Religion and the Question of the Enemy

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1. The Enemy is Nobody (Religious Violence, Religious Enmity)

I begin with the simple and, I think, uncontroversial recognition that, in the field of religion and elsewhere as well, there is a definite asymmetry between violence and enmity. The two notions are not equivalent, of course, nor is one reducible to the other. Yet it is perhaps more difficult to evaluate their relative importance. Indeed, the proximity between them should suffice to generate a sense of perplexity due to the massively unequal treatment to which they have been subjected, the vastly discrepant deployment and critical response they have elicited in the university and in the media, among politicians

and in the broader Western public sphere. It seems safe to say, for instance, that the old grievance about violence yet having to be adequately addressed, reflected upon, and theorized is no longer pertinent. Recall that Hannah Arendt, among others, had forcefully voiced this grievance by stating that "no one engaged in thought about history and politics can remain unaware of the enormous role violence has always played in human affairs." Arendt immediately goes on to stress, however, that it has been rare for violence to be "singled out" for "special consideration."[1] And whereas she complains of a state of affairs that is "making it impossible to localize responsibility and to identify the enemy," she does not appear to see in this cause for further reflections.[2]

By now, the sheer proliferation of what is sometimes, and justly, called "violence studies" in a variety of fields and contexts from literature, philosophy, and law to anthropology, history, and politics makes it clear that a "critique of violence" (as Walter Benjamin advocated it in the 1920s) has long been under way, and perhaps well before Arendt's time.[3] Think, for instance, of Max Weber and of

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1   Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, Orlando, Harcourt, 1970, p. 8.

2   Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 39.

3   Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," translated by Edmund Jephcott in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, Peter Demetz, ed., New York, Schocken Books, 1986, p. 277-300; and see Beatrice Hanssen, *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory*, London, Routledge, 2000.

Georges Sorel, and think of course of Franz Fanon—a major source of Arendt's chagrin. But the "archeology of violence" has been digging and expanding, and many more valuable "chapters in an anthropography of violence" have been written and read.[4] At the same time, it is indubitably the case that in recent years, the question of violence has acquired, in some sectors at least, what seems like a spectacular urgency; most particularly, of course, in the singular case of "religious violence."

We are all cognizant of the reasons for this, of course. We are more than familiar with the notion of a "clash of civilizations," a phrase that was circulating before the events of September 11, 2001. The exponentially wider currency, in fact, the astonishing popularity of the phrase after 9/11 makes one peculiar fact manifest, namely that, although it says nothing about religion, nothing else has claimed a comparable place at the center of the concerns focalized by Samuel Huntington. Indeed, Huntington himself, and those who adopted his views after him, have squarely placed religion at the heart of their understanding of the so-called world order: "Religion," Huntington writes, "is a central defining characteristic of civilizations."[5] More broadly, and even among those

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4   Pierre Clastres, *Archéologie de la violence*, La Tour d'Aigues, Éditions de l'Aube, 1999; E. Valentine Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.

5   Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 48; in

who opposed Huntington's theses, the need for reflective engagement upon and after 9/11 quickly became an imperative to think about religion. "Thinking about Religion after September 11" is Bruce Lincoln's subtitle in a widely acclaimed academic publication, but it is only one illustrative drop in a sea of scholarly and less scholarly books, news dossiers and special reports, not to mention an array of museum exhibits, movies and documentaries of all kinds, and the heightened internet buzz, all of which agreeing that "as neofoundationalism spreads across the globe, the threat of violence and massive destruction grows."[6]

These constitute the response to a universal call of sorts to think about violence, "violence and the sacred," and to reflect on this particular kind of violence now widely acknowledged as "religious violence."[7] They testify that it has now become virtually impossible to

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another formulation: "Of all the objective elements which define civilizations, the most important usually is religion" (p. 42).

6   Mark C. Taylor, *After God*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 355.

7   Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003, but the trend was well under way, from René Girard *Violence and the Sacred,* translated by Patrick Gregory, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, to Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, and Hent de Vries, *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

think about religion without thinking about violence (in the past, we had been offered other models and concepts such as "tribalism," "communalism," or "sectarianism"). And before accounting for this new development in empirical or existential terms—after all, what Arendt rightly pointed out is "the enormous role violence has *always* played in human affairs"—we might pause to recall the asymmetry between violence and enmity with which I began. Of the massive surge of interest in and engagement with violence in all of its aspects and more, nothing remotely comparable can be attested regarding enmity, and even less so "religious enmity."

Consider, then, the explicit or implicit centrality of the enemy, "the ubiquity of conflict" in Huntington's work ("It is human to hate," he claims, and goes on to assert that "the resolution of one conflict and the disappearance of one enemy generate personal, social, and political forces that give rise to new ones").[8] But think, on the other hand, of the singularly different fate of the concept of "the other" in past decades; compare it to the concept—if it is one—of "the enemy." Whereas one concept became the object of ever more proliferating discursive activities, the other received no commensurate attention. The realization quickly follows that there is no discourse on "the religious enemy," no such thing as "enemy studies." Not only am I yet to find a single book in a Western language that would have "religious enmity" or "the

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8   Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 130.

religious enemy" as its title, many are found that claim there are today no enemies, no real enemies. In a different perspective, one could ponder the fact that we have been asked, for centuries even, to think about "the ethics of the neighbor," while few have been willing to explore the ethics of enmity—an implausible Nietzschean phrase at best. Fewer still would pause to consider hostility as an ethical comportment. More prosaically, but no less pertinently, I think, the only entry for "enmity" in the catalog of my university library simply redirects its users to "hostility (psychology)," whereas the term "enemy" is always given in the plural ("enemies") with the puzzling addition of a parenthetical qualification "(Persons)." There are, typically, multiple ways of access to, and entries for, "religion and violence." There is none for "religious enmity."

I do not mean to dismiss, as Arendt does, the "large literature on war and warfare" on the grounds that "it deals with the implements of violence, not with violence as such."[9] Nor would I want to suggest that the enemy has not been a crucial concern of politicians (not to mention military strategists and other members of security services, think tanks, and organizations), the central theme of numerous briefs and reports, books and studies, and famously so since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. As Huntington formulates the matter, "in a situation of changing power relationships, every government

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9   Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 8, n. 6.

necessarily and legitimately wonders: 'Ten years from now who will be my enemy and who, if anyone, will be my friend?'"[10] I certainly have no intention of diminishing, much less dismissing, the contributions made before and since under the heading of "conflict studies," or by the ever expanding engagement with love, tolerance, and world peace from a variety of perspectives that often include as part of their inquiry the problem of hatred, prejudice, and indeed violence. Our understanding of sociability in some of its disturbing forms has certainly grown thanks to psychology, primatology, and the study of international relations as well (though not necessarily in this particular order).

But there are, of course, significant exceptions to this uneasy rule according to which the enemy remains a marginal affair. Anyone with eyes to see, moreover, would have to acknowledge that, whether or not there is an enemy, and a religious enemy at that, one particular figure, one particular religion repeatedly stands out, even if by way of denegation. Consider then the repeated assertion that the war on terror is *not* a war on Islam, that Muslims are *not* the enemy, and recall that no related statement is forthcoming about any other religious community in the global public sphere. As well, there have been serious scholarly attempts to engage in a more straightforward manner the question of Islam as a "privileged" enemy, while recognizing but also transcending mere historical

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10 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 221.

determinations. Tomaz Mastnak, for instance, gave us, in his compelling account of "Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western political order," a detailed report of *peace* as the tortuous and violent path to the enemy. Roxanne Euben told us about "the enemy in the mirror," and Emran Qureishi and Michael Sells initiated a broad reflection on the construction of "the Muslim enemy." I myself have tried to contribute to the issue by pointing toward the possibility (and impossibility) of "a history of the enemy."[11] But a wider perspective would ensure that anyone familiar with the figure of Carl Schmitt acknowledge that the enemy, and more precisely, the friend and enemy distinction, has been the ground of a fundamental and widespread understanding of politics since Thomas Hobbes at least. Interestingly, Schmitt himself joins a consensus that ignores the religious enemy while reinscribing a certain irrelevance of Islam insofar as it is, precisely, the enemy. In a statement that is unimaginable for Leo Strauss (his alleged proxy), Schmitt famously asserts that, "never in the thousand-year struggle between Christians and Moslems did it occur to a Christian to surren-

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11 Roxanne L. Euben, *The Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999; *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, Emran Qureishi and Michael A. Sells, eds., New York, Columbia University Press, 2003; Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003; Gil Anidjar, "Terror Right," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, v. 4, n. 3, Winter 2004, p. 35-69.

der rather than defend Europe out of love toward the Saracens or Turks."[12] Thus, everything is as if the identity of the enemy were perfectly known, or at least implicitly granted (albeit mostly by way of denegation), while at the same time, the problem of the (religious) enemy continues to be underplayed and displaced onto a universalized "violence." This curious rhetorical fact is what I seek to underscore here, namely that the phrase "religious violence" continues to offer significant traction to the thought and concern of journalists, politicians and scholars alike, a traction that is simply unmatched by anything like religious enmity or the notion of a religious enemy. Thus, there is religious violence—which would be a threat to our civilization—but there is no religious enemy. Or, to put it in a yet more explicit manner, there is religious violence, and Islam is its (negative or denegated) figure. Although they are a constant object of concern, Muslims are not the enemy; they are by no means the religious enemy, of which there is none. There is religion, and the enemy is nobody.

2. The Political Body of The Enemy

One could think, of course, that the repeated invocation of religious violence (as opposed to that of the religious enemy) corresponds to an old set of habits, such as

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12 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, translated by George Schwab, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 29.c

those that made possible, in the decades before 9/11, the
massive proliferation of pronouncements that took as their
point of departure the "awakening of ethnic violence," the
resurgence of "ethnic nationalism," and so forth. Much
ado about violence, with still very little to say about the
enemy. But the matter runs deeper, and the division of
ethnicity from religion is more than a historical acci-
dent. It also corresponds to further structuring moments,
whereby violence, and religion, are distinguished and
separated from politics, and the enemy is absented from
reflections on violence. Thus, whereas violence can have
many an attribute (religious violence, ethnic violence),
the enemy does not.

Talal Asad has taken us quite far along these lines,
enjoining us to ponder the singularity (or lack thereof)
of "religiously motivated" violence.[13] He underscores
the ways in which some forms of violence are deemed
more rational than others; how, a certain practice of vio-
lence becomes "incomprehensible to many precisely be-
cause it is not embedded in a historical narrative—his-
tory in the 'proper' sense" (p. 8). At the same time, there
are acts of violence that are not merely deemed justi-
fiable, but are *actively justified* by numerous rhetorical,
state and media apparatuses. That is why, instead of join-
ing those who seek, for instance, to uphold "existing in-
ternational law (the law of force) that legitimizes certain

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13 Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, New York, Columbia Univer-
sity Press, 2007, p. 1.

types of violence and stigmatizes others," Asad propos-
es we "substitute the idea of a historical space in which
violence circulates, in which our wider aims are too of-
ten undermined by our own actions" (p. 15-6). We must,
in other words, examine the way violence is distribut-
ed, highlighted or ignored, even denied, across a wider
field (after Derrida, one could speak here of "an *econo-
my* of violence").[14] Asad recalls in this context the deep
assumption, shared by many in the West, that "poli-
tics, however it is to be defined, cannot have anything to
do with violence" (p. 58). In a number of other, striking
formulations, Asad relentlessly interrogates the funda-
mental divisions between politics and religion, between
rationality and irrationality, that structure much of the
discussions to which I have been attending here.

Much as Asad has deployed a skeptical attitude re-
garding religious violence, Mahmood Mamdani makes a
similar gesture regarding "ethnic conflict," and clarifies
the matter further. If it is the case, Mamdani compelling-
ly argues, that people confront each other as members
of "tribes," "races," or even "castes,"—and *a fortiori*,
"religions"—then we need to look at how life, "politi-
cal life," as he puts it, was breathed into these.[15] These,

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14 Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," translated by
Alan Bass in *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, University of
Chicago Press, 1978, p. 313, n. 21.

15 Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colo-
nialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton,
Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 20.

along with Asad's reflections, should, at any rate, prevent an easy and confident identification of any violence or conflict as specifically or exclusively religious or indeed, assuming it constitutes an alternative, "ethnic" (the qualifier of choice, as I have said, for the word "violence" before 9/11). With Asad, we can and should go on to doubt the wisdom and the accuracy, the consequences even, of a labeling of violence along settled and all too fortified lines. We might then shift the debate away from its disingenuous focus on the universality of violence and the alleged particularity (or irrationality) of religious violence. We might exercise a more differentiated recognition of violence, which circulates in numerous forms and contexts, according to rhetorical and ideological divisions that are less *legitimate* than they are constantly *legitimized*. The somehow protean dimension of violence, at any rate, underscores the difficulty of locating it within a single sphere since the very distinction of spheres is likely to be an *effect* of violence and of its circulation (it is in a proximate context that Edward Said spoke about Orientalism as a "distribution" of knowledge and power).

It will be obvious that, although they do not place the enemy at the center of their concerns, the reflections on violence I have been briefly exploring *implicate*, in one way or another, the question of the enemy. They partake, that is, of an inquiry into politics and into the making of enemies, and have to do most directly with the treatment of the enemy in specific historical, and violent, contexts. They recognize, for their part, that the enemy has a body

(the question of ethnicity makes this particularly obvious) and they take us, no doubt with good reason, away from the question of religion. They reinscribe and even widen the gap I have been pointing to, which implicitly distinguishes violence and enmity, religion from enmity. I should rush to assert at this juncture that when it comes to "religion," and to the recurrence and dissemination of this seemingly universal (and universally translatable) term in the global public sphere, I too find myself very much drawn toward a view that sees not religion itself (whatever that might be) but the *appeal* to religion as an explanatory category, as a part of what Walter Benn Michaels recently called "a technology of mystification," an expression he directs at those analyses that "performed the intellectual function of focusing social analysis on (…) 'questions of racial or sexual identity' and on 'cultural differences' instead of on 'the way in which capitalist economies create large numbers of low-wage, low-skill jobs with poor job security.'"[16] What I mean is that the admittedly massive invocation of religious violence appears to serve as a kind of screen upon which many of our collective fears are projected, distracting us from otherwise alarming (or even un-alarming) concerns that either do not agree with the "paranoid style" of global politics, the politics of fear inherent to the persistently

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16 Walter Benn Michaels, "What Matters," *London Review of Books*, v. 31, n. 16, 27 August 2009, p. 12.

unwavering investment in the "war on terror," or agree too much with it.[17]

Whatever inequalities—class inequalities—are enabled by the justification of indifference or discrimination and even persecution directed at an allegedly "backward" constituency (backward because of race or sexuality, but also because of politics, poverty, and finally religion), it hardly seems radical to acknowledge that some economical dimension, some primary or secondary benefit, is in effect if not in intent at play in the geopolitical field. In this context, the argument that religion (or religious violence) is a dominant site of violence, a primary or even primal threat to "our way of life" must contend with a measure of difficulty in order to be taken seriously. One might have to pause a bit, in other words, and consider the number of threats this way of life is currently confronted with, beginning with its own self-destructive tendencies, whether environmental, nuclear warheading, finance-derivating, and securitizing, or simply life-wasting (in Zygmunt Bauman's sense). Whether religion was ever the opium of the people I do not know.

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17 On the "paranoid style," see Douglas Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1996; on the politics of fear see, among others, Corey Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004; David L. Altheide, *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear*, Lanham, AltaMira Press, 2006; *Fear: Critical Geopolitics and Everyday Life*, edited by Rachel Pain and Susan J. Smith, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008.

What seems clear is that the persistent claim that religion is the current and newly colored peril (brown, yellow, red, or green) is at least equally potent, albeit stranger, a narcotic. There is violence and there is enmity. So much is certainly true. There is insecurity in the "planet of slums," and then there is Homeland Security, financial and mercenary "securities," and there is the global, enduring war on terror.[18] There is conflict everywhere—although it is doubtful that all sides of any conflict would ever agree with regard to its nature, much less its shared "religious" nature—and there is the massive militarization of the police, and the widespread, if unintended and even benevolent, offensive against the poor. There is collateral damage and what Carolyn Nordstrom has referred to as "violence, power and international profiteering in the twenty-first century."[19] There is inequality and there is dissymmetry. Some inflict more violence than others. Some are worse enemies than others. In the search for the last determining instance, we may return to the prob-

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18 The two are not unrelated, of course as Mike Davis shows in *Planet of Slums*, London, Verso, 2006, and elsewhere. And see, for a compelling account of the ethics of security ("a set of techniques and a program of action"), Chowra Makaremi, "Utopias of Power: From Human Security to the Responsibility to Protect" in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*, edited by Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, New York, Zone Books, forthcoming.

19 Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004.

lem in its economical dimensions. This is "disaster capitalism," and it has even less to do with religion.[20] Is there an economic enemy? Whether we will find understanding (or solace) in religion, indeed, by labeling *this* violence and *that* enmity "religious," seems here highly problematic, if not utterly misguided.

3. The Enemy's Two Bodies (The Jew, the Arab)

Let me summarize the arguments I have been rehearsing so far. The manifest, if unreflected, stance that dominates the public sphere is that we are increasingly confronted with religious violence. One particular religion, or some of its rogue offshoots, is repeatedly associated with this violence, albeit by way of denegation. There is Islam, but there is no religious enemy. In this specific context, the enemy has no body. The enemy *is* nobody (which means that the enemy could be anybody, but also that the enemy could always be treated as never having existed). Opposed to this view, or at least distinct from it, and concerned with a recognition of the political agencies at work in the prominence of explanatory schemes whereby violence is deemed "ethnic" or "religious," there is another, critical perspective. I have underscored the necessity of this critique, which attends to the labeling of violence, to the targeting of certain *kinds*

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20 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, New York, Picador, 2008.

of violence, and to the making of enemies. Here, there is only, or at least primarily, political conflict—or alternatively, political toleration, accommodation, economy. There is at any rate no religious enemy. It is precisely the recurrence of this version of epistemological toleration that should make us pause. We should be spending more time wondering about the implausible persistence of the enemy. We could then begin to write the first ever—the last ever—tractate entitled *De Inimicitia*—and perhaps we would know our enemies. The implicit thread of my argument should now begin to emerge.

Recall that the paucity of thought regarding the enemy does not constitute adequate testimony to the importance (or indeed the range and significance) of the enemy. Elsewhere, I have tried to underscore the paradoxical fact that one of the world-famous statements made concerning the enemy has generated a surprisingly minute number of commentaries or even of practical reflections. I refer of course to Jesus Christ's command to "love your enemies."[21] I do not want to revisit here what I have already said, except to reiterate that one of the difficulties elicited by this command is the question of the enemy of God, indeed, the theological enemy. Let me say right away that I do not think the theological enemy (historically associated with the Jew) should be readily conflated with the religious enemy, if only because of the double genitive found in a number of pertinent languages into

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21 I elaborate on these issues in *The Jew, the Arab*, p. 3-39.

which the phrase "the enemy of God" or, to be precise, "enemies of God" (as the phrase appears in Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* 11:28) has been translated. For who are the enemies of God? Assuming we can equate, for the purpose of the argument here, enmity and hatred, the question can take two distinct paths. Are they those whom God hates (which may suggest that they occupy a recognized theological position, which may or may not be deserving of more scorn, their existence being punishment enough) or are they those who hate God (having thereby abandoned all claim to theological validation or recognition, much less redemption)?

This is another momentous question that calls for the kind of differential account I have been describing, but it would take us away from what I am after. Why then mention it? For the following reason: the theological enemy (no less, and perhaps even more than violence of any kind) has traditionally been identified with the Jew (the Jew Shylock, for example). With his double, the political enemy (Othello, the Moor), he has been a central and crucial problem in the thought and practices of Western Christendom. Together, they have served as the mostly unacknowledged shadow of a most famous division with regard to sovereignty in the Christian West, that of the king's two bodies.[22] To put it briefly, and as the

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22 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.

double genitive of the 'enemy of God' was already signaling, the enemy, like the king, has long had two bodies: one theological, one political. And it is with this split body, if with unequal attention, that Western Christendom went "crusading peace" on a number of well-known occasions.[23] This war, this violence—which it would be highly reductive to call "religious"—has taken the form of armed battle but also of disputation.

And there lies another paradox, which further partakes of the disappearance of the enemy. The advent of a recognition that there might be other "religions," the advent of a "neutral" category such as "world religions" occurred in a process (the advent of toleration, the enduring love of the enemy) that is not only contemporaneous with the intensification of colonial conquest, but is indeed coextensive with the decline and disappearance of the practice of theological disputation.[24] Let me quote

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23 Tomaz Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002.

24 See Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 40-3; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Mark C. Taylor, ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 269-84; and, with a different historical emphasis, Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

what I take to be the most pertinent description, and theorization, of the essential, and differential, transformation that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth century with regard to this major aspect of "religious enmity," known as disputation or, indeed, polemics. The specific context is Catholic censorship and the emergence of print culture, the change or erasure of certain sections, phrases or terms from Jewish texts deemed "anti-Christian." The context, to put it differently, is the onset of what Edward Said called "modern Orientalism."

> Changes in these terms, which defined the border that negated the anti-Christian connotations, were intended to lead to a definition of the Jew dissociated from polemical dimensions. The attempt to erase the *goy* from the Hebrew text is not an attempt to erase the Jew but, rather, to create an alternative definition of the Jew, one independent of the network of relations, which fixed his place in relation to other elements. The elimination of those words (…) led to the reediting of sentences so that the relevant field of reading would no longer contain anti-Christian polemics; this editing was part of an attempt to create a common framework in which differences were redefined.[25]

As Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, the author of these lines, makes clear, "censorship was a marginal factor in the overall process," which constituted a broad "cultural transition" that ultimately led to "the muting of the role of anti-Christian polemic in the definition of Jewish identity."[26]

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25 Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century*, translated by Jackie Feldman, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, p. 133.

26 Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor*, p. 132-4.

It is a process he further describes as clarifying "the con-
crete attributes of secularization and its obvious associa-
tion with Orientalism."[27]

This broader context—Orientalism and the question
of religion, along with the long tradition of Christian an-
ti-Semitism—makes it possible to bring up numerous
other instances where, along with the growth, expan-
sion and dissemination of Western knowledge (among
other things Latin and Western), there began to disap-
pear a singularly specific and dynamic layer in the hos-
tile and accommodating encounter between the (Chris-
tian) West and the rest. A somehow lapidary formulation
might bring things into focus: the Jew was detheologized
(read: racialized), while the Arab was de-racialized and
de-politicized and made into the exemplary figure of "re-
ligious fanaticism." Anti-Semitism was always Oriental-
ism. It still is. But the enemy, if he ever was one, is no
more. This process—which continues to separate the
political from the theological—culminates in colonial-
ism and in the Holocaust and in their separation through
mutual denial across well known divides. It culminates
and vanishes in the figure of the *Muselmann*, which Pri-
mo Levi recognized as the central figure of Auschwitz,
the crucial figure of our modernity. Yet, along with the
Muselmann—the Jew as Muslim, and the Muslim as Jew
at the door of the gas chambers—what has always al-

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27 Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor*, p. 182; and see of course Edward
    W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage, 1978.

ready disappeared is the question of the enemy, where what is at issue is no longer a matter of "theological dispute." The enemy is theologico-political yes, but more importantly the enemy is the theologico-political, the figure of Western Christendom's political theology. That is why it is still not possible to conceive of religious violence or of religious enmity as anything but an aberration that shocks our modern, tolerant sensibilities. That is also why—the love of enemy, and the benevolence of charity—there disappears the very likelihood of an agonistic debate, of a polemic that would recognize and confront the asymmetries of so-called religious traditions.[28] The anthropologist Franz Baermann Steiner articulated what I take to be a proximate perspective in a letter he wrote to Gandhi in 1946:

> When the Europeans after centuries of religious persecution gave freedom to our religion it was not because they had come to respect religions, or our religion, or us—it was simply because religions to them had ceased to be of paramount importance.[29]

28 Nermeen Shaikh, "Interrogating Charity and the Benevolence of Empire," *Development*, v. 50, n. 2, 2007, p. 83-9; note that the argument I am making on the disputation is not contingent on its historical dimension (nor is the argument about colonialism in Shaikh's essay). The narrow, and mostly antiquarian, confinement of polemics is sufficiently obvious in an otherwise illuminating collection of essays like *Religious Polemics in Context*, T. L. Hettema & A. van der Kooij, eds., Aasen, Royal Van Gorcum, 2004.

29 Franz Baermann Steiner, "Letter to Mr Gandhi" in *Orientpolitik, Value, and Civilisation (Selected Writings)*, volume II, ed-

If all this sounds like a clash of civilizations, I have been misunderstood. Is there not a different engagement possible with the sound made by *one religion* clashing? I am trying to point toward an ethics of enmity that would involve a transformed understanding of religion, and first of all of Western Christendom in its indifference to religion ("religions to them had ceased to be of paramount importance"), to the enemy's two bodies. This is an understanding, "after God," as Mark Taylor compellingly proposes, that would recognize "the theological origins of modernity," of course, but would include the political translations to which "religions" have been subjected by one particular religion, as well as the changes and transformations undergone by that very religion (in the expanded sense). It would include what David F. Noble has called "the religion of technology," as well as "capitalism and Christianity, American style" (as William Connolly has it). It would further contend with aesthetic and scientific practices, the political imagination and the sources of governmentality in what Michel Foucault described as "pastoral power" ("The Church is a religion that thus lays claim to the daily government of men in their real life on the grounds of their salvation and on the scale of humanity, and *we have no other example of this in the history of societies*").[30] It

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ited by Jeremy Adler and Richard Fardon, New York, Bergahn Books, 1999, p. 131.

30 Taylor, *After God*; Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008; David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity*

is with—and against—all this that I am asking what it might mean to imagine a revival of sorts, a renewal and an expansion of the medieval disputation beyond the narrowly defined realm of religion. Against the separation of spheres which divides the enemy and makes him disappear behind the distinct attributes of violence (religious, ethnic, economic, political, and so forth), against the pseudo-universal question of religion and enmity, and the alleged symmetries of "religious violence," there is still the possibility of a dispute with the particular, with the *secular* "religion" of Western Christendom.

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of Man and the Spirit of Invention, New York, Penguin, 1999; William E. Conolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2008; Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, translated by Graham Burchell, New York, Picador, 2009, p. 148; emphasis added.