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# Antisemitism and Intersectional Feminism: Strange Alliances

In recent years, intersectionality—an analytical concept and political agenda that is widely known as the interrelation of race, class, and gender—has become prevalent in political and academic discourse and also increasingly contested, as it seems to be prone to disregard or even advocate antisemitism. In this essay, I will focus on the strange alliances that occur between queer and intersectional feminism on the one hand and global antisemitism on the other hand. I will elaborate on different traditions and the broad variety of approaches to intersectionality and thus analyze the reasons for intersectionality being instrumentalized for a latent or manifest antisemitism. Thereby I will also refer to pink-washing<sup>1</sup> allegations. At the same time, I will emphasize that there are indeed intersectional approaches that do not have an open flank on antisemitism. In doing so, I will outline a new concept of intersectionality as an analytical tool to analyze the connection between antisemitism and other ideologies—what I shall call intersectionality of ideologies.<sup>2</sup>

## Intersectionality and Antisemitism in Political Praxis: Some Examples

I want to start with a few examples that illustrate the problematic relationship between intersectionality and antisemitism that has recently become apparent in the political practice of certain queer and feminist activists—the so-called Queer International.<sup>3</sup> This was seen, for example, in June 2017, on the occasion of the Lesbian “Chicago Dyke March” from which two participants were excluded

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<sup>1</sup> Pinkwashing is a term coined similar to the term whitewashing, denoting an identification of certain products, people, countries, and organizations with the LGBTIQ+ movement, thereby constituting them as tolerant, modern, and progressive. With relations to Israel, the term is often used to denote the practice of shifting the focus away from the Israeli-Palestine conflict to Israel’s exemplary tolerance of LGBTIQ+ people.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. Stögner, “Intersektionalität von Ideologien”—Antisemitismus, Sexismus und das Verhältnis von Gesellschaft und Natur,” *Psychologie & Gesellschaftskritik* 41, no. 2 (2017): 25–45.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

for carrying a rainbow flag with a Star of David. This was deemed a symbol of Zionism that made other participants feel uncomfortable. Here Jewish specificity was sweepingly identified with Israel and the specific intersection of Jewishness and Lesbianism expelled from the community. Jews were welcome on the march as long as they espoused anti-Zionism, according to the organizers. No other form of nationalism suffered such a ban. In the “Chicago Dyke March Official Statement on 2017 March and Solidarity with Palestine” the organizers explicitly equate Zionism with racism:

Zionism is an inherently white-supremacist ideology. It is based on the premise that Jewish people have a God-given entitlement to the lands of historic Palestine and the surrounding areas.<sup>4</sup>

Completely ignoring the real historic conditions of Zionism as well as the history of the Jewish population in Israel/Palestine, Jews are viewed as alien to the region and juxtaposed to a purportedly autochthonous first nation Palestinian population. While Jewish nationalism is vilified as “white-supremacist,” a nationalism based on the political-ideological construction of the “lands of historic Palestine” is worshipped. During the online discussion that followed the March, activists used the antisemitic expression “Zio” first popularized by the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>5</sup>

A similar thing happened at the Women’s March on Washington in the winter of 2017, where one of the organizers, Linda Sarsour, announced that feminism and Zionism were incompatible.<sup>6</sup> While Zionism as a political movement was excluded, the Muslim headscarf was actively adopted as a political symbol of resis-

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<sup>4</sup> Chicago Dyke March Collective, “Chicago Dyke March Official Statement on 2017 March and Solidarity with Palestine,” accessed January 15, 2018, <https://chicagodykemarchcollective.org/2017/06/27/chicago-dyke-march-official-statement-on-2017-march-and-solidarity-with-palestine/> [no longer available].

<sup>5</sup> For this incident, the Simon Wiesenthal Center listed the group among the perpetrators of the “2017 Top Ten Worst Global Anti-Semitic/Anti-Israel Incidents,” accessed January 15, 2018, [http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/TOP\\_TENANTI-SEMITIC2017.PDF](http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/TOP_TENANTI-SEMITIC2017.PDF) [no longer available]; see also Y. Rosenberg, “Chicago Dyke March Drops Pretense, Deploys Anti-Semitic Term Popularized by Neo-Nazis,” *The Tablet Magazine*, July 14, 2017, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/chicago-dyke-march-drops-pretense-deploys-anti-semitic-term-popularized-by-neo-nazis>.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. Meyerson, “Can You Be a Zionist Feminist? Linda Sarsour Says No,” *The Nation*, March 13, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/can-you-be-a-zionist-feminist-linda-sarsour-says-no/>.

tance: the official poster of the Women's March, "Greater Than Fear" by Shepard Fairey, shows a woman wearing the Stars and Stripes as a headscarf.<sup>7</sup>

Another incident occurred in March 2018, when Tamika Mallory, at that time Women's March co-chair, was present at an outspokenly antisemitic and homophobic speech given by Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, and received public acknowledgement from him.<sup>8</sup> Already before that she and Carmen Perez, another prominent figure of the Women's March, had posted laudatory pictures of Farrakhan on Instagram. While acknowledging a common fight of "historically oppressed people, Blacks, Jews, Muslims and all people must stand together to fight racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia,"<sup>9</sup> Mallory failed to explicitly condemn Farrakhan's antisemitism and homophobia.<sup>10</sup> In May 2018, upon returning from a journey to Israel and the West Bank, she said at an event hosted by the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Justice Delegation that the creation of the state of Israel was a "human rights crime."<sup>11</sup>

These are examples of a disturbing development within global feminist and queer movements. Likewise, we observe a growing international popularity of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions campaign particularly in feminist and queer groups. Thus, in 2015 the National Women Studies Association (NWSA), the biggest feminist academic organization in North America, endorsed BDS.<sup>12</sup>

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7 The image can be seen and obtained for free via <https://obeygiant.com/people-art-available-download-free/>, accessed April 10, 2020.

8 Cf. Anti-Defamation League, "Farrakhan Rails Against Jews, Israel and the U.S. Government in Wide-Ranging Saviours' Day Speech," issued February 26, 2018, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/blog/farrakhan-rails-against-jews-israel-and-the-us-government-in-wide-ranging-saviours-day-speech>.

9 T. Mallory, "Tamika Mallory Speaks: 'Wherever My People Are Is Where I Must Be,'" *Newsone*, March 7, 2018, <https://newsone.com/3779389/tamika-mallory-saviours-day/>.

10 Cf. A. Kaplan Sommer, "Women's March Faces Crisis as Jewish Activists Lose Faith Amid Farrakhan Firestorm," *Haaretz*, March 11, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/jewish-activists-lose-faith-in-women-s-march-amid-farrakhan-firestorm-1.5890356>; D. J. Roth, "Women's March Leaders Refuse to Condemn Farrakhan after Antisemitic Speech," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 3, 2018, <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=544074>.

11 H. Mazzig, "As a Queer Jew of Color, I Find Tamika Mallory's Latest Comments Particularly Heartbreaking," *The Tablet Magazine*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/263721/as-a-queer-jew-of-color-i-find-tamika-mallorys-latest-comments-particularly-heart-breaking>; T. Krupkin, "Tamika Mallory Slams Founding Of Israel As 'Human Rights Crime,'" *Forward*, June 2, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/402315/tamika-mallory-slams-founding-of-israel-as-human-rights-crime/>.

12 Issued November 27, 2015, accessed February 15, 2018, <https://www.nwsa.org/content.asp?contentid=105> [no longer available]; cf. also E. Redden, "Another Association Backs Israel Boy-

Such incidents are routinely justified by reference to an alleged intersectional principle forbidding feminists and queer people from closing their eyes to other forms of oppression and exclusion. However, such incidents also strikingly contradict intersectionality that, with its search for similarities and intersections between different forms of oppression and resistance, undoubtedly has an inclusive aspect. Here, however, we also find a starkly exclusionary aspect: at the same time as promoting international solidarity, intersectionality as a political slogan has increasingly excluded Jewish experience in an openly anti-Zionist drift.<sup>13</sup> In order to adequately situate and assess the alliance between queer/intersectional feminism and BDS, it is necessary to briefly elaborate on the history of intersectionality and its different traditions and approaches.

## Intersectionality: Different Approaches

Intersectionality is probably one of the most important and influential analytical concepts of the new left. It embraces the multidimensionality of social processes and enquires into the intertwining operation of different forms of oppression and discrimination, in particular in terms of the categories of *race*, *gender*, and *class*. Intersectionality seeks to permeate this multi-dimensional structure of domination and to understand the various ways individuals are entangled in the totality of society. Thus, it is very much about rearticulating categories that had been ideologically set apart but which in reality are connected. Intersectionality realizes that the categories intermingle, that race cannot be viewed independent of gender and class, and that categories are not unitary but variable, that the female gender group, for instance, is not homogeneous. But at the same time, the categories themselves and the categorizing process itself require scrutiny: While the fact that race, gender, and class are not independent of one another

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cott,” *Inside Higher Ed*, December 1, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/12/01/national-womens-studies-association-joins-israel-boycott-movement>.

**13** Besides the public statements by, among others, the organizers of the Women’s March and of Chicago Dyke March, academic discourse is also prone to this development. See, e.g., A. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); J. Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” *International Journal for Middle East Studies* 45 (2013): 336–39; critically on this development, see C. Nelson, “The Intersectionality Muddle,” *Insight Higher Ed*, February 15, 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/02/15/concept-intersectionality-mutating-and-becoming-corrupted-essay>; K. Stögner, “New Challenges in Feminism: Intersectionality, Critical Theory, and Anti-Zionism,” in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization*, ed. A. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 84–111.

is recognized, categorization as an act of power has yet to be subjected to critique.<sup>14</sup> Thus, intersectionality clearly reveals the connection between epistemology and social criticism.<sup>15</sup> But from the outset it has also been associated with political activism, in particular in the wake of the Civil Rights Movements and Black Feminism in the USA.<sup>16</sup> However, a demand for empowerment on the part of marginalized groups has led to ever more talk about identities and less and less about supra-personal power relations.<sup>17</sup> Thus we observe that at times in the name of intersectionality, categorization is rather reinforced and hardened in identity politics that sometimes authoritatively subsume individuals to communities and collectivities.

Intersectionality is commonly understood as a struggle of special interests and particularities against the universal, whereas the universal itself is deciphered as a hegemonic particularity, namely a manifestation of a white, male, and heterosexual supremacy. Since the understanding of the universal is restricted to the concept of hegemony,<sup>18</sup> the struggle of special interests and particularities involves a dismissal of universal concepts altogether as manifestations of existing power relations. Angela Davis, for example, refers to this as the “tyranny of the universal.”<sup>19</sup> Jasbir Puar’s argument is similar.<sup>20</sup> Thus, a profound anti-universalism can be observed in many intersectional approaches. And it is indeed true that universal concepts like the individual, the human, equality, freedom, etc. that all these universal concepts originate historically in European Enlightenment and are thus particularities. Furthermore, they have been openly or clan-

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<sup>14</sup> This question is also raised in R. A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G.-A. Knapp, “Zu Produktivität und Grenzen intersektioneller Perspektiven,” *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* 24, no. 3 (2013): 468–501.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement (1978),” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 42, nos. 3–4 (2014): 271–80; K. Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Colour,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; A. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); P. H. Collins, “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2015): 1–20.

<sup>17</sup> Critically on this, see N. Fraser, “Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice,” in *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013), 159–73.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985); J. Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” in *Feminist Contentions. A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. S. Benhabib, J. Butler, N. Fraser and D. Cornell (New York: Routledge, 1995), 35–58.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *Freedom*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. J. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

destinely racialized and gendered, which finds expression in racially marginalized people or women being excluded from these universals. It was simply not about them when Enlightenment philosophers and politicians talked about the universal rights of man; they were excluded from the universal concept of the human, which was bound to reason, autonomy, subjectivity, or with Hannah Arendt to the right to have rights.<sup>21</sup>

But what shall we do with the universal, knowing that it stems from a particularity and knowing that the majority of people were or still are excluded? To give up universalism and universality would imply to abandon also the demand for a universal validity of human rights for all. Hence, the universal has to be viewed as going beyond the mere hegemonic particularity. The specificity is in the negativity, which it also entails—a demand for universality and a promise of a common goal that has not yet become hegemonic but which, to the contrary, exists beneath the surface of and contrary to the actual power relations. It is not possible to legitimize and to debate this form of universality but negatively: without insisting on a concept of universality we would also lose the basis to claim equal rights for all. The universal term humanity—however restricted it certainly is in reality—negatively makes evident the humanity of those who were and are excluded. We need to normatively stick to an idea of universality conceived of as a framework for—to say it with Adorno—“the better state as one in which people could be different without fear.”<sup>22</sup> Understood as a critical framework, universalism might reconcile the competing particularities without leveling them. Without such an idea of universality, we constantly end up in a hegemonic struggle of particularities. And those particularities that are the most powerful will continue to win this struggle. A common goal that embraces all can be formulated only on the basis of a reflected and dialectical concept of the universal that does not deny but that rather strengthens the particular.<sup>23</sup>

Intersectionality acknowledges particularities and seeks to promote special interests. But because the universal is strictly denied, the social reality disintegrates into a plurality of particularities or special interests that compete for recognition—without a common frame of recognition. In this situation, the particu-

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 177.

<sup>22</sup> Th. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), 103.

<sup>23</sup> On the broad discussion on the relationship between the universal and the particular and on how to think about the universal in a different way see, e.g., S. Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); S. Benhabib, “Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian Moment,” in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, ed. L. Rensmann and S. Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 31–55.

larities can rather arbitrarily be summed up into what Angela Davis calls “intersectionality of movements and struggles”<sup>24</sup>—which is a breeding ground for the strange alliances between the international queer movement and BDS. Those alliances are hardly grounded on a common goal but rather on a common foe. This is evident in Queer BDS. For example, what might motivate the Brazilian queer activist and artist Linn da Quebrada to boycott a queer film festival in Tel Aviv in order to declare her solidarity not with Palestinian queers in particular but much more generally with Palestine, which by implication centrally includes the Palestinian leadership, Hamas and Fatah, which are outspokenly homophobic?<sup>25</sup> Wouldn’t one expect a queer activist who fights for LGBTIQ+ rights worldwide to show solidarity with the organizers of a queer film festival in particular rather than with Palestine in general?

These strange alliances provide evidence that it is hardly about the common goal or interest but about a common foe—in this case Israel. Against that background we understand that when certain strands of intersectionality, the ones that I am talking about here which are advocated, among others, by Angela Davis, Jasbir Puar, or Sarah Schulman, acknowledge and promote particularities and special interests, they do not mean Jewish particularity. Rather, Jewish special interests are subsumed to the universal that is deemed tyrannical of the particular. Here we see the ideological basis for identifying Zionism or even Judaism with white supremacy.

But the question remains how it can happen that intersectionality, a concept that wants to be inclusive, excludes Jews and the Jewish experience with antisemitism. And here I should mention that there are indeed different traditions of intersectionality and different approaches to the intertwining of oppression.

Given the historical significance of antisemitism for post-Nazi societies, a critical approach to intersectionality and the use of the category of gender, therefore, gained a hearing by critical feminists in the German-speaking countries. Responding to the second women’s movement and feminist discourses, the question of what was actually meant by talk about “the woman” in society was increasingly raised with regard to women’s role in National Socialism. This happened in the form of an explicit feminist critique of certain pseudo-feminist discourses which granted women *per se*, as a gender group, collective victim status: Nazism was depicted as the apogee of patriarchy, allowing women in general to

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<sup>24</sup> Davis, *Freedom*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. L. da Quebrada, “Boicote a Israel e Carta de Angela Davis Oi gente, Linn aqui. Semanas atrás, quando divulgamos as datas e cidades da #TravaTour3, recebi muitos comentários,” Facebook, May 29, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/mclinndaquebrada/posts/boicote-a-israel-e-carta-de-angela-davis-oi-gente-linn-aquisemanas-atras-quando-d/2063352900569938/>.

be presented as victims of Nazism. This was associated with antisemitic tendencies, since patriarchy was seen as rooted in Judaism. In this way, responsibility for Nazism could surreptitiously be transferred to the Jews.<sup>26</sup> Feminist critics took issue with such antisemitic and pseudo-feminist guilt-deflection operations and investigated female participation in Nazism.<sup>27</sup> The many levels of this involvement were analyzed, for example the role of non-Jewish women in antisemitic settings and the various forms of participation by women as activists, profiteers, and collaborators in the Nazi system, which indeed thereby provided “Aryan” women with a certain “emancipation bonus.” Analysis of these matters deconstructed the often simplistic understanding of the category of gender in relation to antisemitism and racism in Nazism, while at the same time bringing to light the hidden meaning of gender. Jewish women were, it is true, not murdered because they were women but because they were Jews. Their gender was nevertheless instrumentalized in Nazi genocidal propaganda: Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS (Protection Squadron) in Nazi Germany, justified the murder of Jewish women on the bio-political grounds that they were the natural resource for the constant renewal of the “Jewish race.”<sup>28</sup> So here we see a feminist approach to intersectionality that developed against the background of National Socialism and took antisemitism as its starting point. It thus did not exclude Jews and their experience with antisemitism.

In the USA, by contrast, the problem situation was different. The background for developing intersectionality was not the experience of National Socialism but of slavery and systematic racism. Here, Black Feminism demonstrated that gender and race discrimination could not be separated. Individual identities and social positioning are viewed as a struggle of different special interests. Against that background it is understandable that intersectionality has widely been restricted to a particular notion of “race” or ethnicity connected to the social differentiation between white and Black. This makes sense in view of massive racist discrimination against Blacks and Persons of Color. However, the classical triad race-class-gender, if understood exclusively, is not capable of analytically grasp-

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. e.g., G. Weiler, *Ich verwerfe im Lande die Kriege: Das verborgene Matriarchat im Alten Testament* (Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ch. Kohn-Ley and I. Korotin, eds., *Der feministische ‘Sündenfall’? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung* (Vienna: Picus, 1994); S. Heschel, “From the Bible to Nazism: German Feminists on the Jewish Origins of Patriarchy,” *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 21 (1992): 319–33; J. Gehmacher, ed., *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte des Nationalsozialismus: Fragestellungen, Perspektiven, neue Forschungen* (Innsbruck/Vienna: Studienverlag, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> A. Messerschmidt, *Bildung als Kritik der Erinnerung: Lernprozesse in Geschlechterdiskursen zum Holocaust-Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2003), 157.

ing the complex phenomenon of hatred against Jews in global antisemitism. Implicitly, Jews are viewed as representatives of whiteness.<sup>29</sup>

This becomes evident in Black Lives Matter, a platform fighting for antiracism and antidiscrimination. Angela Davis, philosopher, civil and women's rights activist, and former leader of the Black Panther movement, has become a mouthpiece of this very diverse platform. She points to the meaning of the slogan "Black Lives Matter" in contrast to "All Lives Matter:"

If indeed all lives mattered we would not need to emphatically proclaim that "Black Lives Matter." Or, as we discover on the BLM website: Black Women Matter, Black Girls Matter, Black Gay Lives Matter, Black Bi Lives Matter, Black Boys Matter, Black Queer Lives Matter, Black Men Matter, Black Lesbians Matter, Black Trans Lives Matter, Black Immigrants Matter, Black Incarcerated Lives Matter. Black Differently Abled Lives Matter. Yes, Black Lives Matter, Latino/Asian American/Native American/Muslim/Poor and Working-Class White People's Lives Matter. There are many more specific instances we would have to name before we can ethically and comfortably claim that All Lives Matter.<sup>30</sup>

Jewish lives are not mentioned once. This is also noticeable because Black Lives Matter was a very diverse movement in the beginning, in which Jewish women also played a leading role in the fight for civil rights, but gradually withdrew with the growing tendencies of antisemitism within the campaign.<sup>31</sup> By implication they seem to be included in the All Lives—that is, the universal that is coined white and male. Not by mere coincidence parts of the Black Lives Matter movement also support BDS. This blinding out of Jews and Israel-related antisemitism bears specific consequences regarding the acknowledgement of global antisemitism and its genocidal history: intersectionality systematically fails to include the Jewish struggle for self-determination both cultural and political—intersectional identity politics fails when it comes to Jewish identity.

## Intersectional Exclusions: Race—Class—Gender

One reason for this development is the widespread restriction of intersectionality to the trinity of race, class, and gender. This framework cannot include the particular experience of Jews with antisemitism. In intersectionality, the construc-

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. D. Schraub, "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach," *Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) Review* 43, no. 2 (2019): 379–407.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, *Freedom*, 87.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. A. Isaacs, "How the Black Lives Matter & Palestinian Movements Converged," *Moments Magazine*, March/April 2016: 44–67.

tion of the racialized other is restricted to the distinction of white on the one hand and Black or Brown on the other hand—and this othering is historicized only in relation to colonialism and imperialism, while the history of antisemitism within the colonialist and imperialist societies and finally the Shoah are left out. Jewishness is conflated with whiteness, with the bizarre results of the Shoah being described at times as a “white on white” crime.<sup>32</sup> And with this it is no longer a point of reference for an intersectional analysis or activism that solely focuses on the distinction of Black/Brown and white.

Antisemitism itself is not only a form of racism, and its stereotypes do not correspond to the unambiguous image of an inferior, racially marginalized alien exploited in colonialism. Antisemitism is a projection of a non-identifiable, ubiquitous, universal power that destroys any identity. In antisemitism, modernity is being fought off, and the Jews are hated for representing modernity. In contrast to antisemites, racists claim modernity for themselves and turn it against the racialized other that is denigrated as primitive and backward. This difference between racism and antisemitism must be taken into account in order to recognize forms of antisemitism that do not operate in a racist manner but which become manifest, for example, in the hatred against Israel.

That antisemitism does not correspond to the clear-cut division between Black/Brown and white and hence to the category of race/ethnicity is one reason why it is difficult to analyze it within the mainstream intersectional framework. Likewise, Jews are not clearly assignable to the category of class, yet antisemitism itself views Jews as representing both: capitalism (in the first place finance capitalism) and communism or bolshevism. In antisemitism, Jews are basically blamed for disloyalty, inauthenticity, and hypocrisy—also with regard to the class they respectively belong to or speak for. They are depicted as ultimately disconnected and not-belonging: as bourgeois, Jews are regarded as “misfit bourgeois”;<sup>33</sup> and as speaking for the cause of the working class, they are regarded as hypocrites. In both cases, their image is that of the artificial and inauthentic, the “parasite” that would sneak in and betray the “real people.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. G. Cousin and R. Fine, “A Common Cause: Reconnecting the Study of Racism and Antisemitism,” *European Societies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 166–85.

<sup>33</sup> This is a finding of the broad Studies in the Authoritarian Personality, carried out by the exiled Frankfurt Institute of Social Research during the 1940s and 1950s in the USA. Cf. Th. W. Adorno, “Studies in the Authoritarian Personality,” in *Gesammelte Schriften* 9.1 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 311.

<sup>34</sup> K. Stögner and R. Wodak, “‘The Man Who Hated Britain’—The Discursive Construction of National Unity in the *Daily Mail*,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 13, no. 2 (2016): 193–209.

Finally, the history of antisemitism also shows that with regard to the category of gender and sexuality, Jews are not assignable: they were commonly viewed as neither male nor female but rather as challenging heteronormativity. Modern antisemitism centrally operated with images of effeminate Jews and masculinized Jewesses.<sup>35</sup>

Hence: In antisemitism Jews are not clearly assigned to the very categories with which intersectionality operates but rather positioned in between: they are rather drawn as anti-categorical, hence as questioning the validity of these categories. Correspondingly they do not represent an alien identity but rather an anti-identity that threatens any identity—be it gender, be it culture or ethnicity, be it class. So, an approach to intersectionality that is restricted to the trinity of race, class, and gender systematically fails to acknowledge Jews and their experience with antisemitism. This might be responsible for intersectionality's broad blindness toward antisemitism.

## Down with the Universal?

Then there is another conceptual problem with intersectionality that I mentioned already: its undialectical view of the tension between the universal and the particular that results in a profound anti-universalism and an uncritical stance toward particularity. “For most of our history, the very category of the human has not embraced Black people or women,” says Angela Davis, in support of Black Lives Matter.<sup>36</sup> What she does not mention, however, is that also Jews were not embraced by these concepts for most of our history. Nonetheless Jews are hardly viewed as a particularity worthy of protection but as representatives of the universal.<sup>37</sup>

Here, the old “Jewish question” reemerges in a reversed shape. In the Enlightenment period, the Jews were excluded from the universal and associated with an undesired particularity. Thus, the Jewish question targeted Jewish particularity—Jews would not suffice for the criteria of the universal. Jews were forced to give up their particularity in order to be included into the universal, which means to be granted civil rights. In certain strands of intersectionality that im-

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed analysis of the relationship between antisemitism and sexism, see K. Stögner, *Antisemitismus und Sexismus: Historisch-gesellschaftliche Konstellationen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Davis, *Freedom*, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. R. Fine and P. Spencer, *Antisemitism and the Left: On the Return of the Jewish Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

plicitly identify Jews with the universal in the shape of white privilege and hegemony, this relationship is reversed. Now Jews do not represent a particularity that should be erased but rather the universal that is deemed tyrannical and that is the target. It is indeed a characteristic of antisemitism that eventually Jews can personify whatever is abhorred, be it the particular, the false universal (sometimes equated with cosmopolitanism), or even universalism itself when it is deemed tyrannical and repressive of the particular.

But the universal is not merely a tyrannical manifestation of existing power relations but implicitly also their denunciation. Universal categories like freedom, equality, the idea of civil rights, the universal idea of the human; these concepts accuse a society that does not satisfy its own universal claim. While in intersectionality, the universal is discarded altogether in order to promote the particular, I would rather suggest a different manner to deal with it. Critically, the universal terms can be read as combat terms against unequal, iniquitous, and oppressing social relationships. Simply to deny the universal concepts will not change the subjugation of minorities within society. Basing politics on group marginalization fractures the civil polity, and therefore works against creating real opportunities for ending marginalization. Special interests need to be promoted, but they need to be sublated in the universal, in an idea of universal interest and of a common goal. So, to put it briefly: the universal is capable of criticizing itself, it fails not only because it is universal or tyrannical but also because it is not universal enough.

Critically, the universal is indeed an idea, an ideal that has not yet been fulfilled in praxis. Today, the false universal is a desired particularity that has become hegemonic due to the power structures in society. What is perceived as particular, on the other hand, is an undesired particularity that is forced to adapt to the desired one. So in an unequal society, universalism may reinforce inequality while aiming at equality. This is a dilemma owed to the structure of unfree society. The question is what we do about that. Intersectionality has realized the false universal's origin in hegemonic particularity and universalism's failure to come up to its potential—and reacts by discarding it altogether. I would suggest a different manner of thinking about the relationship between the universal and the particular though.

The universal is an expression of hegemony, but at the same time it is more. As an idea it contains the historical notion of the struggle and hope for freedom and emancipation. So it is more than just an empty space that is hegemonically filled by whatever is dominant at the moment. In the universal there also lies the idea of the universal human, that is historically developed, but that does not hegemonically assert itself but rather lies in the dark and persists negatively against what actually asserts itself hegemonically.

To promote the particular, the special interests, necessitates a common framework—universality—with which it can develop without fear. In an unfree society, however, the universal is as damaged as the particular. And this is why the latter cannot simply be leached from this entanglement and rescued as the good part. It shows itself all the traits of domination. Thus a blunt anti-universalism and pro-particularism both blind out the dialectical relationship and will not solve the problem of particularities being unrecognized.

## Queer BDS – A Common Foe instead of a Common Goal

Another disturbing development is the alliance between international feminist and queer movements and BDS. This alliance goes far beyond solidarity with Palestine. In the pinkwashing allegations, the struggle is turned into a feminist and queer issue. The allegation of pinkwashing means that the liberal Israeli legislation in regard of LGBTIQ+ rights would be instrumentalized and abused by the official Israel in order to distract from human rights violations and the occupation of the West Bank. The outrage is evidently not connected to LGBTIQ+ persons being denied fundamental rights—because then the Arab and Islamic states and societies would have to be severely criticized for not protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ and threatening and punishing individuals who openly live a sexuality other than the one that is heteronormatively prescribed. Queer BDS, instead, directs its outrage to Israel's alleged cynicism to grant fundamental rights to LGBTIQ+ and thus portray herself as a liberal society, while at the same time maintaining the occupation of the West Bank. The occupation itself is being viewed as mere harassment and as a manifestation of colonialism of the worst kind. The threat of terrorism emanating from the West Bank, on the other hand, is either not taken seriously or seen as an understandable reaction to Israel's so-called state terrorism. The same ignorance can be observed with regard to the demand of some BDS activists to have the state of Israel dismantled in a Greater Palestine “from the River to the Sea.”<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, Israel's LGBTIQ+ policy is understood as an imperialist agenda with the aim to impose Western liberal ideas on the Arab communities in order to devalue these very communities as homophobic since they do not adhere to the same standards of liberal legislation toward LGBTIQ+. This is also referred

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<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., O. Barghouti, “Strategies for Change,” filmed 2014, video, 15:58, <https://vimeo.com/75201955>; cf. also D. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2018).

to as homonationalism, an argument in the center of current queer theories and global solidarity activities.<sup>39</sup> In order to repel the universalist concept of individual rights, adherents of this discourse evoke the very *Kulturmampf*, the very cultural struggle, of which they blame their opponents. They draw an Occidentalist image of the West as uniquely narrow and materialistic. Here it becomes evident that Queer BDS is as anti-universalist as it is anti-liberal—both is expressed in collectivizing tendencies and in the vilification of individualism solely as a result of neo-liberal policies and economy.

Correspondingly, Angela Davis calls universalism, and connected to this individualism, a tyranny that needs to be opposed by the anti-colonial struggle for the liberation of Palestine.<sup>40</sup> She postulates quite abruptly that the liberation of Palestine must be the primary objective of an international queer movement. But she does not go into detail about how the interests of an international LGBTIQ+ movement and those of the Palestinian Liberation Movement actually merge, what they have in common, what the shared interest should be. We can only guess—it is the common foe, Zionism and Israel. On the other hand, Davis is quite clear on what the struggle is not about: it is not about supporting queer individuals in Palestine who refuse to see what she calls the contemptuousness behind Israel's pro-gay image. Queer BDS, according to Davis, is about directing its message at anyone who is a potential supporter of BDS—so it is about anti-Zionism and not about fighting for individual rights of LGBTIQ+.<sup>41</sup>

Oddly enough this open confession does not lead to an outcry by those Palestinian queers who openly support BDS. They seem to have accepted that the struggle is not about them and their rights but that they have to subordinate their special interests to the construct of a purportedly homogenous Palestinian people—in terms of identity formation culture seems to weigh more heavily than sexual orientation. Activists from the group alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society view themselves as part of Palestinian society. The shared enemy stereotype—Israel and Zionism—covers over the real conflicts within Palestinian society and makes it impossible for these activists to identify with Israel's LGBTIQ+ culture. This ambiguity is not surprising—but can perhaps be explained against the background of the experience of multiple discriminations of Palestinian queers.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Schulman, *Israel/Palestine*.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. Davis, "What Is Queer BDS? Pinkwashing, Intersections, Struggles, Politics," filmed 2013, video, 11:57, <https://vimeo.com/55886232>.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*.

What is noticeable, however, is that neither BDS nor Queer BDS are Palestinian inventions. David Hirsh makes that quite clear in his new book: BDS was initiated by British academics in 2002.<sup>42</sup> Correspondingly, Queer BDS was initiated by US feminist and queer intellectuals, first of all Naomi Klein and Sarah Schulman. So, anti-Zionism and BDS also count as the angry cry of the oppressed not so much in Palestine itself but in the postcolonial West, from where BDS was exported to Palestine. It might be due to this projection that queers worldwide devote themselves so enthusiastically to the Palestinian cause. A regional conflict for territory and religion is being mythicized into a global conflict whose solution would determine world peace.<sup>43</sup> In this exaggeration, the diffuse and subversive power that in antisemitism is ascribed to the Jews reemerges in regard to Israel. Therein the antisemitic, homophobic, and sexist drift of a purported pro-Palestinian argumentation by Western intellectuals becomes apparent: in the name of intersectionality and the postcolonial and anti-imperialist struggle, they subordinate the fight for women's and LGBTIQ+ rights to the general hatred of Israel.

## Prospects: Intersectionality of Ideologies

In view of such tendencies, many scholars of antisemitism see intersectionality merely as a political slogan that should be dismissed altogether. In contrast to this I would like to emphasize the analytical strength of an approach to intersectionality for a dialectical analysis of contemporary societies. Why is intersectionality important, why not dismiss it altogether? I think it is the structure of antisemitism itself that indeed demands an intersectional approach. It enables us to recognize antisemitism as a particular ideology that links moments of racism, sexism, homophobia, and nationalism. Antisemitism is furthermore a distorted reflection of class antagonism, it views Jews simultaneously as Bolsheviks and capitalists. Antisemitism is permeated by gendered, racialized, ethnicized, sexualized, economicistic, and nationalistic moments. And it is precisely this entanglement of ideologies that makes much for the specific effectiveness of antisemitism as an ideology covering over real social conflicts and antagonisms. In view of this I shall call antisemitism the intersectional ideology par excellence.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*, 100 – 101.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. Davis, “Race et impérialisme, intervention lors des 10 ans de la Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR),” (speech, Paris, May 8, 2016), <http://indigenes-republique.fr/race-et-imperialisme-intervention-dangela-davis-race-et-imperialisme-lors-des-10-ans-du-pir/>.

Antisemitism can hardly be analyzed in isolation. To recognize its manifold sources and forms requires an intersectional approach that regards ideologies as constellations and as tenacious but flexible moments within a comprehensive, anti-emancipatory ideological syndrome. According to political convenience, one ideology may come to the fore, covering over another but without the other fully losing its effectiveness. Indeed, it would be truer to say that individual ideologies gain and renew their specificity precisely from their interaction with other ideologies. One of the most important questions is why and how antisemitism persists through social change, that is, how and why antisemitism can be so flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. By using an intersectional approach, we are able to see that this might be due to the special structure of antisemitism as an ideology: it is not a unitary thing, but it is interrelated with other ideologies and intermingles with them. It may also be covered over by other ideologies that are structurally related. Thus, a nationalism can cover over an antisemitism that may not be expressed openly any more in public due to a taboo after 1945. Similarly, also anti-nationalism can cover over antisemitism, like an anti-Zionism that goes far beyond a mere critique of Israeli politics. Antisemitism may also be covered over by anti-feminism and sexism as we can see in the anti-gender discourses led by right-wing populist parties all over Europe and the US.<sup>44</sup>

In view of the special structure of antisemitism—its effectiveness through moments of racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, sexism, and homophobia—I should like to speak of antisemitism as a paradigm of intersectionality and thus as the intersectional ideology par excellence.

To put it the other way round, for intersectionality a focus on ideologies also implies an additional effort of self-reflection to counter signs of terminological and conceptual stagnation and identity-political contractions. An intersectional approach must not restrict itself to the idea that society is structured by specific categories but expose, in a critique of domination, the social grounds and conditions of these categories. Likewise, the very process of constant categorization needs to be criticized. The approach proposed here, therefore, takes a critical stand where intersectionality supports an identitarian and cultural relativistic discourse that may, under the cover of antiracism, tilt toward antisemitism and homophobia. The aim of such criticism is to ensure the approach remains

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. K. Stögner, “Angst vor dem ‘neuen Menschen’—Zur Verschränkung von Antisemitismus, Antifeminismus und Nationalismus in der FPÖ,” in *AfD und FPÖ: Antisemitismus, Nationalismus und Geschlechterverhältnisse*, ed. S. Grigat (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 137–61.

viable for a comprehensively critical and feminist theoretical activity and available for an emancipatory practice.

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