

# Humanitarian Zionism

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## COSMOPOLITANISM:

### THE ROAD FROM RZ TO HZ

Those who are acclimated to tribal solidarity will be reticent to embrace a wider solidarity (i.e. a solidarity based on a shared humanity). This is because they would risk undermining an established support network—a mechanism on which they've come to count on—and even built their lives around. To abdicate the tribal solidarity on which they've come to depend (in order to adopt human solidarity) entails a transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar—thus threatening a coveted edifice. When one's security and one's identity has been based on such an edifice, the prospect of surrendering it for a higher ideal can be quite frightening.

Forging trans-cultural—nay, PAN-cultural—solidarity via inter-culture dialogue requires the participants to develop mutual understanding. They may then work to transcend entrenched cultural institutions, thereby discerning *categorical universals*. Cosmopolitanism is the process by which people of different cultures transcend their own dogmatic systems and embrace that which is categorically universal.

Finding common ground with other groups often involves giving up cherished things (i.e. that on which one bases one's sense of security—and even one's very identity). The endeavor to transcend differences, then, involves asking all participants to rise above their own ingrained beliefs and vested interests, and relinquish a thing to which they are accustomed for the promise of something new and hypothetical. This is necessary, as a shared purpose requires each party to recognize categorically universal principles that may contravene hallowed conventions.

To dilute divisions in the spirit of pluralism is the cosmopolitan mission. This mission demands that groups grow beyond their provincial attitudes and parochial concerns. The essence of cosmopolitanism is anti-parochialism / anti-provincialism. Such an approach counteracts the insularity and myopic worldviews endemic to tribalism—thereby bringing everyone together *on the same terms*. Such terms must be meta-cultural / meta-dogmatic.

Narrative vehicles and dogmas are social constructs. Social constructs are—one and all—accidents of history. In order for cosmopolitanism to work, all parties must recognize this. A coveted ritual is just a ritual; one's own honored tradition is just a tradition; one's cherished heritage is just a heritage. We delude ourselves insofar as we make such things more than they really are: social constructs (i.e. *historical accidents*). Categorical universals are not byproducts of circumstance; they exist independently of contingency. Meanwhile, dogmatic systems are byproducts of circumstance. Any given culture is an artifact of history, not a reflection of (objective) Reality. It must be treated as such.

In this way, all cultures are seen by all parties for what they are: accidents of history that happened to end up in each party's lap.

Transcending social constructs requires every party to acknowledge that its own narrative vehicle is just that: *a narrative vehicle* (a byproduct of circumstance). This means recognizing folklore as folklore, parables as parables, metaphors as metaphors, myths as myths, faux history as faux history, and allegories as allegories. Under different circumstances, all such things could have been other than they actually are.

Such transcendence is not easy to accomplish for those who are thoroughly immersed in their own cultures. (When folklore becomes sacred, people like to think of it as more than just “folklore”.) Thus, cosmopolitanism requires an act of courage.

The task also involves recognizing dogmas as dogmas (superstition as superstition; anti-science as anti-science). This is difficult when certain dogmas have been sanctified by an entire community, and institutions have been erected around them. In such cases, people come to depend on their dogmas BEING TRUE. (When superstitions become extremely important, they are not seen as just another “superstition”. People need to believe that such things are features of objective Reality.)

Religionists must recognize that nobody—NOBODY—has ever had (or ever could possibly have) a uniquely privileged “line” to the divine. The moment we start insisting there is one particular “way” to get in touch with the divine, we Balkanize the human family into disparate factions. In such cases, each faction bases its stance on its own construct: an accident of history that happened to fall in its lap.

Any claim of having uniquely privileged access to the divine is *prima facie* fraudulent—not only because it simply doesn’t make any sense, but because ANYONE can make the claim. Was Jesus of Nazareth a manifestation of the divine or Mohammed of Mecca a messenger of the divine? Your designated mouthpiece for god can say one thing while my designated mouthpiece for god says another thing. Shall we really play this game for all eternity?

Cosmopolitanism, then, involves the crucial tasks enumerated above. Until we are able to carry such tasks, candidly and unequivocally, we’ll be unable to transcend our own dogmatic systems—and consequently preclude the possibility of forging human solidarity. Only by transcending all historical accidents can we discern categorical universals...and thus find THE common ground. The epistemic narcissism of insisting that one’s own social constructs are ABSOLUTES must come to an end. (This is relativism masquerading as objectivity.)

Unity of mankind—forging HUMAN solidarity, not indulging in tribal solidarity—is key to transcending tribal agendas...and thus defusing tribal feuds. Acknowledging social constructs AS social constructs is a prerequisite for this process. Insofar as we do NOT do this, we will be consigned to a world of irreconcilable “camps” vying for power...each passing their own dogmatic system off as “the Truth”. So long as such conditions persist, conflict is inevitable.

## **A WAY FORWARD: THE PATH TO HUMANITARIAN ZIONISM**

Humanitarian Zionism is about fighting for something, not fighting against something. It is essentially a mode of cosmopolitanism applied to the Middle East—an area from Persia to Anatolia, down to the Sinai Peninsula and the horn of Africa. This part of the world includes Arabia, Mesopotamia, and the region known in the ancient world as Canaan. It is the crossroads between Asia, Europe, and Africa. It is the

birthplace of human civilization and now the confluence of several different cultures.

One of the keys to bringing the infamous, awkwardly labeled “Israel-Palestine” dilemma to a resolution is to re-cast the terms in which the discussion about it transpires. Humanitarian Zionism is a new formulation of Zionism based on agape. It is predicated on a way of approaching life that Karl Marx called “species being”. (For more, see my essay, *Species Being*.)

In order to find common ground, both parties in the dispute need to disqualify precisely the claims that render the predicament intractable: namely, that one’s own side has been divinely ordained to do that which it insists it is categorically entitled to do. In other words, any appeals to Providence must be rendered off-limits—lest the impasse with which we’re currently contending be eternal.

Claims that are ipso facto incompatible can’t be forced to ever become compatible. Until we address this, the feud can’t help but persist. Reconciliation can only come to pass by way of proceeding from common ground. A resolution is predicated on a shared purpose that is based on that which transcends the very differences that yield the conflict in the first place. According to fundamentalist Islam, the Jews *are mistaken*; according to Revisionist Zionism, the goyem *don’t matter*. No matter how diligently we strive to overcome this disconnect, it will continue to be the case. So long as the conflict is couched in these terms, no common ground can be forthcoming. The on-going conflict in these terms only serves to further entrench each “side” into its respective posture.

The tribal identities on which the dispute is predicated are themselves functions of respective religious traditions / legacies / heritages. For those involved in disputes *over land based on religion*, the following three insights should be brought to their attention:

1 If there were an infinitely benevolent deity, he is not on any particular tribe’s “side”. There is no “promised land” for any particular group of people. Until ALL parties recognize this fact, there will be an eternal impasse of irreconcilable claims. Since such conflicting claims are the *source of the feud*, further coveting those claims will never resolve the feud.

2 No group is to achieve security and freedom by depriving another group of it. All sides would be well advised to put aside their sacred texts. The categorical imperative is unimpeachable.

3 In negotiating inter-tribal disputes, re-course to one’s own sacred texts and dogma must be kept completely off-limits. Only via standards that *transcend* cultural differences (i.e. that which is categorically universal) can such issues be addressed.

A Zionism based on humanism, therefore, is the only way to resolve the conflict in Israel-Palestine. This is a Zionism for all mankind, not exclusively for some delimited “chosen group”. A democratic nation can’t possibly be based on a shared ethnicity / creed—only on a shared humanity. The modus operandi of a legitimate nation is predicated on that which transcends race and creed. This is something that fundamentalists on both sides of this conflict need to come to terms with if any progress is to ever be made.

A cosmopolitan, bi-national State would be the ideal solution. Short of that, a two-state solution may be formulated. Living together, Muslim next to Christian next to Jew next to Freethinker, as neighbors (*as fellow humans*), must be the ultimate goal. If one group can’t be secure and free from oppression, then nobody will ever be truly secure. So long as there is shame and resentment, unfairness and iniquity, false pride and bigotry, there will be conflict. Tribal honor can play no role in a solution to the problems that plague two tribes.

To the Palestinians, it must be said: You need to stop attacking Israelis; they are not the same as the Israeli government. You forfeit the high road the moment you retaliate by attacking innocent civilians. Two wrongs don't make a right. Cease and desist in your hostilities for long enough to have the moral high ground. Anti-Semitism is wrong for the same reason that the anti-goyem-ism under-girding the IG's despicable policies is wrong. *All* racism is wrong, not just "the other guy's" racism.

To the Israeli government, it must be said: You must stop viciously oppressing the Palestinians...and stop stealing their land. You appropriated enough land in 1947-9 for the (perfectly legitimate) purposes endorsed by the United Nations. Any settlement activity beyond that ordained partition—a perfectly reasonable portion of land—is born of avarice. Seven decades ago, people in need of a refuge were afforded adequate space for sanctuary. It was a desperately needed gesture from the global community. That well-deserved favor given to Jews by the world must not be abused—lest "Israel" forfeit the moral high ground on which it was founded.

Jerusalem must be an international city with access by all peoples, as was intended in 1947. The Gaza strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights must have Palestinian sovereignty—not be rendered a collection of Bantustans managed by an occupying power. The so-called "settlement" activity by Revisionist Zionists (a.k.a. "Judeans") since 1967 has been patently illegal—and morally reprehensible. It is no wonder the Palestinians are incensed; you would be too if they were doing that to you.

Crimes against humanity are crimes against humanity—no matter who the perpetrator is. ALL victims matter equally. There are no subalterns in a just world. The Fourth Geneva Convention must matter for everyone—lest it not matter at all. This isn't about Israeli interests or Palestinian interests; this is about human interests. It is about a shared purpose. If one party has entitlements, so must the other party. If one party has obligations, so must the other party. Fair is fair: no sacred text can change that. (If Golda Meir was as good a person as she's claimed to be, there can be no doubt that she'd concur with this view.)

All involved must get past their insularity and recognize some basic precepts: The life of a Palestinian isn't worth any more or any less than the life of a Jew. The land of a Palestinian isn't worth any more or any less than the land of a Jew. Universal rights know no ethnicity. If one person takes land from another, it's ALWAYS wrong. A benevolent deity would agree with this point—whether one calls him Yahweh or Allah. After all, god doesn't favor certain groups of people; only PEOPLE do that.

We must be consistent with the application of our principles. If it's wrong for a Palestinian to do it, then it is wrong for an Israeli to do it. If Israel has the right to do something, then Palestine must be afforded that right as well.

We can only realize this noble ideal by recourse to meta-religious principles. Only then can Israelis see Palestinians not as "one of them" but as one of us: fellow human beings. Only then can Palestinians see Israelis not as "one of them" but as one of us: fellow human beings.

Tribal conflict boils down to one thing: humans betraying their fellow humans. This happens when a group glorifies themselves while demeaning others. Playing the "my dogma is better than your dogma" game can only lead to serious problems. (Playing the "my heritage / legacy is more important than yours" game has always caused intractable conflicts.) Of all parties involved, it must be demanded: "Keep your dogma to yourself."

Things must be seen from Rawls' Original Position, whereby a Veil of Ignorance is employed as a means to foster impartiality. When those of one cult indict those engaged in *different* cult activity of "not being one of us", tribalism becomes the source of antagonism—and hostility invariably ensues. It is therefore no

particular tribe that is at fault; the problem can be attributable to tribalism itself.

It is mind-numbing to observe the Zionist “settler movement”, and utterly astonishing that they don’t recognize the obvious parallels between their own worldview and that of the Nazis. It is time that the glaring analogy is pointed out to them. Fellow Jews—especially—should be ashamed of Revisionist Zionists, and be able to speak candidly about such a disgraceful movement.

Meanwhile, it is incumbent upon all Palestinians to rebuke and denounce the radical Islamic mindset underlying jihadist militancy. One does not address the killing of innocent civilians *in one direction* by killing innocent civilians *in the other direction*. Making one’s plight about the Koran is wrong for the same reason it is wrong for the Revisionist Zionists to making their cause about Yahweh’s alleged promises to Hebrews. Invoking “Providence” and “God’s will” and fanciful “covenants” is the wrong course for the Palestinians just as it’s an illegitimate plea by Israelis—or anyone else. Keep your dogma to yourself.

All parties must put their folklore aside if they wish to negotiate on common ground: secular ground. There is no “Promised Land” for anyone—any more than there is a “chosen group” or a uniquely privileged ethnicity. The German Third Kingdom made that mistake seven decades ago, and no group should ever repeat it. Have we not learned anything from history?

One can’t talk about the need for one’s own security while denying it to someone else. Hypocrisy must never be tolerated. Only when everyone adheres to the categorical imperative can one human live next to his fellow human, in peace, regardless of the sacred creed with which each may be affiliated. How else can a Catholic live next to a Protestant live next to a Hassidic live next to a Reform Jew live next to a Shiite live next to a Sunny live next to a Jain live next to a Hindu live next to a Buddhist live next to a Freethinker? Whether one practices Santeria or Scientology, we can all be neighbors if we transcend the differences of our personal Faiths. We can all live in harmony if we all proceed according to principles grounded in that which exists independently of our respective religious doctrines.

## **HUMANITARIAN ZIONISM: A NOBLE ENTERPRISE:**

I have devoted so much exposition to the indictments of R.Z. that it is important to articulate the alternative: a Zionism based on humanist principles. It is an entirely noble cause to establish a place—ANY place—in the world where a certain group of people that has endured vicious persecution and systematic oppression in the past—*whoever* those people may be—can find refuge. That is: Ensure that there is a place such people can go where they can be guaranteed freedom from any/all oppression and persecution. Whether we call this place “Zion” or “Valhalla” or “Idaho” or simply a “democracy”, we should actively work to ensure such a place exists for such people, without regard for their *particular* identity.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to work towards making this special place NOT SPECIAL AT ALL. We must perpetually strive to render the entire planet such a place for ALL demographics.

The point is that it doesn’t matter WHO the group in question may be—blacks, gays, atheists, Jews, Hispanics, women... The entire point of establishing such a place-of-refuge is to enforce civil rights for ALL people, regardless of who they are. This noble endeavor is based on universal HUMAN rights: the treatment of all fellow humans as fellow humans. The principles that give such a project credence categorically transcend categories based on social constructs (i.e. cultural differences and tribal divisions). Identity based on group affiliation plays no role in this scheme.

This is based on what Marx dubbed “species being” in his essay, *On The Jewish Question*. With such a treatment of mankind, there are no contentious tribal divisions. The Balkanization of mankind is overcome, and the categorical imperative guides the actions of ALL people toward one-another. This is not some quixotic utopian vision; this is common sense. This is not some pie-in-the-sky prescription; this is entirely achievable if we put our minds to it.

This Humanitarian Zion is not based on any given group’s sacred text or traditions—things that will always faction the human race into disparate groups. Rather, it is based on universal principles—that which categorically transcends any/all social constructs. H.Z. is not about ANY ONE PARTICULAR group. It is about all of us. God doesn’t pick a favorite group of people; religions do that.

The conception of such a “refuge” ultimately entails that the *entire world* must be rendered Zion—that is: Zion-for-humanity. This “global Zion” privileges no particular group above any other. In other words, this refuge-from-injustice must never be provided for ONE group at the expense of any other group...lest it betray the principles by which it is justified.

### **CONSISTENCY OF PRINCIPLE:**

Just as humanists must indict the I.G. for its unconscionable actions against the goyem, elements of the Palestinian proto-Sate must be indicted as well. The principles on which the indictments of R.Z. are based must apply equally to Palestinian organizations. Though its professed *raison d’etre* is noble, the PLO is not innocent. It must learn two things:

1 Two wrongs don’t make a right.

2 The Israeli/Palestinian issue is no more about their own holy books and Allah’s alleged “divine ordinance” than it is about the holy books of Judaism and Yahweh’s alleged “divine ordinance”. God has NO chosen group, neither Muslims NOR the Jews. Insofar as any Palestinians use their own claims of Providence to justify their cause, they commit the same crime R.Z. commits—and thus forfeit the moral high ground.

The PLO has itself been guilty of racism: their anti-Semitic penchants are just as deplorable as the anti-goyem mentality endemic to R.Z. Racism is racism, no matter who is inserted into the equation. The PLO must realize: If it’s despicable when they do it to you, it’s just as despicable when you do it to them. If we expect the I.G. to adhere to the categorical imperative, then the same must be demanded of the PLO. Justice knows no tribal distinctions.

The gigantic power asymmetry between the Palestinians and the I.G. obviously entails a corresponding degree of culpability and responsibility. Thus, the I.G. is far, far more at fault for the massively disproportionate crimes than are the Palestinian elements that retaliate. Nevertheless, the Palestinians compromise their moral high ground each time they engage in iniquitous acts against innocent Israeli civilians.

Meanwhile, never have the actions of a movement so flagrantly counteracted the stated goals as we’ve seen with R.Z.—an ideology which claims its goal is to secure the safety of innocent Israeli civilians even as it entails a foreign policy that endangers them. It must be recalled that Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon came into existence in the first place *precisely due to* R.Z. That R.Z. now uses the existence of such “menaces” to justify itself is schizophrenic.

Imagine a obstinate, belligerent child who keeps kicking the hornets' nest—and consequently keeps getting stung. When you ask him why he insists on continuing to kick the nest, he tells you that he needs to attack the hornets because they keep attacking him. If a child did this, we'd sent him to a psychiatrist; yet when the government of client-state does this, we deem it some sort of righteous vindication. (Meanwhile, the hornets are fellow human beings, and each kick kills dozens of them.)

It's time to notify the child that the kicking needs to stop first, not the retaliatory stinging.

The reprehensible conduct on the part of some militants in the PLO is magnified by orders of magnitude by the I.G. so long as we are consistent with our application of standards. The appalling policies enacted by the I.G. don't give Palestinian militants an excuse to turn around and kill innocent Israeli civilians, but such policies certainly explain the retaliation.

The heinous behavior exhibited by ANY movement that kills innocent civilians, either due to R.Z.'s dehumanization of goyem or due to the PLO's retaliatory tactics, must never be tolerated. But when a large man is raping his tiny victim, and the victim is clawing back in retaliation, who do we first ask to desist? If the large man demands, "First tell the tiny victim to stop clawing back, then I'll think about ceasing my assault," we would most likely deem this to be an unacceptable deal.