

## Gilad and Clara: Conversations of a 'well-poisoner' and an 'anti-Semite'

Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.

*(Albert Einstein)*

**In cases of doubt – stay coherent!**

*(Kurt Flasch, German philosopher and historian)*



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### Growing up

*Clara: What does the Holocaust mean to you?*

Gilad: This is pretty loaded question. The answer is undoubtedly a multilayered one.

*Clara: So let's have a look at the layers and loads in this conversation. How did the Holocaust come into your life?*

Gilad: I grew up in Israel, I was surrounded by people with tattooed forearms; some of them were members of my family.

*Clara: So the Holocaust was part of your reality from the day you were born?*

Gilad: That is hard for me to say although it was clearly there. But I do not think that we, Israelis born in the 1960s, were that concerned about the Holocaust. Both my parents were born in Palestine. On my father's side, my great great grandfather was buried on Mount Olive. But mine is not, of course, is a universal story. My wife probably sees it differently. Both her parents lived in Europe during the war and suffered a lot. Still the Israeli society in which I grew up looked down on Holocaust survivors. They were seen as weak diaspora characters, people who weren't quick enough to respond to the Jewish Nationalist call and paid heavily.

*Clara: Are you really telling me that Israelis had no sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust!?*

Gilad: I guess that here I happen to be the messenger. Until the late 1960s there was an element of dismissal, repression and concealment of the Holocaust in Israel. But there is more that helps to explain this. In Israel in the 1960s, the 70s and even the 80s I can not remember Holocaust survivors asking for sympathy or even empathy. It seemed to us as if most of them wanted to put the Holocaust behind them. To move on, to forget. I tend to believe, and I am not alone, that it was the so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> generation that politicised the Holocaust. It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation that made this chapter into a contemporary pillar of Israeli identity. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation found it difficult or perhaps impossible to deal with their parents' plight. In 'The Wandering Who,' I elaborated on this topic. As you may know, many of Israeli thinkers have been concerned by this topic. I would recommend watching Yoav Shamir's film, 'Defamation' in order to understand the subtlety of the Israeli debate.

*Clara: Now this is extremely interesting. Listen to this description of post-World-War-II Germans taken from the book 'The inability to mourn':*

*"Denial of the past has replaced work of mourning along the Freudian formula ,remember, repeat, work through'. ,The manic cleaning of the slate through the Wirtschaftswunder – Germany's magical economic recovery –, has made it possible to regard Nazism ,as an intermezzo of childhood disease' on Germany's path to democracy (p.25). The result of this ,autistic attitude' was a ,conspicuously emotional rigidity' of the Germans. This emotional rigidity could be perceived everywhere in our society "(p.38)*

*In Western Germany, by the way, the first generation didn't talk, the second generation was the angry one, the third generation (if not 'right-wing revisionist' or 'antifa') tries to understand. I don't really know about the situation in Eastern Germany.*

*Does that seem similar to your experience?*

G: I contend that this results from a systematic and institutional repression mechanism that verges on complete denial. I suppose that for the Germans the Holocaust chapter created cognitive dissonance that has never matured into a universal lesson. Maybe the time is ripe to look at the Holocaust as an integral part of your past and understand it within the context of an historical continuum. Such an approach may prevent the next global disaster.

*Clara: You might be right; what you are saying here is provides a lot of food for thought. I think it is necessary to have a look at the reasons for the denial, both the wish to look only forward and the repression of the past. And of course, its place within German history. But let us explore this one step at a time and have a look at the personal experience first. In my family we grew up with fathers who didn't talk about the war and mothers who talked about the war as if it had been a fate that had come upon them: the husband killed, the waiting for the fiancé who was a prisoner of war in the Sowjetunion, the bombs, the hunger, the tearing apart of families, the sticking together as a family, the partition of Germany and the tearing apart of families again. I learned very early that war is something terrible and this became a basic premise for me. Warmongers are wrong and it is essential to stand up against them.*

Gilad: I am pretty aware of that response to history and I am fully aware of German suffering. But what was the role of the Holocaust in all of that?

*Clara: It wasn't really mentioned in my family. But when I was sixteen I saw the original films about concentration camps and industrially-organized murder and I was profoundly shocked. And this was not fiction! The Nazis had made these films themselves and had seemed to be proud of what they were doing.*

*I took part in a youth exchange in Israel, I saw the names and portraits of people who had been killed and I spoke to survivors. The word 'ramp' has never been a normal word for me again. A ramp is a place where people were selected to live or die by doctors whose duty was to preserve human lives! This was reality. And it would not go away if I looked into another direction.*

*So the Holocaust, too, became part of my moral compass, to prevent something like the Holocaust from happening again a kind of a mission in my life.*

*At some stage the Holocaust did become important in your life, when was that?*

Gilad: Hard to say exactly. But it is clear that there was a shift in Israeli society in the 1970s. Some believe that it had something to do with the great victory in 1967. Others believe that it was actually the traumatic defeat in 73. And a few believe that it had something to do with Menachem Begin's victory in 77. Begin was a right wing Polish Jew who was not a part of the 'sabra' narrative. Begin peppered his speeches with Holocaust anecdotes. In truth, the shift was probably occasioned by a combination of these factors. I grew in the midst of that cultural shift in the treatment of the Holocaust.

*Clara: What about guilt? Did you learn in Israel that Germans were cruel and guilty? My experience in Israel was that people didn't blame me, personally. But the question of guilt was always in the room.*

Gilad: This is a fascinating topic. Zionism was and still is a nationalist, racist and expansionist ideology. It didn't just resemble Nazi ideology, it actually predated Nazism by almost three decades (the first Zionist Congress took place in Basel in 1897). Some political elements within the Israeli right were proto-fascist (Menachem Begin's Herut Party for instance). And it was actually the Israeli 'Left' that ethnically cleansed the Palestinians and prevented their return to their land through discriminatory race laws that were far too similar to the Nuremberg race Laws. The young Israeli Army pretty much copied the Blitzkrieg military doctrine, a military strategy that led to the 1967 miracle victory. So at least in its early days, the Israeli attitude to Germany and Nazism was somehow mixed. No one loved Nazis but admiration for Germans and German culture was deeply embedded in some segments of the still young Israeli society. We are dealing with a love/hate relationship. We have, once again, stumbled upon a cognitive dissonance at the heart of Israeli/Zionist culture. I can try to explain this. For Israelis in the post Holocaust years, the Shoah was a shameful event. It made Diaspora Jews look hopeless. 'Lambs to the slaughter' is how they were described in Israel. Young Israelis preferred not to associate themselves with that disastrous Jewish chapter. They regarded themselves as the healthy alternative. In my immediate family there was always a fascination with Germans and their culture. I even allow myself to think that my peers didn't see Germans as enemies. Within my immediate circle the big war belonged to the past.

*Clara: That was also my experience with my Israeli peers during the youth exchange.*

Gilad: But it is also true that my right wing grandfather, a veteran terrorist who had settled in Palestine in 1936, deeply hated Germany, he vowed never to visit Germany or to own a German car. In short, the interaction among Israelis, Germans and the Holocaust is not as simple a topic as some want it to be. More interesting for me is to hear how the question of German guilt become part of your life, after all you were born almost a decade after the end of the war.

*Clara: It was very early. As a kid of eight I was in Tansania as a missionary's daughter at an American boarding school. The year the Berlin Wall was built my American school-mates blamed me for being a Nazi and a communist at the same time. So yes, I learned that it was 'the' Germans who had been responsible, in the case of the Berlin wall in cahoots with the Russians.*

*Mercifully I didn't bring my parents' and relatives' guilt into the picture until later. Then I found that this was a very wide field indeed, which could hurt a lot. There was the whole range from a grandfather awarded the title 'acknowledged antifascist' in the former GDR, family members being silently critical of what was going on over collaboration to enthusiastic support and even committing war crimes. There were quite a lot of secrets to discover for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.*

*But back to you. Obviously the Holocaust shaped your life a great deal. How was that?*

Gilad: I can't really say it did. As I mentioned before it wasn't a pillar of my identity. But I guess that it was true that the Holocaust was there to deliver us as Israelis, a clear hawkish message--we were raised to fight to death and were traumatised by *phantasmic* future attempts in our lives 'as a collective' (Arabs, anti-Semites, USSR, PLO, Iran etc.) I guess that it was this deep sense of PRE-TSD that contributed to the incredible Israeli victory in 1967. In their minds, my father and his peers were preventing a Holocaust by means of a Jewish made blitzkrieg.

*Clara: PRE TSD?*

Gilad: PRE TSD (Pre Traumatic Stress Disorder) as opposed to POST TSD refers to the idea of one being traumatised by a future phantasmic event. I can provide many examples of PRE TSD manifestations that have shaped Jewish history and actually led to total disasters.

*Clara: But the danger was real. Israel was surrounded by hostile neighbours.*

Gilad: You have to ask yourself, why is the 'danger real'? Didn't Zionism promise to civilize diaspora Jews by means of a 'homecoming', making them people like all other people, a collective of people bonded with the soil and living in peace and harmony with their neighbours? At some point we will have to ask ourselves, why did Zionism fail? Where did it go wrong? Why didn't Israel managed to love its neighbours and to be loved in return? I believe that the answers to these questions extend far beyond Israeli politics and Zionist ideology. We are digging once again into the so called 'Jewish Question.'

In my teens it began to occur to me that we were living on someone else's land. I realised that Israel was a State but Palestine was the land. While in the army and especially at the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lebanon War (1982), it became clear to me that we, the Israelis were on the wrong side of history. As I mentioned in a few of my writings, when I visited Ansar, and

witnessed Palestinians and Lebanese locked behind barbed wire, guarded by towers and machine guns, for the first time I understood that in this battle, I was the Nazi.

It was actually the internalisation of the meaning of the Holocaust that transformed me into a strong opponent of Israel and Jewish-ness. It was the Holocaust that made me a devoted supporter of Palestinian rights, resistance and the Palestinian right of return.

*Clara: So the Holocaust holds a universal message for you and you had to realize that it was not seen like that in Israel?*

Gilad: Exactly. I knew that my days in Israel were numbered.

*Clara: It was similar for me. During the Israel exchange even as a 17-year-old teenager I wondered about how my German „father generation“ could be full of admiration for the Israelis who had just won the 6-days war and how no Israeli complained about applause from the wrong side. The former victims and the former perpetrators joined into the celebration of the victory together. When I asked them about the fate of the Palestinians the answer was: „The Arabs want to throw us/them into the sea“.*

*I picked apples together with 200 young people in a Kibbutz. A great peace project. Some Arab youths from Nazareth made friends with us. I was invited to one of their homes. And strictly reprimanded by the Kibbutz people because „those Arabs are dangerous“.*  
*So that is when I learned that you cannot always call a spade a spade. There seem to be good and bad spades. This made me critical of Israel's politics, but of course also of the American war in Vietnam and the unconditional support Germany gave to our 'big brother'. It made me take part in the big German peace movement in the 1980s and turned me into a staunch supporter of the German 'Entspannungspolitik', the policy of détente in Europe, which led to the fall of the wall in 1989.*

*And you weren't content with being a Jazz musician in Britain. You also became a political activist.*

Gilad: I am really not a political activist, I have never been part of any political organisation and, in general, I stay away from activists. For one reason or another, activists always know the answers. They follow commandments, jargons, regimes of correctness. I am instead a philosopher, my task is to refine the questions. I am pretty good in opening the discourse, offering alternative perspectives. I have been subject to some intensive defamation and smear campaigns, however, it is now clear beyond doubt that my work on identity politics in general and Jewish identity politics in particular was simply ahead of its time. I may not sound modest, but I believe that even my bitterest detractors would admit by now that this has been the case.

## Blaming the Victim?

*Clara: You know, when I saw the pictures of the kids killed in Gaza while playing on the beach in 2014, I was shocked again. But I was told to accept that these people had brought their fate upon themselves using their kids as human shields. Hadn't I heard that before? Didn't the Nazis say the Jews deserved to die because they had brought so much evil upon the world?*

*And you have just told me, that the Holocaust survivors were treated kind of the same by their fellow-citizens.*

*So here's my next question: When I read your book I couldn't help to think,*

*„Does Gilad really want to say that the Jews were responsible themselves for what had happened to them“?*

*In chapter 21 you write: „65 years after the liberation of Auschwitz we should be able to ask – why? Why were the Jews hated? Why did European people stand up against their neighbours“?*

*Isn't that just like telling a victim of rape that she should have dressed more properly or stayed at home altogether? That is outrageous!*

Gilad: 'Don't blame the victim' is a popular, however problematic, proclamation. It begs for attention. We must ask some crucial questions who and what is a victim? What forms victimhood? What are the circumstances in which a crime is taking place? As you may imagine, I actually gave a lot of thought to these questions. The ethical judgment here is far from being a universal algorithm. On the contrary, it is the particularity of the judgment that aspires at a universal maxim instead.

Let's for instance examine the case of young woman X who was raped in the park in the middle of the night. She was subject to sexual assault something she didn't consent to. The case of a rape is established. X was a victim. However, we also learn that X made a conscious decision to cross the park half naked, in the middle of the night, knowing that this given park is known for its bad reputation as far as sex predatory activity is concerned. Will you agree that while X is a victim of a rape, she, to a certain extent, brought it on herself? She took an unreasonable risk. And what would you say about X if you learned that she has been raped in the same spot on a regular basis five times a week for the last two decades? X is still a victim, those who rape her are still criminals, yet would you be interested to examine X's mental making?

The case of Jews, Jewry and Jewish history is actually different altogether. To start with, we are dealing with an ethnic group (as opposed to an individual). Furthermore, I myself do not deal with people; Moshe, Yossef or Yaakov. I deal instead with ideology, culture and politics. The answer to the questions 'Why were the Jews hated? Or why did European people stand

up against their neighbours?’ led me to a study of the culture, the ideology and the politics that form Jewish identity. I ask ‘what is it in Jewish culture, ID politics and ideology that evokes animosity in so many different places and different times in history’?

I do believe, and this is fundamental to my work, that Jews like all other people are born innocent. I argue that some elements in Jewish culture, such as tribal chosenness, have made things complicated for many Jews all along Jewish history.

*Clara: Wait a moment: of course this victim isn't acting very sensibly. But still, I hold to it that I want to live in surroundings where my safety is secured and I do not have to expect that kind of "activity", no matter how eccentric I may be ...*

Gilad: This is somehow more fundamental than just being eccentric.

I believe that since Jewish history is a chain of disasters, we must understand once and for all ‘what is it in Jewish culture, politics and ideology that puts Jews, the people, at risk’. By the way, I didn't invent this question. It is this question exactly that initiated the Zionist movement. It was thinkers like Bernard Lazare who elaborated on the Jewish question in an attempt to grasp, once and for all ‘why the Jews?’ The difference between early Zionists (Herzl, Lazare, Borochoy, Nordau etc.) and myself is that early Zionists believed that Jews could be morphed collectively into something else. I am not sure that this is the case. I am not convinced that there is a collective solution to the Jewish question. I believe that some break out as individuals. I hope that I, myself, have managed.

*Clara: It's also what communists tend to believe in, that they can forge a new and better kind of human being. I used to think that way, too. Today I have some doubts about how realistic that idea is.*

*But back to the question of 'blaming the victim' once more:*

*It is a well-established fact that victims of abuse tend to seek the reason for what has happened to them in themselves. The guilt they feel is a way of finding a meaning in the egregious things they had to suffer, of trying to control the uncontrollable. Aren't you doing exactly the same?*

Gilad: I certainly do. I believe that considering Jewish history being a chain of disasters, Jews must examine themselves by means of self reflection instead of accusing the Goyim. As you know, I am a follower of the Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger who revealed to us that in art self realization is realization of the world. The more I look into myself, the better I understand the world around me.

*Clara: Well, I'm not sure. Many victims blame themselves for things they are 100% not guilty of. That is not a healthy way to cope with traumatic experiences.*

Gilad: Who decides? How do we figure out the exact percentage of our accountability? Should we care about such percentage? I actually believe that understanding reality in categorical terms is way more helpful. Examining, for instance, the case of X may reveal that being a rape victim satisfies X's needs. I guess that you can extend this analogy as you wish.

*Clara: If it were that way, we would indeed have to think about X's frame of mind. But for us who do not draw satisfaction from being a victim it maybe all comes down to the question of responsibility. To take responsibility for the things I can change and to accept that there are a lot of things I cannot. It's hard enough for an individual to find out which is which. Can a group go through such a process? Having started and lost two world wars the Germans as a collective have been blamed and blaming themselves for all the bad things which happened to them as a result. Now some people have started questioning whether the shock and awe tactics of bombing Dresden and other cities really was necessary to win the war (not to forget the atomic bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki). My mother, for example, lost everything she had during the bombing of Leipzig, luckily no one in the family was killed. But this is seen by others as an attempt of justifying the atrocities committed by my people.*

*However, if an individual like yourself claims to take responsibility for a whole group, the other members might not be amused. No wonder that some of your fellow Jews call you a well-poisoner.*

Gilad: I do not think that those people are my 'fellow Jews' for I haven't been a Jew for many years and they aren't exactly my fellows. Rather than blaming Jews I ask Jews to look into their culture, ideology and politics and ask themselves why? Why pogroms, the Holocaust, anti-Semitism? Zionism promised to transform the Jews, to make them loved, it failed miserably, why? If Jews are struggling to come with an answer, as I mention before, early Zionism is a good start. I, once again recommend the work of [Lazare](#), [Borochoy](#), [Ehad Ha'am](#) and even Herzl. Responsibility, if you wish, starts with self reflection.

*Clara: So how would you describe yourself if not as a Jew?*

Gilad: To start with I avoid any form of political identification ... I am a jazz artist, I am a writer, I am British, I am an ex Jew and ex Israeli, I follow the message of Christ but do not follow any organized religion.

## Revising History

*Clara: You are quoted as saying: "I think that Israel is far worse than Nazi Germany".*

Gilad: My comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany was limited to a discussion on collective accountability in democratic vs. authoritarian regimes. I argued that since Israel defines itself as the 'only democracy in the Middle East' its barbarian policies reflect on the Israeli society as a whole, something that can't be said about Nazi Germany. Once democracy is abolished, collective accountability is removed!

*Clara: Obviously literature dealing with the question 'what is it in German history that has led Germans into two disasters in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?' could fill a lot of library shelves. For years we were taught that World War I was the Germans' fault alone, now we know that it was more complicated. And the collective accountability of the Germans of that time and consequently the accountability of Germany as a nation for everything that happened in World War II is still presented as fact in a host of films supporting the narrative of the unique German guilt and explaining it with Hitler's and the Germans' dangerous ideology and madness alone. Now you argue that this narrative is not valid because Nazi Germany was not a democracy.*

Gilad: This is true.

*Clara: I can see your point. While we have to accept the fact that unbelievable atrocities actually did happen and our parents were involved, we also have long discovered that Hitler was supported by a majority of the national elites. Therefore it is important to keep in mind that there were powerful interests behind the national-socialist project, not only those German people who happily cried 'Heil Hitler' and were indoctrinated by the Nazi education system.*

*Besides, Hitler kicked out the very people in his movement who took the word 'socialist' seriously, at an early stage of his 'reign'.*

*And there's another thing: the Germans couldn't have sustained the war as long as they did without the help from foreign, especially US-American, bankers and industrialists. We have also found out that the western allies would have loved to see Germany destroy the Sowjetunion before being defeated herself.*

Gilad: I must admit that the carefulness that I hear in your voice and the manner in which you describe an historical chapter that happened more than 70 years ago, suggests to me that instead of talking about the past, we better discuss the fear of talking about the past. What are we afraid of? What are you afraid of? Who plants this fear in us and why? What method was used to plant this carefulness? And obviously who benefits from us being afraid to look back?

*Clara: Those are some really good questions to ask. Disturbing questions, too. One thing is that even though Nazi Germany was not a democracy, I wouldn't want to let every German of the time off the hook. There is such a thing as a personal responsibility. And a lot of Nazis did not take it. On the contrary – in Western Germany they were to be found in a lot of powerful positions and others went straight to the USA.*

Gilad: I totally agree here. Rather than collective responsibility we are talking about personal accountability. This principle wasn't really applied after the war, neither by West Germany, the USSR or the Americans.

*Clara: But I guess the big fear is that for a lot of people questioning the narrative means justifying Hitler and the Nazis, which means that, if we go on doing that, we will soon have a '4<sup>th</sup> Reich'. Never trust a German. Racist exceptionalism and 'Weltherrschaft' are part of their DNA.*

*And there are that kind of right-wing Germans, I do not want to be found 'in bed' with, who are revising history and demanding free speech with the aim of making Germany great again by expelling foreigners and burning their homes.*

Gilad: I do understand what you are saying. I am not impressed at all by many so-called 'revisionists' who actually happen to be as dogmatic as their foes and actually prefer to dictate their own narratives. Therefore, I am not for 'revisionists', I am for revisionism. For history reinstating itself as a dynamic and elastic realm as opposed to a fixed dogma. Needless to mention that I reject all forms of bigotry and violence.

*Clara: Something which seems to frighten certain people. But I must admit that I felt quite offended when I was called a potential Nazi for demanding to take your ideas seriously and not just dismiss you as a dangerous 'Holocaust denier'.*

Gilad: I guess that you are referring above to Rubikon's Jens Wernicke and Elias Davidson who worked hard to defame me yet did little but exposing themselves for what they are for real. I sadly must point out that their kind of behaviour is exactly the type of Nazi authoritarianism we were set to oppose. It is pretty amusing to find out that the so called 'anti Nazis' perform some of the most problematic Nazi symptoms. But it is hardly surprising. The Anti Fascists are often operating as AFF-Anti Fascist Fascists. The same can be said on anti Zionists, most often they perform the AZZ tactics. They are nothing but Anti Zionist Zionists.

*Clara: I don't think that anti-Semitism is part of my DNA. I would like to understand what really made the Nazis great and investigate whether it is true that we are on the way to a new fascist regime and especially new pogroms against Jews, as some people seem to fear when they watch the rise of right-wing populist parties. I have the impression that, if there is*

*a group of people in contemporary Germany, it is not the Jews but the Muslims. And this enemy has been systematically established in the media since 9/11.*

Gilad: That is exactly part of my 'affair' with the Holocaust and with the past in general. I insist that history is the attempt to narrate the past as we move along. History is a revisionist adventure, and at the core ethical thinking for revising the past offers an opportunity to envisage a better future. In the open I am against all history laws. I oppose the Holocaust or any other chapter in the past becoming a religion, a dogma. Living in Europe for more than two decades I am really upset by the emergence of such history laws.

*Clara: You are talking about a Holocaust religion or dogma. What do you mean by that?*

Gilad: It is a fixed narrative like that lost all elastic and dynamic qualities. It is there to sustain the primacy of Jewish suffering and European guilt. However, the problem is that this primacy has matured into a pretext for global conflicts with no end. Look at Palestine. Look at the Neocon wars: Syria, Iraq, Libya, Iran. Once again we do not think in ethical terms. We dismiss the universal appeal. My point is clear and simple. If the Holocaust is the new religion, then let me be an atheist.

*Clara: So would you argue that the 'Holocaust religion' is the origin of Israeli Pre TSD you talked about at the beginning of our conversation?*

Gilad: ... not at all. Pre TSD is embedded in the Jewish thinking. Here is an old Jewish joke for you:

A Jewish telegram: 'Begin worrying, details will follow ...'. And it is far from being a Jews only affair. Anglo America post 9/11 politics is similarly sustained by self inflicting terror - We are tormented by phantasmaic prophecies and work hard to make these prophecies being fulfilled.

*Clara: We are walking on extremely thin ice here. Anyone who dares to touch the official Holocaust narrative is easily accused of being a Holocaust-denier, which is against the law not only in Germany. You obviously do not deny the Holocaust; as you have explained, you reject its function as justification of current policies and politics. Everyone who really reads your books or listens to your interviews can easily find that out. Besides, you have not been found guilty of such a crime by a German court.*

Gilad: Not only I wasn't found guilty, I have never been questioned by a single law enforcement authority worldwide about anything I have ever said or written. My activity is well within the boundaries of the law, in your country and every other country. My books are available world-wide including in Germany and Israel. However, I better mention it once again. I am not fearful of the past, including my own past being questioned or revised.

*Clara: Still, you are accused of 'Holocaust denial', a reproach which has been used to discredit journalists, i.e. KenFm, or a whole movement, i.e. 'Friedenswinter' (a German peace initiative started in 2014) and everyone who is in contact with those accused.*

*I think there are very powerful interests behind this. Promoting peaceful relationships with Russia, criticizing the wars Germany is supporting world-wide and from our territory, i.e. by allowing the US to operate their drones from the airbase Ramstein, provokes quite heavy negative reactions from those in power. There is a strong connection between revising the Holocaust history and questioning current German politics. Unfortunately those who try to split the critical movement have been quite successful.*

Gilad: If they were successful, they wouldn't react in panic as they do. They are in the wrong side of history and they know it. An adequate study of WWII within the historical context of English Speaking empire will reveal that those who burned Hamburg, flattened Dresden and nuked Hiroshima and Nagasaki have continued doing the same thing in Korea and Vietnam. They kept supporting Israel's expansionist program, they brought total destruction on Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Iran seems to be next. An appropriate historical discussion will detect an institutional negligence of human life at the core of Anglo American politics. The Holocaust together with German guilt are there to prevent us from witnessing the crimes that are committed in our names in front of our eyes. For the Americans and Brits it is much easier to build Holocaust museums instead of looking back at slavery or the crimes of the empire, especially because these crimes are far from being resolved yet.

### **Anti-Semitism, Racism and cultural identity**

*Clara: Let's talk a bit more about anti-Semitism. The same people who warned me off have accused you of being an anti-Semite. They quote you as writing: 'Actually I carefully carve out the contempt for the Jew in me'. Now I understand that an anti-Semite is a person who discriminates against Jews as a race. So are you a racist who hates his own race instead of a different one?*

Gilad: I believe that Jewish race is an empty signifier. In 'The Wandering Who' I deal with those who identify politically as Jews. I do not deal with 'the Jews', I do not touch issues to do with race. I do not engage with Judaism (the Jewish religion) either. But here is a question you and me and everyone else should ask ourselves: How is it possible that me hating the Jew in me concerns so many Jews who have nothing to do with me? Is it possible that my so called 'self hatred' is a concern for other Jews because it reveals a deep problem at the heart of Jewish Identity most self identified Jews work hard to conceal? I know many gay self haters, they are not subject to pressure by their identitarian community. Self hating Brits are getting the pass ticket. Even self hating Catholics get away with their 'crime.' But Jewish self hatred seems as a vile crime. We should ask why? Why was Jesus nailed to the

cross? Why were Spinoza and Uriel Da Costa subject to vile *Herem*? The answer is probably in the Old Testament. The prophets were probably the Athenians amongst the Jerusalemites.

*Clara: I could say about myself that 'I carefully carve out my contempt for the Protestant in me', the meanness, the exaggerated work ethos, the inability to relax and just have fun once in a while ... Nobody would call that racist, these are deeply-embedded cultural features, some of them I embrace, some of them I try to overcome.*

Gilad: This is indeed a good place to start. Why you can hate the protestant in you, yet I can't despise the Jew in me. It is hard to deny the fact that, despite Jews not being a race, Jewish politics is always racially driven. This obviously applies to Israel, the Jewish State, and its discrimination of Palestinians (look at Israel's Law of Return), but it also applies to the Jewish anti Zionists such as JVP. You, Clara, can subscribe to JVP (Jewish Voice of Peace), you can donate money but you will never become their secretary. Why? Because you are not racially qualified. I guess that me pointing at this makes me into a public enemy.

*Clara: How do I 'qualify' as a Jew according to the JVP rules? Must I be born one or is converting to Judaism enough?*

Gilad: You don't, but I guess that conversion to Judaism is an option.

*Clara: It seems to me that it is very hard to distinguish between 'Jewish race' and 'Jewish culture'. You talk of 'culture' and are called a 'racist'. You call JVP racist when I could change my religious beliefs to become a member ... It is all very confusing ...*

Gilad: I do not know whether it is hard to distinguish between race and culture. However, what I do instead is pointing at a racist culture at the core of different Jewish political schools. But, let's take it further. Do we really have to convert into Judaism in order to criticise the Jewish state? The meaning of it is devastatingly simple. The discourse of the oppressed is shaped by the sensualities of the oppressors ...

I am critical of all forms of racism and biologically oriented politics, and this includes Jewish racism as well as Nazism!

Nazis prosecuted Jews for being Jews. Jews were subject to persecution for what they were rather than what they did. Such a transition is indeed the death of innocence. But in the Jewish State Palestinians are discriminated for not being Jews. I do insist to put reason into play until such an exercise is officially banned.

*Clara: So you see no basic difference between the way Palestinians are treated by Jews in Israel and the way the Jews were treated in Nazi Germany? But weren't that perfectly rational pseudo-scientific definition of race and the skilful bureaucratic and 'industrialized'*

*organization of genocide racism brought to heights beyond any human imagination? And wasn't thus the Holocaust the unique event of genocide in history?*

Gilad: This is a good question that should be discussed openly and not with a gun to your head.

But let's extend this question; was the Holocaust more unique than the Holodomor? Is two years in Auschwitz more unique than 70 years in Gaza? I don't know the answers to these questions, and I do not think that we need to answer these questions. As I show in my book 'Being in time' this is the all point of being Athenian as opposed to being a Jerusalemite. Athenians are dedicated to the primacy of questioning. The Jerusalemites impose answers by means of commandments and Mitzvoth (Political Correctness). I believe that these questions must be open and subject to constant examination and revision.

*Clara: That makes a lot of sense. There are a lot of questions to be raised. For one it is well known that racist theories were not a unique Nazi thing. There was a strong Anglo-Saxon scientific movement promoting the killing or at least sterilisation of the 'unfit' and it is very probable that Hitler read a lot of that kind of literature while writing 'Mein Kampf' in prison. And some people also would surely like to know why the Allies didn't do more to prevent the Jewish genocide. They quite certainly were informed about what was going on. And they could have bombed the railways.*

Gilad: Exactly. If you really want to talk about Hitler and Nazism, I'll be frank with you. Race and racism weren't invented by Hitler or the Nazi Party. As I mentioned before, Zionism that promised to 'make the Jews great again' was born 30 years before Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' and Jewish exceptionalism being racially driven was born 3000 years before Zionism.

I am the last person to advocate biologically driven politics. In fact I criticize New Left Identitarianism for being Hitlerian. I am equally critical of White identitarians. But when you read 'The Destruction of Dresden' by David Irving you grasp the extent of the genocidal intent in the minds of Anglo-American's policy makers.

I want to live in a world where ideas can be exchanged freely and ethical thinking is explored with no limit. In fact, we are having this discussion now because those elementary liberties are fading rapidly in front of our eyes. This entire Holocaust phobia has proven to pave the path to a new banality of evil that is as blind as the old one.

## Pre TSD, Zionism and Empire

*Clara: After having read Exodus as a teenager I was convinced that after the Holocaust finding a new home in Israel and fighting anyone who threatened their existence was quite an understandable reaction of the Jewish people.*

Gilad: Do you mean killing Arabs and taking their land in the name of Jewish suffering? If this is what you mean, you should bear in mind that Arabs and Palestinians in particular had nothing to do with Jewish suffering. In fact, in Palestine and in the Arab world Jews were living in peace and harmony with their Muslim and Christian neighbours.

As I explained before, with a manifestation of Pre TSD the so-called 'victims' envisage an imaginary hostile reality. The only way to prevail is, to act first, to fight anyone who might be in the way. Next we see the erection of ghetto walls, the prospect of peace and harmony evaporate. In short, welcome to the contemporary dystopia.

Israelis today, for instance, are genuinely tormented by a future nuclear conflict with Iran. Yet, instead of resolving this volatile situation trying to calm the tension, Israeli politics and Jewish Lobby activity actually escalate this tension. The reality on the ground is devastating. The entire region is under a threat of a war that can easily deteriorate into a nuclear conflict. Zionism was initially a promise to 'civilize' the Diaspora Jews by means of 'homecoming.' We, I include myself in order to simplify the argument, were supposed to evolve into 'people like all other people.' This surely meant living in peace with our neighbours. This project clearly failed.

We are told by most anti Zionists that Zionism hijacked Judaism. I believe that the facts on the ground suggest that it is (almost) the other way around.

Zionism that was initially an anti Jewish movement (some would say anti-Semitic) was hijacked by Jewishness (as opposed to Judaism). It was once again the chosenness (Jewish exceptionalism) that abolished from the initial affinity towards the universal. It was Jewishness that guaranteed that Israelis would be unlike any other people. It was Jewishness that retained chosenness at the core of the Zionist thought. By the way, this exceptionalist shift within early Zionism was subject to a vivid debate.

*Clara: Wasn't Einstein still an old-school Zionist, when he wrote to Chaim Weizmann in 1929 that if Jews could not coexist peacefully with Arabs, "then we have learned absolutely nothing during our 2,000 years of suffering?"*

Gilad: Indeed and this is the crux of the matter. Einstein realised already in 1929 that hostility towards the indigenous is sadly embedded in Jewish culture. Einstein could see as early as 1929 that the Zionist movement was already making the Palestinians into the new Goyim. This was probably devastating for him and it clearly produces a devastating understanding of the Jewish continuum.

*Clara: You argue that it has basically been the belief in their chosenness which has led to the many disasters in Jewish history.*

*Now this is not a Jewish 'speciality'. I have always been wondering how Europeans (and later US-Americans as well) felt entitled to conquer the world, to take the land, exploit the resources and manpower, impose their culture and religion on foreign peoples and killing them when they were in the way. This feeling of racial and cultural superiority has always puzzled me. And it wasn't and isn't only greed. Many of us were and are true believers in the mission of promoting 'western values' all over the world be it for religious or secular reasons. And even those of us who are critical of what is going on still tend to display a kind of colonialist attitude. I admit I have been asking myself more than once 'What is it in Christianity and western culture as a whole that has made it so disastrous for the world?'*

Gilad: Let us closely examine the notions of chosenness. To start with chosenness is not necessarily a bad thing. It becomes a bad thing when you celebrate your chosenness on the expense of the other. For orthodox Jews Judaic chosenness is interpreted as a moral burden. It is the duty to serve the world with an exemplary ethical behaviour (please do not ask me how many orthodox Jews follow the above). While in Judaism chosenness can be interpreted as a moral duty, in secular Jewish culture it is often realised as a sense of exceptionalism that is racially oriented. The Zionists, for instance, believe that they can 'return' to a land after 2000 years and to reinstate their Biblical reign of power. Let me assure you, not many Italians claim for acres in Britain based on the Roman's reign in the land more or less around the same time. But the anti Zionists are following exactly the same path. The Jewish pro Palestinian activists do believe that they are in a very special position within the Palestinian Solidarity Movement. They are the ones who give the rest of us a "[kosher stamp](#)". The Jewish anti Zionists have in practice established a realm of Jewish privilege at the core of the discourse that is set to fight the supremacist abuse invoked by their brethren. I came to the conclusion that Jewish ID politics is basically a collection of different ideas that facilitate self love.

However, you are correct. European colonialism, Slavery, British imperialism and contemporary Zionism are all forms of chosenism. The problem that we face with Zionism or Israeli brutality is that it celebrates that form of exceptionalism in front of our eyes, yet, we can't really talk about it.

*Clara: So the real tragedy is that, if Israel's enemies united and if they defeated the country, all the fears would come true – the self-fulfilling prophecy of a new 'Holocaust', which could have been prevented by true 'self love', learning from the past and making peace in time.*

Gilad: I feel very comfortable with that. Israel defines itself as the Jewish State. If we want to grasp the actions of Israel, its lobbies and world Jewry we must dig into the meanings of Jewishness and Judaism, we must ask who are the Jews. We must delve into Jewish culture and ideology. We should become familiar with Jewish survival strategies.

*Clara: Speaking of unveiling Jewish lobbies: You have just mentioned contemporary 'Ziocons'. What or who do you mean by that?*

Gilad: Zioncons are those Neocons who send young American and Brits to die for Zion in the name of Coca Cola.

*Clara: For Zion? They fought/fight in Afghanistan, Iraq, some in Syria, it's an empire of more than 760 military bases worldwide ...*

Gilad: Pretty much so. Zionism is no longer a geographically limited nationalist ideology. I often argue that the Neocon school points at a clear global shift from 'a promised land' to 'a promised planet.'

*Clara: So that without the Neocons the state of Israel would not be so strong and powerful, look at Trump's support of making Jerusalem the capital of Israel? And without the support and lobbying of rich and powerful Zionists the Neocons couldn't control US-American politics the way they do?*

Gilad: I wish I could say that. As I write these lines I read about Bibi Netanyahu successful visit in India. Israeli strategists know that America is on its way down. They are already zigzagging their way into the corridors of power of the new emerging powers. Russia, India and China.

*Clara: At one point you ask in 'The Wandering Who' (p.25, kindle edition) „How did America allow itself be enslaved by ideologies inherently associated with foreign interests?“ Another one of your 'anti-Semitic' sayings.*

Gilad: Indeed this silence of American political establishment, media and academia demands our intellectual attention. I often argue that Jewish power is the power to suppress discussion on Jewish power. I believe that the 1<sup>st</sup> step in the right direction is to unveil the meaning of this power, to grasp that which they work hard to conceal and suppress.

*Clara: Could we see the Neocons and the Zionists as two not necessarily very brotherly siblings with similar mindsets working together against a multipolar world? A world where nations solve their collisions of interests in peaceful negotiations with respect to international law? A world where the people living in a country are more important than the wish to control some distant part of the world or the supposed interests of Israel? I have found that for many issues I am concerned with I have to talk about the American Empire. But since the Neocon –dominated Empire is entangled with Zionism, and because Jewish elites are mixed up not only with Israeli politics but with the politics of Empire, criticising these kinds of policies is still very difficult: as soon as you touch Jewish or Israeli influence the question of*

*being a Nazi or an anti-Semite lingers behind every corner. It is hard to think straight in such an environment!*

Gilad: Once we break out of the tyranny of correctness we grasp that Neocons are practically Ziocons, in other words, the Neocons and the Zionists are one. Why is it so difficult to discuss it? Because Jewish power is the power to silence criticism of Jewish power. Jewish power is maintained by the so called 'Left' (new Left really) I will prove it to you. Who was it who tried to silence you recently when you questioned the campaign against Atzmon, was it the Zionist federation, the Israeli embassy? Not really, it was the so-called 'lefty' Rubikon and the 'anti' Zionist Elias Davidsson. Let me tell you, we are now very close to the bone. A continuum has been established.

## Jewish Power and Identity Politics

*Clara: You show how Jewish institutions influence US policies, that it all happens in the open and that the Zionist lobbyists boast about their power. So, are Jews, in fact, controlling the world, just as the Nazis claimed they were?*

Gilad: This is another multi layered question for which we must first clarify the terminology. Do the 'Jews' (the people) control the world? Absolutely not. But a few segments within the Jewish elite are certainly dominant and vastly over-represented within media, finance, culture, academia, politics, political lobbying, Hollywood and so on. I elaborate on this volatile topic in my new book 'Being in Time – A Post Political Manifesto'. The book was partially inspired by 'The Jewish Century', the monumental text by Yuri Slezkine that attempted to explain what it was within the Jews that made the 20<sup>th</sup> into their century: What is it about Jews and their culture that made them dominant in the West? In 'Being in Time' I offer a few of my original ideas. I also attempt to examine some other theories that have been largely rejected, but that I find helpful.

My study suggests that the Jewish elite is extremely sophisticated as well as gifted.

*Clara: If they are so gifted, why do you see 'their dominance in western culture' as a problem? Can't we all profit from their extraordinary talents?*

Gilad: To start with, we did and we do. That which we criticize is also that which makes our life special. The obsession with the global free market which we hate is entangled with the imaginary sense of freedom we purport to celebrate. The widespread consumerism we hate is part of the illusion that we can possess whatever we want.

But this is a problem as well. The world we live in is not a nice place. It is dystopic and we the people are becoming more nostalgic by the minute. At an earlier point we saw ourselves as free subjects. Now not much is left of that decaying freedom. We are reduced to consumers. The politicians who should represent our needs and desires mostly just facilitate consumption by means of credit. Manufacturing has died on us and the prospect of a better future is remote. I addressed these troublesome issues in 'Being in Time'. I believe that the identitarian revolution, or rather, the New Left ideology has a lot to do with the above. The Western subject has been indoctrinated to think and speak 'as a': as a gay, as a woman, as a black, etc. We learn to identify with our biology (gender, skin colour, sexual orientation, etc.) We learn to see ourselves as an aggregation of biologically oriented tribes. Our people are a construct of multiple Israelite tribes, but the Israelites are better than anyone else at being Israelites, they have been doing it for 3000 years.

*Clara: So identity politics are a Jewish construct?*

Gilad: Exactly. And here is the most problematic twist. In 'Being in Time' I argue that the New Left has fallen into the Nazi trap. Dividing humanity by biology (race, skin colour, gender etc.) requires that we define ourselves and others in biological terms. Instead of uniting under a dynamic universal ethos we are subject to new categories that make human universal harmony impossible.

We live in a totally fragmented society. Instead of fighting together for our common and universal needs, we are divided into identitarian groups and fight each other.

*Clara: Biology? Doing what the Nazis did and even defining a 'race' when there is none? I see your point: a nice twist indeed.*

*Although defining oneself in terms of identity seems to be natural: we (nearly) all have experiences of loss and discrimination because of our 'biological' identity: as a woman, as a member of an ethnic minority, as somebody with a handicap, because of our sexual orientation, and so on.*

Gilad: True. It is natural for people to identify with their biology.

This is why half of the Americans voted for Hillary Clinton. This is why ID politics is the only so called Left ideology that has gained in popularity. It also explains some of what what attracted the masses to Nazism. And then, it also explains the logos at the core of Jewish tribalism.

*Clara: Gilad, I have a lot of sympathy for anti-discrimination and emancipatory movements. Without them I still would not have the right to vote and my independent career would not have been possible. The homosexual couple in my neighbourhood would have had to pose as cousins and a lot of barrier-free railway stations would be non-existent. And I, personally, love the mix of different ethnic cultures we experience in Germany, in spite of the problems that come with it.*

*For me as a teacher it has always been important to make sure I support those students who were not born with a silver spoon in their mouths. The motto of our school is 'Diversity is our strength' and I stand by that.*

*When I first encountered criticism of identity politics I didn't take it seriously because I found the criticism regressive: it came from the kind of people who want to send women back to, as the German saying goes, Kinder, Kueche, Kirche (kids, kitchen and church), forbid abortion, kick out foreigners and view homosexuality as something sick. Though there were increasingly aspects to the 'multi-culti' and open-border ideas that made me wonder. I must admit that it was not until the last American presidential race that I realized that within the Democratic Party, identitarian politics had replaced policies that were, in my opinion, 'genuine Left' such as improving people's social and economic situation and anti-imperialism. And I realized that the same had happened to the left in Germany.*

*So has the Left been captured by identitarians?*

Gilad: Yep, I fully understand. Like many others, I used to agree with Left ideology but as I grew older I found the Left to be increasingly delusional, dogmatic and frequently duplicitous. I couldn't detect any suggestion of dialectical thinking. Even the aspiration towards equality had somehow evaporated. In 'The Wandering Who' I shifted. Instead of asking what the 'J-word' represents, I asked what do people mean when they identify themselves as Jews? In 'Being in Time' I copied the tactics of the Left. I asked what is it that people who identify as Leftists adhere to?

The answer was pretty troubling. The New Left shares little or nothing with old Left values. The New Left is tribal, biologically oriented, and it is authoritarian and often proto fascist. The Left was not simply captured by the identitarians, it was hijacked. The New Left is occupied territory and this is another reason why we are all Palestinians. This is why I argue that by now the Left / Right dichotomy is meaningless and on the verge of futile. Welcome to the post-political condition.

*Clara: We are all Palestinians?*

Gilad: I believe that it was me who coined the popular adage, 'by now, we are all Palestinians.' The meaning of this saying is devastating.

Like the Palestinians we aren't really allowed to dig into the true meaning of our oppression. The boundaries of pro Palestinian discourse are shaped by Jewish sensitivities. Tragically, this is an adequate description of our Western dissent. Our opposition is shaped by the sensitivities of our oppressors.

*Clara: So could we say that emancipation has been replaced by victimization? Are identity politics a powerful movement of people who see the world through the restricted perspective of victims of racist, sexist or some other prejudice or discrimination? Is its philosophy that 'The world would be a better place, if everybody saw it the way I do'; 'If xy changed his attitude, I could fulfill my potential, I cannot do that because xy doesn't let me do it'? Then it is always somebody else who is made responsible. No wonder that white males, who until now were symbols of oppression, also want to be recognized as victims. The steps from this thinking to hate and destructive violent behaviour are not that big:*

*"We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or the earth will be leveled by our attempts to gain it." That is how [Eldrige Cleaver](#) described the needs of blacks. The way the MeToo movement brings down male 'perpetrators' also seems to be more driven by spite and the wish to humiliate than by the wish to bring wrong-doing to light and peace to women who have been scarred. True 'souls on ice'!*

*And because we have to be 'politically correct' we are not allowed to criticize victims so as not to hurt their feelings. But this doesn't heal the harm. You go on feeding this particular*

*'child,' it will never be satisfied and will grow into a big fat monster crying 'feed me!' till the end of time.*

*But how does Jewish victimization and their huge success in the 20<sup>th</sup> century connect?*

Gilad It is amazing for me to read your comment because I examined ID politics and victimhood using a similar approach in 'Being in Time'. On the one hand we are all broken into biologically oriented tribes. We are defined by our skin, gender, mother's gene, sexual orientation, yet it is only the biologically identified Jews have a state, hundreds of atomic bombs, and squadrons of F-35s and the question is why? Let me shock you. Because Jewish identity involves self-hatred. Early Zionism was the promise to change the Jews, to relieve them of their victimhood. To make them people like all other people. When identitarians learn how to hate themselves, they may start to move forward, they may even find their path back to the universal.

*Clara: Do you mean that self-hatred was the key to Zionism and if Jewishness hadn't hijacked Zionism, the Jews could have found the path to the universal?*

Gilad: Exactly, Zionism was driven by hard core self-loathing. A core principle of Early Zionists was 'negation of the Galut (Diaspora)'. This form of self-hatred fuelled the fantasy of a new Jewish beginning. Zionism was a form of Jewish empowerment, that tried to replace victimhood.

*Clara: '... but [I laugh](#), and eat well, and grow strong ...'*

Gilad: Yes. Instead of blaming the *Goyim* for anti-Semitic crimes, early Zionists looked into Jewish history and culture and tried to identify what is it in Jewish culture and politics that brings about anti-Semitism. This may explain why Jewish identitarianism has achieved far more than other ethnic identitarian groups. Early Zionism, as far as I am concerned, was an astonishing transition in Jewish history. The fact that it failed is even more significant. It might mean that there is no collective remedy to the Jewish question. If Jews want to rescue themselves, they must break out alone into the night, in the dark, with the hope that they may meet the universal at daybreak.

## Global Tribes and National Hypes

*Clara: I have just been reading a [Canadian Jewish news bulletin](#) and all the tribal features are there: the community life with kosher catering, the private Sunday schools with their curriculum of Jewish culture, Judaism and the Holocaust, the comment on why we shouldn't sympathize with Palestinian children and the trip for adolescents to Israel where each of them is supposed to find out 'what Israel means to me'.*

*In my opinion one of the flaws of biologically oriented identity politics is the belief that 'the differences between the respective identity groups are bigger than the differences within the group' as the ['Saker' defines 'racism'](#). I am not sure that supporting Israel's politics is really in the best interests of all the Canadian (US-American, British or German) Jews or even in the best interests of the Israelis themselves. But as members of the tribe they are all on board of the same ship.*

*Is that what you mean when you argue that identity politics are a tool of globalization and that the 'identitarian tribes' are used to support Neocon / Zionist policies?*

**Gilad:** It is actually simpler than that. The emergence of more and more ghetto walls between us the people dismantles our ability to fight for our universal needs, let alone see the universal for what it is. In the name of diversity, we create a fragmented human landscape that is blinded to its fragments. This tribal construct is indeed ideal environment for Neocons, mammonites as well as our compromised politicians.

*Clara: In 'The wandering who' you write that compassion has evaporated in Jewish thinking. I often feel it is the same in Germany: we do not sympathise with the Greek people and their poverty in connection with the introduction of the Euro, we think they ought to be punished for 'being lazy, living above their means and not doing their homework'. The same goes for the poor in our country. And we mourn the victims of terrorism in Germany and France but we are not really interested in the terror victims in St Petersburg, Beirut or the terrible suffering in Yemen. And the one time our politicians seemed to show compassion by opening the borders for refugees, the many Germans who, like myself, welcomed that chance had to realize the double standards which were behind it: supporting the wars and economic policies that caused people to leave their homes and not adequately addressing the social and security problems the influx of refugees caused at home.*

*Does this lack of compassion have to do with the 'incapability of mourning one's own fate' we mentioned in the beginning of our conversation and which seems to be a common feature in Jewish and German mainstream thinking?*

**Gilad:** The lack of compassion is a symptom of chosenness and exceptionalism . Chosenness and exceptionalism are indeed attached to Jewishness but not only. It is hardly a secret that the selfish manner of thinking is embedded in capitalist thinking. The next question you may want to ask yourself is what is the connection between Jewish culture and capitalism. This is obviously a loaded question that has many answers. Marx believed that the two were

intrinsically tied. [Werner Sombart](#) agreed with Marx. [Max Weber](#) didn't. My point, as always, is that we must be able to discuss these matters in the open.

*Clara: I agree, and it is actually a kind of selective compassion with double standards. But there is also the aspect of collectively getting stuck in the victimized self-image connected with identitarian world views.*

*Anyway, let's be a bit more specific here. In a talk you gave in Berlin you said that for example the international feminist movement was used to promote wars for the rights of Muslim women. And just recently [Angela Jolie posed for NATO](#) exactly for that reason. You also gave the example of gay rights. When it comes to attacking Russia, gay activists from many countries show their concern about gay rights there. So we are led from one fragmented campaign to the other and forget about more important issues.*

*But what is the alternative? In that talk you seemed to argue that we should return to think in terms of national interests instead. You seem to want to replace the concept of 'identitarian tribes' by returning to the idea of strong national states and fixed borders. Isn't that a very dangerous right-wing concept? Doesn't that lead to new chauvinism, the persecution of ethnic minorities and more?*

Gilad: This is a good question. To start with, I am not a political activist. I do not offer solutions or alternatives. As mentioned before, I am a philosopher, I am refining questions rather than repeating readymade answers. indeed often argue that if global capitalism is a problem (and it is a problem), we may have to consider the idea that equality within borders is a possible answer. Now, let's talk about Nationalism and National States. I contend that Nationalism isn't necessarily a problem unless celebrated on the expense of others. In the 1940's people and nations were minced in the name of *lebensraum*, in the Neocon dominated global universe we do the same in the name of Coca-Cola, Gay-Rights and fake democracy. I argue, therefore that ethical thinking which is basically an Athenian aspired domain is the remedy.

*Clara: If there is a definition of left wing, it is concern for social issues and anti-imperialism. Many people argue that politics addressing these issues need a strong national state, i.e. [Bill Mitchell](#) (fiscal policies), [Paul Steinhardt](#) (social welfare policies - paywall) and [Professor Michael Hartman](#) (national elites are still strong). While others advocate 'more EU' to address social issues on an international level, these people claim that such a project is bound to fail, even if tried which currently is not really the case; the EU is not a social project. The right wing parties want 'less EU' as well, but tend to support neo-liberal policies. But again – slippery grounds – people quickly 'stone you' when you start talking about the role of the national state. When Sarah Wagenknecht from the Left Party criticized Merkel's open-border policy, she was accused of socializing with the right-wingers from AfD. Often accusations of working together with right-wing people (Nazis!) replace an open exchange of argument. I think this is a dangerous development.*

Gilad: Again, you are pointing at the Jerusalemite tendency, that tyranny of correctness that dictates a manner of speech, a pattern of 'correct' thinking, newspeak. Orwell recognized that that tendency is inherent to Left politics which is fascinating considering the Athenian dialectic nature of Marx thinking. We are living in an upside down world --The anti Fascist are often intrinsically fascists. The anti Zionists are mostly AZZ (Anti Zionist Zionists) and the Athenians who see it all are castigated subject to constant abuse. Yet, the people are not buying into that reality. Brexit proves that Brits want to see a change. Trump won because Americans are frustrated (surely, they are more frustrated now). Far from being surprising the popularity of Corbyn in Britain and Sanders in the USA can be realised as a similar symptom of frustration with the current identitarian dystopia. Both leaders are nostalgic anti identitarian characters. The meaning of it is simple. We are moving into a realm that transcends beyond left/right banal binary. To be in time is to grasp the post political condition.

## Finding the Way Home

*Clara: While not many people feel bounded with the soil nowadays, many people would argue that a spiritual home is not enough. I would agree. Identity groups seem to be an answer. But as you rightly said, identitarian views do not make a consistent argument for the universal, especially in a context of victimization. For others home is still a certain place they defend against the invasion of foreigners or wind turbines, which isn't exactly a universal argument either.*

*Isn't following a universal ethos a contradiction to the concept of home? And if not, how do we find our way?*

Gilad: Not at all, the bond to the soil, the love of the land, and even biological identitarianism can become universal as long as you accept that it applies to everyone. I am obviously anti-identitarian, but I do accept that, if Jews, Lesbians, Transsexual and Black can identify politically with their biology, then Whites can also do the same. If Jews can identify with their imaginary 'promised land', surely Palestinians, the indigenous people of that land, should be entitled to do the same and actually return to their homes. In short every idea including egoism can turn into a universal ethos once it is stripped of exceptionalism. And to address your question, 'home' can be a universal idea as long as we set universal conditions to facilitate such an idea. The Israel/Palestine conflict is a great test case. At the moment Israel is a chauvinist Jewish State. For Israel to become a universal adventure, it has to transcend itself into a 'State of its Citizens.' This idea was suggested by Palestinian-Israeli Knesset Member Azmi Bishara, soon after he coined this genius motto he had to run for his life.

*Clara: You have explained that Zionism was the promise to civilize the diaspora Jews by means of 'homecoming', making them people like all other people, a collective of people bonded with the soil and living in peace and harmony with their neighbors.*

*So is home, for you, living in peace with oneself and the universe, so to speak?*

Gilad: To start with I am not a Zionist and making myself 'people like all other people' isn't my objective. I also contend that making Jews people like all other people is a problematic motto for other people who do not want to resemble other people. Living in peace and loving my neighbors isn't an objective for me but rather the way in which I live my life. However, my relationship with myself is a different matter all together. I, in fact, live in peace and harmony with my neighbours despite my upbringing and early indoctrination: despite the *goy* hatred, the chosenness, and the constant Shoah brainwashing. I had to clear all those out of my system. This is exactly where self-hatred becomes a positive force towards harmony and reconciliation.

*Clara: I must admit, that when you first talked about self-hate being the path to the universal, I strongly disagreed. I thought it was exactly the path to hundreds of atomic bombs*

*threatening the world. But I guess I didn't grasp what you were saying at all. It is about that 'know thyself' moment in your life when you discovered you were 'the Nazi here' which changed everything, isn't it?*

*So I agree with you if you define self-hate as being able to look at yourself in a detached and self-critical way and self-love as not being able to do that. It needs that special ugly moment to develop such a capacity. To be honest, I have had such moments, too. But self-hate alone cannot be the way to harmony. I think you need to be able to love yourself to be able to love others. And btw, even though you call yourself a self-hater, I do not think that you hate yourself so much. You actually seem to be quite in peace with yourself and the world around you (a long as there is no smear campaign in sight).*

Gilad: You are obviously correct. Let me address your point in a humorous manner. If you define Jewishness as an intense form of self-love, then Jewish self-hatred can be realised as 'loving oneself hating oneself.' We obviously accept that self hate is a metaphorical notion. I wouldn't necessarily argue that it is a universal path. But it is clearly a recognized Jewish path towards the universal. It is a method of breaking out of intellectual and spiritual stagnation. I better admit that I love myself hating myself, this is probably what is left of the Jew in me. But I also love reading and exchanging with other self haters. For me the so-called self haters, Jesus, Spinoza, Weininger, Marx were whistleblowers, as we call them these days, they actually introduced a scope of harmony.

*Clara: We are talking about a painful individual process here. Can such a process be applied to a group? You said before that 'there is no collective remedy to the Jewish question. If Jews want to rescue themselves, they must break out alone in the night, in the dark with the hope that they meet the universal at daybreak.'*

Gilad: Yes, this is my view. There is no collective remedy for the Jews. Why? Because people who are tied to each other by a phantasmic exceptionalist notion of race, biology or blood, will always fall into the same chauvinist racist trap. This is what happened to Zionism, it promised to emancipate the Jews from themselves but ended erecting the biggest ghetto walls known to man. This is exactly the trap the Jewish anti Zionist have fallen into. They promised to emancipate the Jews from the Zionist but ended operating within privileged racially oriented political ghettos that are identical with Zion.

*Clara: Isn't that the end of any collective effort to fight for a peaceful and more just world?*

Gilad: On the contrary, this is where we launch into a search for ethics in ourselves. This is where we depart from Jerusalem (the city of mitzvoth / *commandments*) and reinstate Athens (the capital of reason) once again. We dig into the meaning of being human regardless of our gender, race or skin colour. We leave the tribal behind and re-launch our expedition towards the universal.

Ulrike Simon and Gilad Atzmon,  
January 2018



### Can't find my way home

Come down from your throne,

... of chosenness and western arrogance.

And leave your body alone,

... stop identifying yourself mainly in terms of biology.

Somebody must change,

... because something is very wrong here, and either you or me or both of us together have to act.

You are the reason I have been waiting so long,

... because I actually love you ("you" as my people and friends from my background, maybe the "west", the music, the literature, the inventions, the way of life – I don't want to miss out on those things.)

Somebody holds the key

... to open the door to go beyond our narrow view of the world,

But I'm near the end,  
and I haven't got the time,  
and I'm wasted,

... and, if I don't change, with or without you, this is the way my life will end.

And I can't find my home!

Will I ever?

*Steve Winwood*

*Clara*