

## *Why Anti-Semitism Is Moving Toward the Mainstream*

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For the first time since the end of World War II, classic anti-Semitic tropes—“the Jews” control the world and are to blame for everything that goes wrong, including the financial crisis; “The Jews killed Christian children in order to use the blood to bake Matzo; the Holocaust never happened—are becoming acceptable and legitimate subjects for academic and political discussion. To understand why these absurd and reprehensible views, once reserved for the racist fringes of academia and politics, are now moving closer to the mainstream, consider the attitudes of two men, one an academic, the other a politician, toward those who express or endorse such bigotry. The academic is Professor Brian Leiter. The politician is Ron Paul.

You’ve probably never heard of Leiter. He’s a relatively obscure professor of jurisprudence, who is trying to elevate his profile by publishing a gossipy blog about law school professors. He is a colleague of John Mearsheimer, a prominent and world famous professor at the University of Chicago.

Several months ago Mearsheimer enthusiastically endorsed a book, really a pamphlet, that included all the classic anti-Semitic tropes. It was entitled “The Wandering Who” and written by Gilad Atzmon, a British version of David Duke, who plays the saxophone and has no academic connections. Atzmon writes that we must take “very seriously” the claim that “the Jewish people are trying to control the world.” He calls the recent credit crunch “the Zio punch.” He says “the Holocaust narrative” doesn’t make “historical sense” and expresses doubt that Auschwitz was a death camp. He invites students to accept the “accusations of Jews making Matzo out of young Goyim’s blood.”

Books and pamphlets of this sort are written every day by obscure anti-Semites and published by disreputable presses that specialize in this kind of garbage. No one ever takes notice, except for neo-Nazis around the world who welcome any additions to the literature of hate.

What is remarkable about the publication of this hateful piece of anti-Semitic trash, is that it was enthusiastically endorsed by two prominent American professors, John Mearsheimer and Richard Falk, who urged readers, including students, to read, “reflect upon” and “discuss widely” the themes of Atzmon’s book. Never before has any such book received the imprimatur of such established academics.

I was not shocked by these endorsements, because I knew that both of these academics had previously crossed “red lines,” separating legitimate criticism of Israel from subtle anti-Semitism. Mearsheimer has accused American Jews of dual loyalty, and Falk has repeatedly compared Israel to Nazi Germany. Both were so enthusiastic about Atzmon’s anti-Zionism—he has written that Israel is “worse” than the Nazis—that they were prepared to give him a pass on his classic “blood libel” anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. No great surprise there.

What was surprising—indeed shocking—was the fact that Mearsheimer’s relatively apolitical colleague, Brian Leiter, rushed to Mearsheimer’s defense. Without bothering even to read Atzmon’s book, Leiter pronounced that Atzmon’s “positions [do not mark him] as an anti-Semite [but rather as] cosmopolitan.” Leiter also certified that Atzmon “does not deny the Holocaust or the gas chambers.” Had Leiter read the book, he could not have made either statement.

Atzmon himself credits “a man who...was an anti-Semite” for “many of [his] insights” and calls himself a “self-hating Jew” who has contempt for “the Jew in me.” If that’s not an admission of anti-Semitism, rather than “cosmopolitanism,” I don’t know what is. As far as the Holocaust is concerned, Atzmon asserts that it is not “an historical narrative.” And as to the gas chambers, he doubts that the “Nazis ran a death factory in Auschwitz-Berkanau.”

Leiter went so far as to condemn those who dared to criticize Mearsheimer for endorsing Atzmon’s book, calling their criticism “hysterical” and not “advance[ing] honest intellectual discourse.” And he defended Mearsheimer’s endorsement as “straight forward.”

The Brian Leiters of the world are an important part of the reason why anti-Semitic tropes are creeping back to legitimacy in academia. His knee-jerk defense of an admitted Jew hater—who, according to Leiter is not a despicable anti-Semite but an acceptable “cosmopolitan”—contributes to the legitimization of anti-Semitism.

The same can be said of Ron Paul, who everyone has heard of. Paul has, according to The New York Times, refused to “disavow” the “support” of “white supremacists, survivalists and anti-Zionists who have rallied behind his candidacy.” (These “anti-Zionists” believe that “Zionists”—Jews—control the world, were responsible for the bombing of the Oklahoma federal building, and caused the economic downturn, because “most of the leaders involved in the federal and international banking system are Jews.”) He allowed his “Ron Paul survival report” to espouse David Duke type racism and anti-Semitism for years during the 1990s, claiming he was unaware that they were being

promoted under his name. Edward H. Crane, the founder of the libertarian CATO Institute, has said, “I wish Ron would condemn those fringe things that float around” his campaign, but he refuses to reject the support of these anti-Semites who form a significant part of his base. The New York Times has criticized Paul for his failure to “convincingly repudiate racist remarks that were published under his name for years—or the enthusiastic support he is getting from racist groups,” including those that espouse “anti-Semitism and far right paranoia.”

Even now, Paul continues to accept contributions from Holocaust deniers, from those who blame the Jews for everything and from other bigots, thus lending some degree of legitimacy to their hateful views.

It has been said that “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” Leiter and Paul may or may not be good men, but they are guilty of more than merely doing nothing. They are, by their actions, helping to legitimate the oldest of bigotries. Shame on them!