developed by antisemites alone; this was a racial identity that Jews also formed and stood by.¹³⁹

In general, it seemed that the concept of race was finding its way further and further into Jewish communities. For instance, the use of race as an identifier by Jewish authors, such as Jules Carvallo and Joseph Salvador, was only growing more popular as the nineteenth century moved on.¹⁴⁰ Interest in race was become commonplace for Jews in France, as a form of identity and as an area of study. Indeed, as more Jews were able to enter into higher education, an increasing number of Jews, became interested in the academic field of “Jewish studies.”¹⁴¹ Since many of these Jewish scholars were not

¹³⁷ Hart, “Racial Science,” 271.

¹³⁸ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 10.

¹³⁹ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 216.

¹⁴¹ Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 117.

primarily identifying their course of study as “Jewish studies,” one might assume that this was not a large area of interest.

The position of Jews in French society, mirrored by that of Jewish scholars in the academy, did not in fact justify a specific—still less exclusive—investment in this area...in France there was not the same need for acceptance on the part of emancipated Jewish scholars, who were socially and professional integrated, and so the study of Judaism remained a secondary pursuit.¹⁴²

Jews’ integrated status in French society essentially meant that they felt no special need to make Jewish studies a primary field of study, though the field was still of interest to a small group of scholars.

In 1880 a group of Jewish scholars, including James Darmesteter, a professor of Hindu civilization, Théodore Reinach, a religious history professor, and Joseph Halévy, a Hebraist, established the Société des Études Juives,¹⁴³ which in that same year began publishing a journal, *Revue des études juives*.¹⁴⁴ The articles in this journal do not conform to a narrower definition of the study of race science and could easily be overlooked by those looking for only works of the pseudo-biological variety. However, if we go back to that expanded definition of race science that I outlined earlier, we open avenues to new ways of thinking about the discourse of race science, especially if we analyze those contributions based on the social sciences, such as history, psychology, or anthropology. If the term race was so all-encompassing in the time period we are examining, then we must allow for a more all-encompassing approach to race science.

¹⁴² Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 132.

¹⁴³ Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 23.

¹⁴⁴ Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 132.

During the journal's inaugural year of 1880, racial language crept into different articles. An article on ancient Jewish history contained speculation about royalty having descended from blood lines that were of a “pure race.”¹⁴⁵ More than once do we see speculation about an ancient Jewish race, one that no doubt some felt modern Jews descended from.¹⁴⁶ While the concept of race that the people of the nineteenth century were familiar with was a modern concept, this did not stop many who studied race science from trying to find signs that the races as they knew them today had always existed. The ancient and aforementioned “timeless” quality of a race gave it more historical and scientific backing by lending credence to the idea that these were natural categories that had formed long ago. Some of these scholars tried to establish the historical backing for the idea that they had already accepted as true.

In an article on Tacitus, one scholar, C. Thiaccourt, analyzed the work of that well-known Roman historian to correct errors that Tacitus had made about the Jewish race.¹⁴⁷ In a way, the scholar let readers know, this is not Tacitus' fault, because “his errors are a result of his method, which relies on his views rather than pure science.”¹⁴⁸ In Thiaccourt's view, pure science does not allow for errors; Tacitus is not using scientific methodologies and therefore does not contain many “facts.” Perceptions in the past of the Jewish race

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Halévy, “Cyrus et le retour de l'exil”, *Revue des études juives* 1, (1880): 17. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ C. Thiaccourt, “Ce que Tacite dit des Juifs au commencement du livre V des *Histoires*”, *Revue des études juives* 19, (1889): 57.

<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

could be faulty and thus, one assumes, perceptions in 1889 could also have been found wanting. Thiacourt's main argument is that Tacitus' sources are "untruthful" and thus his history is "contradictory."¹⁴⁹ Tacitus does not have the benefit of science to help him evaluate his own source material, which was why his own work contains so many errors about the Jewish race. At the end of the article, Thiacourt concluded that the problem with Tacitus' method was also based on Tacitus' origin; Tacitus was a Roman and not a Greek—which causes him to follow his own reasoning rather than seeking out the truth.¹⁵⁰

Articles on more recent historical matters also spoke of the Jewish race. In an article by Abraham Cahen, a rabbi, on the French emancipation of the Jews, the author spoke of the difficulties and prejudices the Jews in France faced. His article went on to explain that the prejudices gave way to tolerance: "The idea of seeing the Jews as something other than a perverse and detestable race made headway despite the opposition."¹⁵¹ It is striking that in this time period, with antisemitic feeling in French society, Cahen chose to write a history of French Jews gaining equal citizenship despite strong prejudices against them. A journal such as this is meant to be read by academics; it is possible that Cahen might have hoped non-Jewish academics were also reading carefully.

¹⁴⁹ Thiacourt, "Tacite," 58.

¹⁵⁰ Thiacourt, "Tacite," 74.

¹⁵¹ Abraham Cahen, "L'émancipation des Juifs devant la Société royale des Sciences et Arts de Metz en 1787 et M. Roederer", *Revue des études juives* 1, (1880): 84. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

Some of these scholars sought to establish a sense of historical continuity that bound the Jewish race together. “What strikes us,” Léon Bardinet wrote, “is the fidelity to the obstinate attachment that the Jewish race has for 'old institutions'.”¹⁵² Though there were French Jews who sought new, more “modern” paths, there were also those French Jews who turned to more traditional paths.¹⁵³ Quite simply, the use of social sciences and academia were not the only paths that Jews could take in order to better understand their own identities.

As we have seen, some scholars established the role of race in the past; another, identified as “T.R.,” quite likely Theodore Reinach, brought it home to the present. He explained that in modern France, the Jewish race had spread through the country and many people mingled with them in many different facets of daily life.¹⁵⁴ Acculturation had taken place and now people had to interact with Jews on a day to day basis, a fact that not all were happy about. Jewish scholars were not ignorant, nor as complacent about it as Efron has portrayed French Jews.

Maurice Vernes, secretary of the Société des Études Juives, expressed his displeasure with the idea that there was a Jewish race and those who held the position that “Judaism is a closed race, who retain, from the earliest time, the same fixed ethnic

¹⁵² Léon Bardinet, “Antiquité et organisation des Juiveries du Comtat Venaissin”, *Revue des études juives* 1, (1880): 288.

<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁵³ Hyman, *Jews in Modern France*, 122.

¹⁵⁴ T.R., “Les Juifs Dans L'Opinion Chrétienne Aux XVII et XVIII: Peuchet et Diderot”, *Revue des études juives* 8, (1884): 144.

<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

composition and whose vices or virtues are explained by their remote origin.”¹⁵⁵ Vernes went on to explain that given their long history, which included different people of different races converting to Judaism, that the race could not possibly be at all a “closed” race.¹⁵⁶ Since many of the articles in past volumes were on the subject of Jewish history, it is noteworthy that an article appeared that dealt mainly in, what was at the time, current race theories. A publication was mentioned in the 1905 volume, written by J. Krauskopf and entitled “Israel a nation, race, or people? A discourse,” patently suggestive of the ongoing debate about how Jews were to be categorized, especially in the context of the Zionist movement.¹⁵⁷ This question of a Jewish race was clearly difficult to settle. The *Société* itself had no trouble referring to Jews as a race, one which has “four thousand years of history” and one whose intellectual talents the *Société* had united in order to reconstruct the story of that race’s past.¹⁵⁸ However, there were clearly those among these scholars, such as Vernes, who did not subscribe to the theory of a Jewish race. The race debate might not have been decided, but common usage of the word race and its application to the Jews appeared to be a well-established means of identification.

¹⁵⁵ Maurice Vernes, “Rapport sur les publications de la société pendant l’année 1893: a l’assemblée générale de 27 Janvier 1894,” *Revue des études juives* 29, (1894): xviii. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁷ “Israel a nation, a race or people? A discourse by J. Krauskopf,” *Revue des études juives* 50, (1905): 277. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Édouard de Goldschmidt, “Assemblée Générale: Séance du 29 Janvier 1905,” *Revue des études juives* 50, (1905): iii. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

Maurice Bloch gave a speech at the 1899 conference of the Société des Études Juives that dealt with one of the major issues with the language of race: that what one individual did could, and arguably, would, be attributed to the whole race.¹⁵⁹ Bloch not only protested against the way that the vices of some were portrayed as being universal to the Jewish race, but he also rallied for the Jews to organize together in order that social justice would prevail.¹⁶⁰

This was by no means the first time that a Jewish person had called for others Jews to organize as a means of combatting injustices done against other Jews. A similar appeal had been presented in 1860 by the Alliance Israélite Universelle.¹⁶¹ In passionate rhetoric, it called for Jews who did not “blush at being Israelites” to unite in their beliefs. “If you hold that unity is strength: that, although we are members of various nations, we may still be one nationality in sentiments, hopes and expectations...”; the appeal continued from there, appealing not only to the religiously minded, but also to those aware of the political situation for Jews in other countries. At the end, the appeal invited all Israelites to aid and assist the Alliance, assuring the reader that “The work is a great and blissful one.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Maurice Bloch, “Le juifs et la prospérité publique a travers l'histoire conference faite a la Société des Études Juives 28 Janvier 1899,” *Revue des études juives* 38, (1899): xiv. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Bloch, “Le juifs et la prospérité publique,” XLV.

¹⁶¹ Alliance Israélite Universelle, “Appeal to All Israelites,” *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, trans. David Job Printing, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 292. Printed 1864, from “Constitution of the Universal Israelitish Alliance.”

¹⁶² Alliance, “Appeal to All Israelites,” 292.

The contributors of the *Revue* praised the accomplishments of the Jewish race. One scholar, identified only as “T.I.,” praised “This unique phenomenon of a race which after having played a considerable role among the people of the Orient and spread throughout the world the highest religious concepts, their national unity has survived, and continues, despite the persecutions they [the Jewish race] has suffered, to produce intellectual and moral work.”¹⁶³ This is quite a different image of the Jewish race than the one that Gobineau had presented. The Jewish race is credited for having brought to the world its religious concepts, namely, one supposes, monotheism. For this writer, the persecutions they had suffered had done nothing to diminish their achievements in the past or present.

Others were worried about the state of Jews in a world that seemed to be rapidly becoming antisemitic. Isidore Loeb, a Jewish historian and scholar, seemed particularly concerned about the “race issue” he saw in antisemitic writings in Germany.¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ Loeb was focused on the state of conflict in Germany, despite the antisemitic writings that were being produced in France at this time. He wrote that the Jews needed to demand an alliance with “the Christians” in order to help resolve these conflicts.¹⁶⁶ Despite the fact that this terminology has the connotation of a religious conflict, I do not think it reflects

¹⁶³ T.I., “Pour la Fondation de la société des études juives,” *Revue des études juives* 1, (1880): 160. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁶⁴ “Isidore Loeb,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, JewishEncyclopedia.com, 2002-2011. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10080-loeb-isidore>.

¹⁶⁵ Isidore Loeb, “Réflexions sur les Juifs,” *Revue des études juives* 28, (1894): 165. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁶⁶ Loeb, “Réflexions sur les Juifs,” 165.

the reality of the conflict at this point in time. By speaking of Jews and Christians, Loeb relegated the conflict to a long history of anti-Judaism. The conflict between French Jews and non-Jews was, at this point, rooted more in nationalism, racism, and “anticapitalism.”¹⁶⁷ While many of these scholars have discussed race, not many have proposed solutions to the race conflicts as Loeb does here. While he brought up the Jews and Christians in terms of religion, he used racial terms in order to explain the conflict.

The 1908 issue contained much more on the subject of race than the journal did three years prior. The reviewer of J. de Lataulade’s doctoral thesis, “The Jews Under the Old Regime. Their Emancipation,” was not impressed by Lataulade’s thesis that the former state of the Jews under the old regime was not due to political or economic reasons, but that of race.¹⁶⁸ The reviewer questioned the facts presented, along with the sources cited. “It ignores all the important works,” the reviewer complained.¹⁶⁹ One of the sources that the reviewer objects to is none other than Drumont. His influence can be seen in Lataulade’s description of the Jewish race as possessing “a subtle, cunning, mercantile spirit.”¹⁷⁰ It is easy to see why such a work would not have been well received in the *Revue*. This review also gives us another example of the active participation of these Jewish scholars in the Jewish race science discourse; there is no sense that they feel so comfortable in their position in France that they do not voice concerns over the way

¹⁶⁷ Winock, *Nationalism*, 87.

¹⁶⁸ “Les Juifs sous l’ancien régime. Leur emancipation. Thèse pour le doctorat. By J. de Lataulade,” *Revue des études juives* 56, (1908): 304.

<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/6478285.html>.

¹⁶⁹ “Les Juifs sous l’ancien régime.” 304-5.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

that Jews as a whole are viewed by others. Jews were able to make the racial discourse their own by actively participating in its development.

Outside of the *Revue*, one strong voice in the area of Jewish race science was that of Jules Carvallo. Carvallo was a member of the aforementioned Alliance Israélite Universelle and a scholar with a deep interest in race science.¹⁷¹ Carvallo relied on the use of cranial measurements to make determinations about a “distinct racial type” that set Jews apart from others.¹⁷² Notably, as Marrus tells us, Carvallo observed that the cranial measurements of Jews were “superior” to those of Christians.¹⁷³ He argued that Jews should not give themselves over to arrogance; they should recognize that they clearly had a greater set of responsibilities in the world.¹⁷⁴

As Graetz explained, Carvallo chose to emphasize what he saw in Jewish intellectual superiority as a way of explaining how it was that Jews had survived so well, in light of a history, as Carvallo saw it, of violence and expulsions.¹⁷⁵ If those engaged in a racial discourse wanted to talk about a struggle for race survival, than Carvallo appeared to have little doubt as to who would win in the long run. The Jews had made it this far in history and were still around due to certain superior features of their race. In addition to intellectual superiority, Carvallo also credited the Jews with cultural superiority: marital habits and “the Jewish family’s way of life” were also part of what

¹⁷¹ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 240.

¹⁷² Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 16-17.

¹⁷³ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 17.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

made Jews able to adapt to new environments and yet still retain a unique Jewish identity.¹⁷⁶

These contributions to Jewish race science made by French Jews add a rich new dimension to the history of race science. Rather than allowing others to impose definitions upon Jews using race science, Jews—including the scholars we have seen—maintained their agency in the discussion of race. French Jewish contributors to race science wrote their own works on the Jewish race and did not let non-Jews go unchallenged in their assessment of the Jewish race. The *Revue* used its platform to review works on the theory of Jewish race and be an active participant in the conversation about the “Jewish Question,” while Maurice Bloch asked that Jews become more organized, become more aware of social injustices in the world, and be a force against them. There is no sign that Jews were unaware of the antisemitic attitudes that were part of French society or the prejudices that Jews faced in other countries; in fact, just the opposite is true.

Efron’s assessment of the French situation and what integration meant for the Jews in France does not hold up after the consideration of these sources. Levy’s review of Legoyt’s work and the review of Lataulade’s thesis demonstrated that French Jews were not so at ease that they did not engage in the Jewish race science discourse. In fact, and most importantly, their integration into French society meant that French Jews thought of themselves as being on equal footing with non-Jewish citizens, and their engagement of Jewish race science was one expression of that equality.

¹⁷⁶ Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, 240.

IV

Conclusion

Race science is built on ideas of separation and categorization. It divides individuals into groups and projects a group identity onto each category. It seems unlikely that race science could be used as a means of expression integration, but as we have seen, in the case of French Jews, race science was one outlet of that expression. Through race science, Jewish contributors were able to participate in the race science discourse and express their own views of the Jewish race. Jewish race science was not a discourse that was shaped by non-Jews alone; the voices of Jewish contributors were not silenced by antisemitism. Instead, some Jewish scholars and academics were actively engaged in the discourse on their own race. French Jews were not in complete agreement about the Jewish race—as we saw earlier, Vernes did not subscribe to the theory that there was a Jewish race—this only adds to the race science conversation by giving historians multiple viewpoints to study.

Integration and acculturation did not mean a loss of Jewish identity for French Jews. Instead, integration and acculturation would compel French Jews to seek out new ways of expressing their Jewish identity, even as many Jews in France embraced a national identity. As historian Nadia Malinovich explains it:

From the time of the revolution the French nation has been conceived of as a universal political entity that stands above any particular group interest. While in reality, of course, this concept of citizenship has always been strongly linked to adaptation to French social and cultural norms, the power of the universalist paradigm has shaped the ways in which groups expressing particularism of any kind—whether rooted in class, religion,

ethnicity, or region—have worked out all their own sense of difference. This holds true for Jews as well, who, above all, sought to cast a positive light on Jewish particularism by reconciling notions of cultural difference with French values of identity.¹⁷⁷

Race science was only one avenue that some French Jews used to form a Jewish identity. A racial definition could allow for integration of French Jews and non-Jews, while still maintaining a particular Jewish identity.

Identity is a complex idea. The contributors to race science were trying to impose a group identity on a group that they could not precisely identify. As we have seen throughout the contributions examined, exact determinations of who belonged to which racial category were strictly avoided. For many of the contributors examined, the Jewish race was a reality, but a reality that they could not precisely express. For instance, in the case of Renan, he thought that races had intermingled to the point where there were no pure races, but he still thought that there was an identifiable Jewish race, despite the mixing that the races had undergone. Contributors to race science masked prejudices and ideas about race with scientism; vagaries concerning the definition of race made it possible to dress up an individuals' bias as a matter of science.

There was a view in nineteenth century France that French antisemites were trying to import a German race war.¹⁷⁸ Antisemitism was characterized as a German-born virus. We must be careful of this historical narrative. The French scientific community did not wake up one day merely infected by an outside thought. Race was a narrative that non-Jews and Jews built together in France and in other countries. Instead of studying

¹⁷⁷ Malinovich, *French and Jewish*, 2.

¹⁷⁸ Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation*, 24.

contributions to race science on the national level and thus opening the door to ideas of one country being Pandora, opening the box of racial categorization in a fit of curiosity, we could instead look at race science more globally. However, in order to do so, we have to thoroughly study the race discourse in all countries, and it is my hope that this study will contribute to further historical inquiry into less explored areas of the subject.

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