

Elise Duryee-Browner at Gandt, May 28th – July 3rd

Vibe of the Era:

The world is preserved, as we shall see, only by a positive yea-saying to the world. Among the Jewish people this world-affirmation is totally pure, without any admixture of world-denial ... Where the idea of the immortal dwells, the longing for the eternal or the withdrawal from temporality must always emerge again ... the non-Jewish peoples ... are the custodians of world-negation, of the idea of the Hereafter ... [If] the Jewish people were to perish ... the end of all time would be here. This would also be the case if the Zionist idea were to become a reality.

Alfred Rosenberg, "The Earth-Centered Jew Lacks a Soul," 1928

Rosenberg, a leading intellect of the Nazi party, took the entire thought-structure of this essay from Otto Weininger's 1906 book, Sex and Character, in which Weininger says that Judaism is the religion of materialism, and that to surpass the mirror image systems of capitalism and Marxism we must pass through it ("the possibility of begetting Christs is the meaning of Judaism"). There are some parallels between how whiteness is described now and how Jews were described by anti-semitic thinkers. Nazis and Weininger had concerns, which I share, about overly rationalist tendencies in modern life.

As far as I know, Jews were the first group to organize an identity around a persecution narrative. This fact is probably what preserved Jewish culture through what we could now call anti-colonialist wars and then a diaspora, but it also produced Jews as an eternal other.

The idea that all human society is structured by persecutor/persecuted relationships produces in some people annoyance at the post-enlightenment cultural interest in fetishizing the oppressed. René Girard argues, in his 1978 book, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World, that the first leaders were actually remainders of an unfulfilled human sacrifice, living scapegoats, the ritualization of murder being the foundation of human culture. Are we all Jews now?

Weininger, unlike Rosenberg, was born Jewish and later converted to Christianity. He thought that woman, like the Jew, was soulless. He wrote, "truth will not prevail until the two become one, until from man and woman a third self, neither man nor woman, is evolved." It must have been uncomfortable to be part of an early minority group, and it seems he was also homosexual. He killed himself at 23.

People go up peaks in order to study cosmic rays. Probably they have paid little attention to the composition of the mountain itself. And most likely they have not helped on the experiment by conducting research about their own energies.

Helena Roerich, Heart, 1932

Roerich, whose famous husband was a bit of a charlatan in my opinion, was more comfortable than Rosenberg and Weininger with the idea of duality, maybe because she was Russian and interested in Eastern thought.

Some people like money because it protects them from the vagaries of culture, which can be cruel...