Chapter Two - Versions of Truth in the Dreyfus Case

As proofs, forged documents, in general, are better than genuine ones, first of all because they have been expressly made to suit the needs of the case, to order and measure, and therefore they are fitting and exact. They are also preferable because they carry the mind into an ideal world and turn it aside from the reality which, alas! in this world is never without some alloy... Nevertheless, I think I should have preferred ... that we had no proofs at all.

Anatole France, Penguin Island

There are some recent pasts so politically and morally charged as to preempt any neutral accounting, when even the attempt to stand aside is to take a stand. This was the case for the contemporaries of the Dreyfus affair. Even now, the assumption of neutrality lent by distance has not guaranteed a perfect consensus. The affair remains "an inexhaustible subject for meditation." These are the words of the novelist-critic Maurice Blanchot in a sensitive, reflective essay stimulated by Jean-Denis Bredin's fine work on the affair. Blanchot's meditation concerns, among other questions, the moral necessity of the political engagement of the "autonomous intellectual," and its inevitable creative costs. I will meditate here on the question of truth in, or about, the affair and on what Blanchot characterizes as the inseparability of morality and rationality.

While the affair does continue to provide a subject for meditation, and not only for historians, it is one of those "memorable" occasions whose memory has congealed into a few more or less accurate clichés. Probably the most common image of the affair even among fairly well informed people, in as well as out of France, is not so far from that of a student who once wrote in an exam that Dreyfus was condemned for his race, religion, and handwriting. Therefore, a brief outline and chronology might be appropriate without, I hope, insulting the intelligence of the historically literate.

In September 1894 the "Statistical Section" of the French army that is, the intelligence service acquired a list or schedule (in French a bordereau) of secrets apparently conveyed by a French officer to the German military attaché in Paris. The listed items suggested to the members of the Statistical Section that the traitor might have been a gunner attached to the General Staff. A Jewish officer who fit that description, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was arrested, interrogated, and arraigned before a military court. The crime and the suspect's identity were leaked to certain newspapers and immediately taken up by the anti-Semitic press, which put great pressure on the authorities to bring in a conviction.

Under brutal grilling, Dreyfus refused to confess. Handwriting experts disagreed on whether samples of his writing matched that of the bordereau. Various fellow officers testified about his generally disagreeable character, but it was difficult to assign a plausible motive to a wealthy, ambitious officer from an Alsatian family that had chosen France after their province was seized by Germany in 1871. Faced with the possibility that Dreyfus would be acquitted, the prosecution presented a secret dossier to the court martial without submitting it to the
defense. Dreyfus was convicted and was sentenced to perpetual deportation in a fortified enclosure (Devil's Island) and to military degradation.

At that time no one outside of a tight military circle was aware of the illegal submission of the secret dossier or the fact that the documents in the dossier had been doctored to strengthen the case against the accused. Therefore, aside from the captain's attorney and immediate family, no one questioned the verdict of the court.

There the case rested until March 1896, when Colonel Georges Picquart, who had recently been appointed director of the intelligence service, came upon a document apparently obtained, like the bordereau, from the wastebasket of the German attaché. It was a draft of a notea letter-telegram called a petit-bleuto a French officer, a Major Esterhazy. In the course of the investigation of this notoriously dissolute and debt-ridden character, Picquart chanced upon a sample of Esterhazy's writing that immediately struck him as identical with that of the bordereau. When he brought this to the attention of his superiors, he was told to "keep the affairs separate." As it became apparent that Picquart would refuse to bury the issue, he was posted to the military frontier in Tunisia.

By the end of 1896 the Dreyfus case resurfaced in public consciousness through leaks to the press and a remarkable pamphlet by Bernard Lazare that challenged the legality and validity of the verdict. At this point the Dreyfus case had become the sensational affair. The anxiety of the High Command and the anger of those who were eventually designated as the anti-Dreyfusards were aroused when it became known that the distinguished vice president of the Senate, C. A. ScheurerKestner, having been informed of Picquart's discoveries, had expressed doubts about the justice of the original verdict. The publication of a facsimile of the bordereau which could then be compared with the handwriting of Alfred Dreyfus and eventually with that of Esterhazy contributed significantly to the formation of a circle of "revisionists" soon to be locked in bitter public conflict with the army's defenders.

With the approval of their superiors, the members of the intelligence service responded to the growing revisionist campaign by complicated maneuvers intended to shield Esterhazy and implicate Picquart. The solution to Esterhazy's vulnerability was to bring him before a court martial that duly exonerated him. This seemed to lay the affair to rest, especially as an overwhelming majority in the Chamber of Deputies categorically repudiated any proposal to reexamine the verdict of the original court.

However, the public perception of the affair was transformed by the publication in January 898 of Émile Zola's "J' Accuse," in which the chiefs of the military establishment were accused of responsibility for a consciously orchestrated miscarriage of justice. Zola's highly charged polemic was designed to provoke legal reprisal and a trial that might become a forum for public exposure of the machinations of the military cabal. This trial brought the simmering passions that had attended the affair to a boil. Mobs gathered outside the court and in the streets of the cities. Anti-Semitism became a popular political force, and the anger aroused by the revisionist campaign turned against the republic itself. While the majority of the republic's political elite continued to affirm Dreyfus's guilt, the anti-Dreyfusard movement clustered around the pole of traditional hostility to republican institutions reflecting the convictions of a section of the Catholic Church, the nostalgic aristocracy, the officer caste, and a new brand of
ultranationalism that fused a populist demagoguery with antidemocratic goals. The intelligentsia was polarized over the affair and played an increasingly visible role in both camps. A section of the socialist and labor movement led by Jean Jaurès concluded that it should join the battle in the Chamber and in the streets, in defense of bourgeois democracy and individual rights.

Zola's trial on charges of defaming respected military officers, his conviction, and his flight to England seemed fatal to the revisionist cause. The generals called upon to testify at the trial referred with great effect to secret documents proving Dreyfus's guilt. Documents whose disclosure would risk war with Germany.

At this point, the determination of the new minister of war, Godefroy Cavaignac, to provide an irrefutable public demonstration of Dreyfus's guilt blew the case open. The officer assigned to reexamine the dossier discovered that the key document mentioning Dreyfus by name was a crude forgery that, along with other fabricated or altered pieces of "evidence," had been added to the file by Colonel Henry, the central figure in the vendetta of the Statistical Section against Dreyfus and his defenders. Henry was arrested, imprisoned, and found in his cell with his throat cut allegedly a suicide. After the exposure of these forgeries as well as other counterfeit letters mailed to Dreyfus and Picquart, the tide began to run to the Dreyfusards.

The response of the militant anti-Dreyfusards was to celebrate Henry's "patriotic forgery" and collect subscriptions to a memorial in support of the patriotic martyr's wife and children. The messages accompanying the contributions to the memorial were characterized by a ferocious anti-Semitism in words that anticipate the practices of the twentieth century.

By 1899, the accumulated evidence about the identity of the real traitor and the gradual shift in mainstream political opinion in response to the perceived threat to the existence of the republic enabled the High Appeals Court to annul the original verdict, in light of the illegal procedure, and impose a retrial once again before a military court. This was the trial at Rennes in August and September 1899. Under immense pressure, before a deeply divided nation, the second court martial once again found Dreyfus guilty, this time with the ludicrous codicil of "extenuating circumstances."

In the same year, a new republican coalition, the so-called Waldeck-Rousseau government, which reflected the transformation of the dominant attitudes toward the affair in the Chamber of Deputies, decided to close the case by granting Dreyfus a pardon. Dreyfus and his family decided to accept the pardon, for which he was never forgiven by some of the zealots for his cause. In 1906 the Appeals Court annulled the second verdict. Dreyfus returned to the army and served as a lieutenant colonel in the First World War.

The immediate and distant consequences of the affair were not terminated by the closing of the case, but for my purposes here it is sufficient to say that truth had prevailed. While a penumbra of doubt still clings to certain salient aspects of the story such as whether the bordereau had really been discovered in the office of the German attaché; the identity of the author of the petitbleu; or the real relations between Henry and Esterhazy before the affair began eventually, even in France, there came to be an authoritative consensus on the truth at the core of the Dreyfus case in a narrow sense, as distinguished from the broad interpretation.
of the affair. Now almost, if not quite (a rather strident not quite), everyone believes that Dreyfus was innocent. In that sense, the truth is, and was, on the side of the Dreyfusards. Truthfulness in a larger sense has often been attributed to the best of the Dreyfusard partisans with regard to their "rigorous concern for facts, the requirements of demonstration and logical proof, the very method which intellectuals had acquired and were inclined to extrapolate to other areas of consideration." 2

This is Bredin's characterization a descendant of the original self-image of the Dreyfusards, which has often been reproduced by their sympathizers. For example, in his book More Than a Trial: The Struggle over Captain Dreyfus, Robert L. Hoffman devotes most of a chapter to a distinction between the Dreyfusard scholars, "who had deliberately committed themselves to scientific rigor in their work," and those anti-Dreyfusard intellectuals who "typically were those who did not fully employ rigorous scientific methods, or did so without consciousness of and commitment to the critical rationalism that underlies that method." The Dreyfusards believed that their political purpose "would best be served by telling the truth and they were prepared to accept correction of errors they might have committed should evidence prove them wrong." 3

While this chapter might be considered an extended commentary in support of Hoffman's interpretation, I do recognize that there are historians who would find his treatment far too simple and far too confident. Bredin himself, who has no difficulty in locating where moral right belongs, cautions against Page 40

"explaining the Affair summarily as a systematic confrontation between two moralities, a clear division between men of Truth and men of Dogma." 4 While I agree with Bredin's qualifications, I will emphasize the way in which competing claims to authority in interpreting the affair came to express conflicting criteria of truth.

Others, including those with no particular French axe to grind, have gone much further than Bredin in qualifying or simply jettisoning the classic version of the affair as a conflict between liberal, humanist, rationalist Good and reactionary, racist, obscurantist Evil. Revisions of the simple celebration of the affair as the victory of the Rights of Man come in various flavors:

I. Dreyfus was and remains guilty as charged.

Certainly most of those who first heard of the affair in 1894, and for some years after that, believed that Dreyfus was guilty in the light of common sense and conventional juridical canons of truth. It has been virtually de rigueur to cite the initial response of the great Dreyfusards Jaurés and Clemenceau demanding a more severe punishment for the culprit. This conviction was supported by a rational deference to authority: a court weighed the relevant evidence and came to presumably valid conclusions, as in the normal course of events. Later, as evidence emerged that seemed to support a revision of the original decision, a sincere belief in Dreyfus's guilt was still founded on a deference to authority, partly because revisionism came to require a belief in the dishonest or at least stupid behavior of those worthy of trust and respect. After the uncovering of the forgery in the counterintelligence bureauColonel Henry's fabricated documentit required more ingenuity to maintain an unqualified belief in the truth of the original charge.

Spitzer - Page 4 of 26
Then with the revelations of further fabrications, tampering with evidence, the clear implication of Esterhazy, and so forth, the strains on ingenuity increased; now what was required was a belief in the existence of esoteric proofs, such as undisclosable documents in the Kaiser's hand. Historical imagination proved equal to the task. The anti-Dreyfusard cause continues to be argued in works that claim the authority of conventional, empirical, and rational canons in order to support the original decision of the military courts. Even after the publication in 1961 of the magisterial work of Marcel Thomas based on the discovery of new material in the archives, anti-Dreyfusards still produce books arguing that Dreyfus was guilty in fact. By this time we have arrived at a perverse appropriation of the authority of rational and empirical discourse, of which there are even worse examples dedicated to the obliteration of twentieth-century atrocities.

2. It doesn't matter whether or not Dreyfus was guilty; the villainy of the Dreyfusards entailed a sort of retroactive condemnation.

This is a variant of the argument about consequences, which I will discuss below, but I set it off here to identify those who are not willing to agree that Dreyfus was in fact innocent. To accept this argument is to speak the language of Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès. If Dreyfus were innocent, Barrès wrote, "one thing must be refused him all the same: pardon for his defenders. For the rest, if he is not a traitor, he should perforce be ashamed for having aroused such sympathy." 8

3. Dreyfus was not guilty, but the conflict posed a genuine moral dilemma: justice at all costs versus the health of the state.

This is one version of what I will call the pragmatic standard, in which the commitment to truth must be weighed in light of the consequences. If the affair is viewed from this perspective, men of goodwill might well have taken either position. This is an approach that continues to be favored by what one might call the British School, an early example of which is Brian Chapman's book The Dreyfus Case: A Reassessment. Chapman concludes by quoting Julian Benda, himself a committed Dreyfusard who recognized the grave political consequences of his commitment: "the single coherent attitude for the nonrevolutionary Dreyfusist was to say either: 'I put justice before all and with death in my soul accept the political consequences of my act of justice'; or 'I put order above everything else and with death in my soul renounce an act of justice which will inevitably bring in its train such social consequences' (emphasis in original). 10

A variant of this approach, and a French specialty, is to concede that Dreyfus was innocent but to conjecture that the people who framed him were involved in a complicated game involving double agents and double-crosses and pregnant with the threat of war—a game that could not be exposed without blowing the intelligence network. One fairly recent example of this theory is in the work of Henri Giscard d'Estaing, who embellishes such a scenario with remarks on the essentially sinister behavior of the Jewish cabal in their exploitation of this patriotic dilemma. We find various sanitized versions of this approach: Page 42
4. Dreyfus was innocent, but the consequences of the affair were certainly deplorable, and the behavior of the Dreyfusard faction put them on a level with their antagonists.

This interpretation is usually accompanied by an attempt to qualify what is considered the received view of the moral alignments in which there was, as Douglas Johnson puts it, "on the one side justice, truth, and the determination to achieve them, on the other side obscurantism, prejudice, indifference, and injustice." 12 Johnson's work, often cited as the most balanced, objective account of the affair, is certainly dedicated to a reassessment of the moral balance sheet that enters all the good on the side of the Dreyfusards and various forms of evil on the other side. For Johnson, any evidence about the inherent goodwill of the generals or some understanding of their motives, even when they engaged in lies and illegality, is drawn out, and any shred of evidence about the less-than-heroic qualities even of such legendary Dreyfusard heroes as Colonel Picquart is sedulously unearthed. Having listed all of the ways in which both sides might be considered equally prejudiced, tendentious, unscrupulous, and merciless, Johnson concludes, "All this is not to say that there is no difference between anti-Dreyfusard and Dreyfusard. But it is to say that the difference between them was not one of personality, of scruples or of methods. Often, in fact, the difference was histrionic." 13

In his book The Fall of Public Man, in a section entitled "The Dreyfus Affair: Destructive Gemeinschaft," Richard Sennett follows Johnson's general interpretation but locates the meaning of the affair in the essential histrionic identity of the two camps. Sennett provides a close reading of Zola's J'Accuse (and the complete text in an appendix) to show that "devoid of logical and legal substance, its purpose, would cast the affair as a drama of personal morality." In this regard, Zola's conclusion to J'Accuse "has a disturbing parallel to Edouard Drumont's vicious anti-Semitic article, 'The Soul of Captain Dreyfus.'" Sennett emphasizes the similarities in the self-dramatization of the author and the dehumanization of the enemy, in which the essential goal is to define irreconcilable communities, and thus he reads the affair as typified by "inward turning language[,] ... rigidity for the sake of feeling bound up in the group, a defiance of the dissonances of history for the sake of community." For Sennett, the substance of the Dreyfus case, the questions of truth or falsity regarding the facts of the matter, are of negligible interest; the innocence of Dreyfus is indubitable but insignificant. 14

This is also the approach that informs Richard Griffiths's work The Use of Abuse: The Polemics of the Dreyfus Affair and Its Aftermath, in which the essential
were similar. From this point he concludes that the two camps were virtually indistinguishable in contributing to the deterioration of political discourse in France. Griffiths's emphasis is on the results: "both sides in the Affair, carried away with their own rhetoric, lost hold on reality and created a new 'reality' of their own, leaving far behind them the case itself, and its unfortunate victim." 15

The considerable literature that locates the meaning of the affair in its pernicious consequences has come to no consensus on which consequences were the most pernicious. One familiar theme has to do with the pernicious effects on the army and therefore French security in the light of the cosmic conflicts of the twentieth century. The hostility toward the officer corps, its persecution when the Dreyfusards were in the political saddle, and the general tension between a segment of the political elite and the armed forces are blamed for the striking incompetence of the military leaders of the French response to the German invasion in 1914 (somewhat less incompetent than its response to the invasions in 1870 and 1940). The military historian Douglas Porch carries this line right up to the fall of France in the Second World War: "When defeat seemed certain in 1940, a generation of soldiers who had suffered arrogant politicians since 1900 did not pass up the opportunity to pull the rug from under the feet of its tormentors." 16

In an article entitled "The Dreyfus Affair and the Corruption of the French Legal System," Benjamin Martin presents a "more complicated and less moralistic" assessment of the corruptions of the judicial process than the standard unqualified condemnation of the implacable persecution of a victim of anti-Semitism by a self-serving military elite. Martin grants the shameful irregularity of the proceedings of the first military tribunal and the ludicrous verdict of the second, both of which condemned Dreyfus on the basis of illegally submitted and fabricated evidence, but he goes on to argue that "many of the Dreyfusards acted out of a determination to right an injustice, only to commit injustice themselves in the process. Eventually, for both sides, the ends justified the means. And few on either side appeared to understand when damage to principle was done the legal system was politicized."

Martin's "more complicated and less moralistic" account honors the Dreyfusards for their courageous battle for justice in a legal system that was often and even characteristically unjust, but he also reads the motives of the military leaders in a more or less sympathetic light and emphasizes the deplorable results of overturning an illegal decision, "however improper," by legislation rather than by another legal decision. 17

One can find a virtually paradigmatic presentation of the line that treats Dreyfus's innocence as assumed, but more or less beside the historical point, in Theodore Zeldin's influential and idiosyncratic work The History of France, 1848 to 1945. Like Griffiths and Martin, Zeldin recommends Douglas Johnson's book as "the most judicious and perceptive study" and in a brief compass rings virtually all of the changes on what might be called the "modified revisionist theme with special emphasis on consequences." In Zeldin's reading the Dreyfusard intellectuals set France back thirty years by "refusing to let it go forward in the solution of the problems of the day." Thus the affair itself "was one of the greatest failures of the Republic, precisely because it impeded advance beyond the disputes of the nineteenth century." 18
Zeldin isn't clear as to what would have constituted an advance beyond the disputes of the nineteenth century, and indeed, one might remark that the Dreyfusards were actually mired in such shibboleths of the eighteenth century as the Declaration of the Rights of Man, whereas people on the other side, such as Maurras and Barrès, looked forward to the twentieth century in rhetorical anticipations of fascism.

One common theme in the modern "less moralistic" school of interpretation is the application of the principle of tout comprendre, if not quite tout pardonner, to an empathetic reconstruction of the motives of the conventional "villains" of the story, to right the balance against the anachronistic sanctification of the heroes. Their emphasis on consequences rather than truth does indeed rethink past thought, as the affirmation of consequences was at the very rhetorical and moral core of the anti-Dreyfusard camp. Yet this emphasis is anachronistic, because coming to terms with the facts of the case was inseparable from the establishment of a partisan identity in either camp.

One could read as the implicit message of those historians who dwell on Page 45 deplorable consequences of insisting on the truth that during the affair it would have been better, if not expressly to lie, at least not to have insisted so zealously on the truth. Or perhaps this is too doctrinaire an interpretation. Some of them grant the virtue of that first cohort of truth-tellers, sometimes labeled Dreyfusists, who at considerable cost dedicated themselves to asserting an ideal, in contrast to the Dreyfusards, who subsequently exploited the affair.

The canonical version of this interpretation was articulated by Charles Péguy in 1910. It seems impossible to write a piece on the affair without citing his aphorism about how mystique degenerated into politique. According to some commentators, this degeneration into the politiquethe illiberal treatment of religion, the tendentious purges of the officer corps, and so forthis a negative reflection back on the original crusade; but Péguy refused to believe that the subsequent corruption of the ideal forced a reevaluation of that heroic mystique as a tragic mystification. Péguy's work Notre Jeunesse was composed as a specific refutation of an erstwhile Dreyfusist who looked back on the days of that great struggle with an ambivalence that could be interpreted as regret. This was Daniel Halévy, Péguy's close friend and comrade-in-arms, whose work "Apologie pour notre passé" was read by Péguy as an apology for their commitment to the cause, in light of its dismal effects. Actually, Péguy's long, impassioned response, perhaps the best-remembered of all his works, is an example of interpretive overkill, since what Halévy wrote was an apologia, a justification for the commitment to the battle to free Dreyfus, despite the subsequent corruption of the ideal. Péguy's essential objection referred to the least hint that the Dreyfusists, whose eternal glory dwelt in that first heroic commitment to truth and justice, might in any sense share the responsibility for its degeneration into the politiquethe opportunistic Dreyfusards; "my past," he said, "needs no apology." 21

While he enumerated in obsessive, eloquent detail the pernicious consequences of the corruption of the original mystique, Péguy would not enter a negative balance: the temporal balance sheet, the salut temporel, of the nation, weighed as nothing against the salut éternel. The immortal soul of France had been saved by the Dreyfusists. According to the conventional wisdom, the cité did not depend on the fate of a single citizen, and yet one
single crime, one example of injustice, if officially sanctioned and universally accepted, will fracture the social contract and dishonor an entire people. 22

Thus Péguy never would concede to the anti-Dreyfusards the argument about the consequences an argument that would be central to the response Page 46 to the Dreyfus case once a specter of doubt was raised by that handful of revisionists. At that point the question of consequences became the guiding principle of the political elite, who simply wanted to bury this issue, which could only have unfortunate and divisive results.

As the Dreyfusard chorus swelled, it became difficult to argue this line without reference to the truth of the original charge that is, difficult for political pragmatists of a certain stripe, then as now, simply to say, "It is meet and right to lie in a good cause." It would take the malevolent ingenuity of Charles Maurras to create a cult of the heroic lie when the forgery of Colonel Henry was exposed, and even that was supposed to be the authentic copy of verbal communications.

The version of truth that proceeds from the argument from authority, dominant at first in the rational deference to the decision of the military court, was transformed into a transcendent faith in the integrity of the officer caste, invulnerable to any appeal to evidence or logic.

After the public exposure of facts that undermined the presumption of guilt, a far different appeal to authority appeared in a Manifesto of the Intellectuals in Clemenceau's journal L'Aurore, in the issue that published Zola's J'Accuse. The collective endorsement of this outrageous attack on the military elite as perpetrators of a judicial crime was immediately perceived as a claim that depended on the prestige of spokesmen for high culture. And the answer was the organization of a competing group of writers and thinkers, leading to that confrontation of the "families" of the intelligentsia, a subject on which there is a substantial body of literature. 23 I do not intend to reexplore the ground so well covered by Stephen Wilson, Christopher Charle, and others in drawing sociological or disciplinary profiles of these groups, but I do wish to reexamine the claims to authority and the criteria of truth that developed out of their debate.

The manifesto of the intellectuals was greeted with outrage, not only for its content but also for its presumption, attacked in language that is familiar enough in our day and, as in our day, by people we would identify as other intellectuals. The masterful vituperation of Maurice Barrès is often cited at this point. The use of the term "intellectual" was bad enough, he wrote, but nothing was worse than the thing itself. The culture of the soi-disant intellectuals was a "demi-culture" that ruined instinct without replacing it by conscience. "All of these aristocrats of the mind insist on proclaiming that they do not think like the vile multitude.... They no longer sense their affinity with their natural kind and do not attain the clairvoyance that would recover a conscious identity with the masses." 24 Page 47

Another virtually magisterial anathema leveled against writers and academics with political presumption, less remembered now but carrying a great authority then, was that of Ferdinand Brunetière himself a mandarin among the mandarins. Brunetière was a professor and a public figure, an immensely influential if controversial literary historian and critic, a professor at the...
École normale, his career crowned by a chair in the Académie française. He was also editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes, where he published his personal manifesto "Après le procès [the Zola trial]" in the issue of March 15, 1898. After what might most charitably be described as an equivocal treatment of anti-Semitism and a paean to the French army, Brunetièrè turned with heavy sarcasm to the pretensions of this self-identified group of so-called intellectuals. "What conception of life," Brunetièrè asks, "granted them the authority to lord over those who didn't honor that designation?" According to what criterion was this prestigious title awarded to distinguished paleographers or linguists or scientists? By what right was the actual distinction acquired in some particular field of study presumed to extend to whatever area these professors were inclined to consider? Such "grand words" as "scientific method, aristocracy of the intelligence, respect for truth" simply concealed the pretensions of individuals and capitalized and underlined the great contemporary malady, in which "each of us . . . sets himself up as sovereign judge of everything." Brunetièrè's special targets were the experts presuming an authority outside of their disciplines, as in the case of the paleographer who presumed to refute "the judgment of three court martials" that is, such distinguished scholars as Paul Meyer, director of the École Nationale des Chartes, who testified at the Zola trial. In effect, such a self-infatuated individualism approaches anarchy, and it is clear enough where that leads. In an earlier passage Brunetièrè had made the point that "the discipline indispensable to the existence of armies is precisely and uniquely incompatible with individualism and with anarchy." The army, the great bulwark and incarnation of French democracy, had found its worst enemy in those so-called intellectuals. 25

Brunetièrè's manifesto constituted a public challenge, and it was immediately taken up, notably by fellow academics directly or implicitly condemned by his diatribe. The response of Émile Durkheim remains of considerable interest because it documents his location on the political spectrum and because he strikes chords characteristic of arguments advanced by Brunetièrè's adversaries. Durkheim vigorously defends the individualism that is the central target of Brunetièrè's tirade. Like Péguy, if not in his apocalyptic language, Durkheim reverses the nationalist thesis about consequences of the public exercise of independent judgment: "Not only is individualism not anarchical, but it henceforth is the only system of belief which can insure the moral unity of the country." 26 In effect, individualism conceived as freedom of expression is a unifying characteristic of Durkheim's France, an indispensable constituent of the national identity. To restrict it is to compromise the national existence. A far different France might have emerged from an affair in which the Dreyfusard truth had been repressed and the ultranationalist version of the affair affirmed.

This reading of the implications of the affair retains its contemporary relevance. Those historians who conclude that to be a Dreyfusard was to prefer some ideal of the truth over the health of the state have preempted the argument as to consequences. Even to say that the affair became a myth, whether or not in the pejorative sense, is to say something about the society that France became, to note an entry in the register of the French people's collective memory, to specify the constituents of their political culture. The anti-Semitic strain that polluted political discourse in France even before the affair would never prevail; France would not go fascist in the 1930s and would only succumb to the tradition incarnated in the other camp as a result of the defeat of 1940. 27
Durkheim also came to grips with Brunetièr's attack on intellectuals' presumptuous claims to general authority. Durkheim's response was to become the familiar justification of the intellectual engagé: to enjoy the right and assume the duty to participate, as any other citizen, in public discourse. With reference to the issue at hand, Durkheim argued,

To know whether a tribunal can be permitted to condemn an accused man without having heard his defense requires no special intelligence. It is a problem of practical ethics for which every man of good sense is competent and to which no one should be indifferent. If, therefore, in recent times, a certain number of artists, and especially scholars, believed they had to refuse to concur in a judgment whose legality appeared to them suspect, it was not because in their capacity as chemists or philologists, as philosophers or historians, they attributed to themselves some sort of special privilege and a sort of eminent right of control over the thing being judged. It is because, being men, they intend to exercise all their human rights and retain before them a matter which is amenable to reason alone. 28

This unexceptionable statement does leave something unsaid. The signers of the Manifesto of the Intellectuals and subsequent collections of signatures were not randomly distributed along the population of the Dreyfusards. There we find the names of Émile Zola, Anatole France, Daniel Halévy, Marcel Proust, Gabriel Monod, Charles Seignobos, Lucien Herr, and so forth, not a selection of modest instituteurs, Jewish laborers, or anticlerical peasants. The critics of the manifesto rightly sensed some claim to collective authority. Indeed, Durkheim suggests this in the sentences following his assertion of the rights that intellectuals shared with all men because of their common humanity: "It is true that they have shown themselves to be more jealous of that right than has the rest of the society; but it is simply because in consequence of their professional practices they take it more to heart. Since they are accustomed by the practice of the scientific method to reserve their judgment as long as they do not feel themselves enlightened, it is natural that they should yield less easily to the sway of the masses and the prestige of authority." 29

"The practice of the scientific method": from the ultraskeptical perspective of the end of our century, when authority is denied even to scientists speaking within their own disciplines, when the ideal of the scientific method is characterized as an ideology of dominance, when the Enlightenment has been written off as a "failure," what legitimacy is left to the civic pretensions of a scientific (or social scientific) Weltanschauung? And at the end of the last century the other side had its scientists, too, claiming the authority that anthropometrists and social Darwinists conferred on bigotry and racism. 30 However, the pretension that their conclusions were illuminated by the light of science was much more a weapon in the revisionists' arsenal, so it became a target for the facile contempt of their antagonists. Thus Ferdinand Brunetièr, who had already demolished to his satisfaction the cosmic pretensions of science in general, turned his guns on the presumption that expertise in the physical sciences endowed anyone with the authority to speak on political or legal issues and on the idea that the methods of the social scientists applied to matters of disputable fact had anything to do with scientific demonstration or formal proof. 31

As Maurice Blanchot remarks in his "Les Intellectuels en question," such an objection can be applied generally to intellectuals' presumption that their specific expertise entitles them to an authority over subjects for which they have no special competence. In fact, Blanchot says,
this is not necessarily an unreasonable assumption to the extent that intellectuals apply the quality of mind that has won them distinction, rather than as they too often do, assuming the authority while applying slipshod methods they would never accept in their professional pursuits. 32 Page 50

In fact, the Dreyfusist savants who appealed to the model of the scientific method in political debate like the chemists Edouard Grimaux or Émile Duclaux, for example, did not claim either the authority of their professional distinction or the authority of what passes for proof in the physical sciences. Their essential appeal was not to a specific disciplinary method but to a professional ethic transferred to the realm of public affairs. 33

This was an ethic that could be practiced by anyone. As Duclaux, director of the Institut Pasteur and one of the participants in the running debate with Brunetière, put it, "What is scientific reasoning? Quite simply, reasoning applied with the healthy fear of self-deception and the resolution to avoid it." Irrespective of scholarly discipline, from physicist to historian, "all are worthy of the title of savant on condition that they do their research with integrity, sans parti pris, and find the evidence for their conclusions outside of themselves, independent of the subjective realm where the hypothesis to be verified was born." 34

The appropriation of the authority of objectivity, sans parti pris, was the familiar language of the revisionists in public debate and at the major trials. 35 To be without bias in this sense is not equivalent to neutrality; the engagement of the Dreyfusard savant was scarcely value-free. But among the values implicit in the Dreyfusards’ assertion of objectivity was the commitment to apply one's best standards, one's most rigorous criteria of truth, to the issue in question irrespective of other preferences or personal costs.

And there were indeed personal costs, especially in the early stages of the struggle. The distinguished chemist Edouard Grimaux, who took the stand at the Zola struggle to defend his honor as a bred-in-the-bone patriot, forced against the grain to conclude that the leadership of his beloved army had failed their country would stick to his guns despite dismissal from his chair at the École Polytechnique, repudiation by sometime friends and colleagues, and vilification and physical harassment at public meetings. 36

Still, to suffer for an ideal is not to guarantee its authenticity. Furthermore, the experts who testified for the other side at the trials also claimed the authority of inference from indubitable evidence sans parti pris. While some anti-Dreyfusard polemicists gloried in their lack of objectivity, most continued to insist that the original decision of the court martial was, in fact, correct. 37 However, the appeals to common evidential standards concealed a crucial difference. A Durkheim or a Duclaux continued to assume the possible falsifiability of his conclusions, in or out of the laboratory, whereas the anti-Dreyfusards merely exploited that ethic: that is, faced with convincing, and Page 51

eventually devastating, evidence that not Dreyfus but Esterhazy was the spy, they tacitly exploited the proposition that no accumulation of evidence about matters of fact is the equivalent of a formal proof. The apprehension that it is always possible to imagine some additional fact that might falsify a given conclusion encouraged the proliferation of lies by unscrupulous demagogues like Rochefort; the elaborate graphological analyses intended to
explain away the fact that the handwriting of the bordereau seemed closer to that of Esterhazy than of Dreyfus; or, as in Figueras's recent book, the suggestion that all of the documents exposed as indubitable forgeries had been planted by agents of the Dreyfusard cabal to discredit the counterintelligence apparatus. In practice, the antirevisionist appeal to the facts of the case has never been separated from the pragmatic principle that truth is what serves the cause. That is why Daniel Hoffman is right to distinguish the critical rationalism of the Dreyfusard tradition (despite obvious individual deviations) from the systematic lies of its antagonists.

Admittedly, my citation of the Dreyfusard scientists or Durkheim is selective, tailored to support an argument. In making a different argument, Richard Griffiths chooses to emphasize the nasty polemics of Urban Gohier and Laurent Tailhade, scarcely first-rank luminaries in the Dreyfusard galaxy. It is not my intention to select out exemplary Dreyfusards as representative figures or to fabricate a rationalist saints-calendar, but to examine the criteria of commitment to the cause insofar as those criteria constituted a response to the facts of the case.

The commitment to rationalism and objectivity is, as we are now often reminded, the product of historical circumstance and is, I would agree, a moral choice. Those who reject that choice presumably embrace another, although it is difficult to find someone engaged in a morally charged debate about the past who publicly repudiates rational standards not to speak of simply admitting to lying in a good cause. Even Maurice Barrès, who assimilated standards of truth to group loyalties, never admitted to lying about the case in the conventional sense of the term.

There is one rather odd exception to this inhibition: the writer Paul Léautaud. Léautaud contributed to the Henry Memorial, Le Monument Henry, organized by an anti-Semitic journal in support of the widow of the martyred forger, and accompanied his contribution with the comment "Pour l'ordre, contre la justice et la vérité." It is difficult to know what to make of this perhaps that sort of mischievousness that the French call gaminerie. Léautaud identified himself as a Dreyfusard and cheerfully engaged in arguments over the affair with his friend Paul Valéry, who had made his contribution to the Henry Memorial accompanied by the inexpungible "non sans réflexion." 38

Valéry never retreated from that early indiscretion, and he persisted in an attitude toward the affair and the truth about the affair that I will label "aesthetic," in Allan Megill's sense of aestheticism as "a tendency to see 'art' or 'language' or 'discourse' or 'text' as constituting the primary realm of human experience," applying it in this case to moral judgment. After the association of the term "aesthetic" with political morality occurred to me, I came upon the controversy over the wartime writings of Paul de Man, in which the "aestheticizing" of politics is presumed, on the authority of Walter Benjamin, to lend itself to, or even be the essence of, fascism. This is not the place to detail what I think is wrong with all of that; 40 I simply want to characterize the tendency to disassociate political commitment and moral judgment from any conception of truth.

The aesthetic approach in the most narrow and literal sense was expressed with
characteristic flippant cynicism by Leon Daudet, major star in the Pleiades of the Action Française and an implacable enemy of the Dreyfus ideal until his death in 1942, who once described Dreyfusism as "a lesion that infects everything, even aesthetic judgment. There is a Dreyfusard hue." 41

With Valéry the issue is somewhat more complex. Marcel Thomas's assemblage of the fragmentary evidence about Valéry's refusal to withdraw from a position that became less defensible with the passage of years traces out Valéry's transition from a belligerence that drove André Gide into craven apologies for having signed the Manifesto of the Intellectuals to scattered, more or less defensive allusions to that remote historic moment. 42 None of these published and unpublished scraps suggest a conviction that Dreyfus was in fact a traitor. At the time of the affair, Valéry's justification proceeded from an argument as to consequences. The affair contributed to the erosion of power at the center, the quasi-anarchy of "counter powers," the self-promotion of mediocrities, the strain on "the mechanism of the army already so delicate in a democratic country."

In Valéry's last recorded reflections on the affair, his justification is no longer cast as a political, but rather as a personal, response to the behavior of the Dreyfusards:

Not "wicked"that is to say feeling pain at the sight of painyet my heart feels no pity for anyone who exploits my compassion who tries to gain his ends through invocations to Justice, Humanity, etc. So much so that, in spite of his appeals to established Idols, I align myself with Injustice and take refuge in the disgust at this comedy, of which I have seen many examples. That explains my attitude during the celebrated Affair. For one does not become a man simply by invoking Humanityl knew those men who were exempt from no human weakness and no weakness of the man of lettersand in this particular case I saw them inflame themselves and others for a cause. 43

As Blanchot remarks after quoting this passage, "Pénible souvenir, pénible énigme." 44 All the more enigmatic in the light of Valéry's reputation as an icon of lucidity and rationality. 45 In this case the standards are neither rational or pragmatic but set by rhetorical sensibility. Presumably the self-righteous discourse of the self-proclaimed intellectuals, the "stupidity and false bonhomie of such 'savants' as Duclaux, Reville, etc.," 46 justify the embrace of injustice. The moral touchstone for Valéry, as for such subsequent commentators as Sennett and Griffiths, is not the truth about matters of contested fact but the quality of the contestants' discourse.

Not that Valéry, even in his militant phase, expressed solidarity with demagogues like Drumont or Rochefort. The aesthetic stance is usually characterized by a certain degree of "a plague on both your houses." This is the case with Romain Rolland, who acquired an unsolicited Dreyfusard reputation because his play Les Loups was understood, contrary to his intentions, as a revisionist allegory. Rolland, an anti-Semite with a Jewish wife, believed that both sets of protagonists of the affair, which he considered a tragic conflict of valid principles, were infected with corrupt motives. Therefore he took a stand "above the battle": "When a house is on fire each one saves what is most precious to him, for some it was justice; for others the tradition of la patrie. For me it was reason."

Spitzer - Page 14 of 26
Rolland's version of "reason" spoke not to the facts of the case or to the issue of Dreyfus's innocence (of which he was apparently convinced) but to the unreasonable behavior, the "fanaticism," of the contending parties. After the Henry forgery, he reaffirmed his anti-Semitic inclinations, which he would have set aside, he assured Lucien Herr, "if justice hadn't remained quite secondary in the preoccupations of the defenders of Dreyfus." 47 As if it were a matter of taste, observes Blanchot 48 even of literary taste. Rolland told Lucien Herr that he would support neither a dubious cause nor "a writer whose character I have never esteemed."

The writer was almost certainly Zola. Zola's role as the heroic voice of justice never has been universally celebrated. The bombastic and self-dramatizing rhetoric of J'Accuse is not much to modern taste and received mixed reviews at the time. For example, after Georges Sorel's disenchantment by the corruption of the original mystique had transformed him from a combative Dreyfusard into a malicious critic of the paladins of Dreyfusism, he characterized Zola as the "representative man of the buffoonery of this era." Even Joseph Reinach had to admit, says Sorel, that J'Accuse was a collection of "romantic bric-a-brac applied without taste and without moderation" and Zola's trial testimony "one of those absurd and sonorous speeches of the sort delivered by one of Victor Hugo's characters." 49

I have not cited this passage to suggest that the reason for the radical change in Sorel's attitude toward the affair was aesthetic; it proceeded from the outrage he shared with Péguy at the degeneration of the original ideals into the sordid maneuvers of the republican politicos. But unlike Péguy, Sorel responded to the degeneration of the ideal by casting a negative light backward onto the entire meaning of the affair. The structure of his tract La Révolution Dreyfusienne is cast in the form of a vast argument ad hominem in which Sorel compares the affair to the French Revolution, characterizing both moments through the discrepancy between the historical immensity of the events and the pitiful shrunken moral stature of their protagonists. This interpretation is applied in detail to the Dreyfusard heroes Zola, Anatole France, Jaurès, and even Colonel Picquart. No conjecture or innuendo about corrupt motive is overlooked in "Sorel's most deplorable publication." 50

Wherever Sorel took his stand, it could not have been on the ground occupied by a Durkheim or a Jaurès. His hostility to rationalism as a principle of intellectual existence and to professional intellectuals as bearers of the rationalist virus, of "the metaphysics of the people who vulgarized the vulgarization of the eighteenth century," 51 guaranteed that his political stance would not depend on conventional criteria regarding the truth value of statements about contestable facts.

Shortly before the First World War, at the time of Sorel's flirtation with ultraroyalism and an affectation of vicious anti-Semitism, 52 he wrote to the Action Française that he was stimulated by the hostility of the Dreyfusards to wonder whether "I should not now write a brochure on the reasons that would lead one to believe in the treason of Alfred Dreyfus." 53 I read this not as an assertion of Sorel's conviction that Dreyfus was in fact guilty as charged but as a suggestion of what the Dreyfusards had coming to them.
In his anti-Dreyfusard phase, Sorel damned the Dreyfusards for the consequences of their agitation, which weakened the "social structure," that is, the coalition of elites that enabled the parliamentary system to function. Rather odd objection for that sometime Pied Piper of the general strike. In any phase, Sorel was never concerned with the objective validity of a movement's ideology but with how it worked, and at this time his transcending of rational or empirical criteria in political conflict aligned him with the pragmatic and irrationalist ethic of Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès, who would transform anti-Dreyfusard politics into a permanent protofascist politique.

Charles Maurras, whose celebration of Colonel Henry's patriotic forgery was the launching pad for a lifetime career as philosophic guru of the ultranationalist Right, asserted the categorical priority of the pragmatic standard. "I do not wish to reengage in the old debate, innocent or guilty," he wrote. What mattered was the damage inflicted on France by the defenders of Dreyfus. "Unfortunately societies without justice have been seen, but one has yet to see justice without a society." But Maurras's pragmatism never inhibited his appeal to the "evidence" of Dreyfus's guilt, such as the claim that Esterhazy, "straw man of the Jews," had been paid to imitate the handwriting in the bordereau.

This is the case too of Maurice Barrès, the most brilliantly perverse polemicist in the antirevisionist camp then and ever since. Barrès was a figure of considerable literary and political influence before the First World War; his novels became a generational touchstone for the educated youth of the 1890s. Although he was subject to the ferocious contempt of the postwar intelligentsia, he has remained an admired figure for the French Right, but the primary revival of interest in his work during the last two decades has been in his presumed role as a precursor of fascism. There is no complete consensus on this, but the works of Ernst Nolte, Robert Soucy, C. Doty, and especially Zeev Sternhell have made a strong case for the anticipations of fascism in Barrès's fiction and in the polemical journalism hammered out during his battle against the Dreyfusards. According to Nolte, Barrès propounded "a relativist irrationalism obviously a position of decadence[that] glorifies instinct and blood and thus creates one of the most remarkable characterizations of future fascism." 56

I wish to emphasize an element of the Barrèsian polemic that was indeed characteristic of fascist ideology but that also has a quite contemporary resonance. This is his location of truth or the criteria for truth in a community and its presumed interests.

Although Barrès' pugnacious assault on the Dreyfusard camp came as a surprise to many of his young acolytes on the Left, Zeev Sternhell and others have persuasively analyzed the continuity in his ideas that made his anti-Dreyfusism continuous with attitudes already affirmed, notably in his extremely influential novel Les Déracinés. In this novel published on the eve of the outbreak of the affair, Barrès depicts a Kantian professor engaged in poisoning the minds of the novel's young protagonists through his version of the categorical imperative: "I ought always to act such that I would wish that my action was the universal rule." Rather than demand the regurgitation of such lifeless abstractions, it was necessary to teach a particular truth rooted in a particular environment and a certain human community. It was necessary to teach "French truth, that is to say, that which is most useful to the nation." "Les préjugés nationaux" were the very stuff of wisdom.
This was the version of truth that would turn out to be appropriate to anti-Dreyfusard polemicindeed, providential, once the evidence about the fabricated indictment began to accumulate. Barrès's assertion "It is hopeless to try to establish truth solely by reason, since the mind can always find a new reason to question the conclusions" 60 forecasts generations of dialectical acrobats who continued to invent one more scenario designed to assimilate and explain away the manifest evidence about the overwhelming probability of the innocence of the accused. But for Barrès the unassailable redoubt would be his definition of truth as "French," rooted in the soil where his ancestors were interred, inaccessible to Protestants or Jews, and the unassailable authority for the refutation of opposing views. Thus Émile Zola could be disposed of with reference to his Venetian descent, which guaranteed a mentality alien to that of the French. 61 Proust's Baron Charlus carries the Barrèsian logic to its ultimate conclusion when he observes that "in any case the crime is non-existent. This compatriot [Dreyfus] of your friend would have committed a crime if he had betrayed Judaea, but what has he to do with France?" 62

Barrès's ethnocentric standard of truth might now be read as an affirmation of solidarity in Richard Rorty's sense, 63 although Barrès preferred the term "affinity" to "solidarity" because he wanted to emphasize the instinctual feelings of sympathy and identity inherited from the past and transmitted in the blood. 64 This is scarcely the sort of solidarity that Rorty has in mind; nor, presumably, what those who relativize truth to the standards of particular communities intend. "Tribalism" is the term applied to the Barrès version. 65 One might say that, projecting our own tribal sympathies into the past, we liberals would have belonged to some other tribe, by choice rather than birththat of Jaurès or Anatole Franceand in accepting their standards of truth, then as now, would have had no dialogue with Barrès except the discourse of combat. Page 57

This is certainly the way that Barrès claimed to see it. Implacable opponents face each other across impassable barriers, not merely of political preference but of incommensurable standards of veridicality. But this was not, in fact, the case. The contesting "tribes" inhabited the same time and space, shared the same political, social, and human circumstances, and partook of the same tradition of intelligible discourse. Here I borrow the burden of Ernest Gellner's critique of Peter Winch's anthropological relativism, where he argues that radically distinct societies often overlap. 66 Just as the Aztecs and Spaniards who confronted each other on the causeway outside of Tenochtitlán shared a flesh vulnerable to missiles, irrespective of their respectively viable systems of myth or science, so the combatants in that small French arena all faced the insistent question of the actual guilt or innocence of Captain Dreyfus. Undoubtedly they approached that question out of the matrix of prior loyalties and other assumptions: there was the old radical who allegedly said that all he needed to know was where the priests and generals stood in order to locate himself in the other camp; or Paul Claudel, who wrote that he could not deny his motherthat is, the insults of foreign commentators on the affair aligned him on the side of France and against the Jews. 67 But this is not to say that the arguments of the contending parties were incommensurable, as if they actually spoke different languages.

This is the case with Barrès himself, who was never willing to concede the epistemological terrain of conventional argument to the Dreyfusards. Thus, in order to justify deference to the
duly constituted authority of the military court, he argues the lack of sufficient information through which the layman could evaluate the facts of the case. This appeal to the authority of the vérité judiciaire as opposed to any "absolute truth" was to make a conventional appeal to an authority that we respect because it knows what it is talking about, is professionally competent and uniquely in command of relevant information. In addition, Barrès never hesitated to summon up the hard evidence that was to demonstrate Dreyfus's guilt to any rational intellect. In reporting on the Rennes trial he returned to the "demonstration" that the crime could only have been committed by a gunner assigned to the general staff as a stagiaire, and he still evoked the expertise of Bertillon, who produced "before the council of war the same geometric technique that Dreyfus employed" to disguise his own handwriting. For this particular performance Bertillon had literally been laughed out of court, even by many of the anti-Dreyfusards. The continued celebration, long after the event, of Bertillon's "genius" by Barrès, Charles Maurras, and Léon Daudet is an indicator of the ethical quality of a histori-cal discourse that never dispensed with the cynical exploitation of whatever seemed to do the polemical job. 68

Despite the appeals to those conventional standards of objectivity that Barrès was to relativize out of existence on suitable occasions, Lucien Herr was right when he said that the question of innocence or guilt, of justice or legal crime, was of no moment to Barrès. 69 He could not help but speak the same language as the Dreyfusard intelligentsia in debate about the actual bearings of the case, but he spoke it without scruple. And here he does belong to a different community, defined in terms not of language but of morality.

I do not believe that one can grant the facts of the Dreyfus case as a more or less insignificant given in order to emphasize the political rhetoric attendant on the affair, not because I believe that the rhetorical element is negligible but because the language in which the conflict was cast was imbued with claims to knowledge of what had actually occurred. The truth of the case was central, not marginal, to the affair. That is why I disagree with Johnson and Sennett and Griffiths, who conflate the rhetorical excesses of the contending camps. That is why I think Richard Griffiths and Michael Marrus 70 are wrong to assimilate the Dreyfusard fabrication of the Jesuit conspiracy to the anti-Dreyfusard figment of the Jewish Syndicate. The former was a familiar weapon seized by the more unscrupulous Dreyfusards, 71 the latter an indispensable instrument of a polemic forced to explain away the accumulation of embarrassing facts. The Dreyfusard tactic of publishing copies of relevant documents was scarcely available to the other camp. Not even the evocation of Colonel Henry's heroic act of patriotic forgery would do the job. Eventually it would be necessary to invent and reinvent that implacable organization which had even planted false documents in Dreyfus's dossier in order to undermine the valid indictment.

It is true that the motives of the Dreyfusards ranged from disinterested to corrupt and that the testimony about their commitment is often self-serving, but many people did join the movement, some at considerable personal inconvenience and risk, only after they were convinced of the truth according to their lights. And many of the opportunists shifted sides only after the truth became so apparent to common sense that a different sort of commitment was required to continue to insist on Dreyfus's guilt. Faced with the fact that Dreyfus was
indeed innocent, the anti-Dreyfusards would hit on a criterion of "truth" that subsumes what are ordinarily called lies, and that is not their least significant anticipation of a fascist politics.

Those scholars and scientists such as Durkheim and Grimaux who associated the ethic of their discipline with their public values were not asserting a Page 59

sort of political scientism but applying what John Dewey called "the spirit of scientific inquiry" to public life. Their values are well characterized by Richard

Bernstein's description of Dewey's ethos:

It is the openness of scientific inquiry, the imagination required for its successful practice, the willingness to submit a hypothesis to public test and criticism, the intrinsic communal and cooperative character of scientific inquiry that Dewey highlighted when he spoke of "scientific method." If we are to dedicate ourselves to the task of the concrete realization of "creative democracy," then, it is these virtues that must be cultivated and nurtured in our everyday moral and political lives. 72

These were the virtues to which the best of the Dreyfusards appealed and the virtues that the anti-Dreyfusards, given the nature of their cause, were bound to subvert.

57


4. It is best to leave that caveat in its context so that there can be no question as to where Bredin does stand: If it is thus true that one should be cautious about explaining the Affair summarily as a systematic confrontation between two moralities, a clear division between men of Truth and men of dogma, it is also the case that it revealed in its time and in its way enduring distinctions: on the one hand, those who, in Jaurès's phrase, make of "the human individual the measure of all things, of the country, the family, human property, and God," and on the other, those who posit and serve values higher than the individual: God, the Nation, the Army, the State, the party; those who do battle for Justice, an undefinable ideal of freedom, truth, and generosity, and those who fight on behalf of prejudices, in the etymological sense of the word: the established order, recognized organizations, prior verdicts; those who look toward the ancient cemetery and those who dream of leaping the wall; those taken with memory and those driven by sympathy. (Bredin, Affair, 540-41)

5. In 1909, under the pseudonym Henry Dutrait-Crozon, Colonels Georges Louis Larpent and Frédéric Delbecque published Précis de l'Affaire Dreyfus (Paris, 1909). Its second edition, which appeared in 1924, became the more or less definitive version of the die-hard affirmation of Dreyfus's guilt. It was reissued in a "revised and augmented" edition as late as 1938. See also their Joseph Reinach Historien (Paris, 1905), with a preface by Charles Maurras.


7. See, for example, the filiopietistic volume of the daughter of Godefroy Cavaignac, the minister of war who bumbled onto the egregious forgery that blew open the case but went to his grave believing that Dreyfus was guilty (Henriette DardenneCavaignac, Lumières sur l'Affaire Dreyfus [Paris, 1964]). For strikingly inventive recent contributions, see André Figueras, Ce Canaille de Dreyfus (Paris, 1982), and L' Affaire Dreyfus revue et corrigée (Paris, 1989).


8. Quoted in Robert Soucy, Fascism in France: The Case of Maurice Barrès (Berkeley, 1972), 100. Charles Maurras wrote, "If by chance Dreyfus was innocent, he should have been made
a Marshal of France, but a dozen of his principal defenders should have been shot for the triple offense to France, Peace and Reason" (Maurras, Au Signe de Flore [Paris, 1931], 55).


10. Brian Chapman, The Dreyfus Case: A Reassessment (London, 1955), 360. In the preface of this, the first of two works on the affair, Chapman wrote,

Unhappily much legend is attached to the Affair. To accept the conventional reading of a clerico-military conspiracy is to swallow the propaganda of the Dreyfusards. No conspiracy existed in military circles, none in clerical. The arrest of Déroulède and his allies in August 1899 was no more than the spectacular method of a shaky and nervous Government of rallying opinion to its side. This consideration led me back to a re-examination of the evidence from the beginning. It soon became apparent that much more is to be said for the War Office than has generally been admitted, that anti-Semitism played little, perhaps no, part in the arrest of the unhappy victim or in his trial, that the accusations against the secular Church and, save the Assumptionists, against the religious Orders have the flimsiest foundations. In short, the conventional story is overlaid with propaganda put out by partisans on both sides. (Ibid., 9)

Seventeen years later, in a revised version titled The Dreyfus Trials (New York, 97 2), Chapman's preface responds to the new material uncovered by Marcel Thomas.

The Dreyfus Case is the classic case of miscarriage of justice: after fifty years we are only just coming to a full understanding of the triviality, the prejudice, the casual cruelty and the clannishness which sent a wholly innocent man to isolation on a bare Caribbean rock, kept him there for five years, and with a lack of scruple and a tenacity worthy of a better cause checked every move to re-open the case. (i)


12. Douglas Johnson, France and the Dreyfus Affair (London, 1966), 5. For a somewhat more qualified, "even-handed" evaluation see Albert S. Lindemann, The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Belia, Frank) (Cambridge, 1991), 94-128. A recent issue of l'Histoire, a journal directed to the general reader, was devoted to "L'Affaire Dreyfus: Vérités et Mensonges" (vol. 173, January 1994). The editors intended to reexamine the affair, as many received opinions were now rejected by historians. The contributors offered some rather ambiguous revisions and many received opinions.


22. Ibid., 643.


1898 428-46: Maurice Paléologue recalls Brunetière's pugnacious expression of his views in a mixed political gathering:

And this petition which is being circulated among the "intellectuals." The sole fact that the
word "intellectual" has recently been coined for the purpose of setting apart in a kind of exalted social category people who spend their lives in laboratories and libraries points to one of the most absurd eccentricities of our time, namely, the claim that writers, scientists, professors, philologists should be elevated to the rank of supermen. I certainly do not despise intellectual abilities, but their value is only relative. I place will power, force of character, sureness of judgment, practical experience, higher in the social scale. I know farmers and merchants whom I do not hesitate to place far above certain scholars, biologists, and mathematicians whose names I do not care to mention. (An Intimate Journal of the Dreyfus Case, trans. Eric Mosbacher [New York, 957], 113)


29. Ibid.

30. J. P. Honoré, "Autour D'Intellectuel," in Les Écrivains et l'Affaire Dreyfus, 15 2, distinguishes the scientism of the intellectuels from that of the nationalists:

Mais alors que la terminologie scientifique représente, chez les intellectuels, l'instrument d'une méthode, elle est chez les nationalistes l'instrument d'une métaphysique: face aux preuves de Jaurès, le "nous avons obei à un instinct" de Lemaître est l'argument ultime. [But while scientific terminology represents a methodological tool for the intellectuals, for the nationalists it is a metaphysical instrument: faced with the "proofs" of Jaurès, the "we have followed our instincts" of Lemaître is the ultimate argument.]


33. Of course, various parties to the polemic were not exempt from academic hubris. J. Psichari, directeur d'études at the École des Hautes Études, suggested that centers of higher education might convoke special assemblies to deliver opinions on important events, thus benefiting from the deliberations of these savants and artistes, whose judgment is essentially disinterested, therefore superior (from a letter to the Page 143 Directeur du Temps, reprinted in E. de Haime, Affaire Dreyfus: Les facts acquis à l'histoire [Paris, 1898], 298).
34. Emile Duclaux, "Avant le procès," Le Revue du palais 5 (May 1, 1898): 241-42. Duclaux's reference to "scientific reasoning" is in the broader European sense of Wissenschaftsystematic and disciplined thought not confined to the natural sciences.

35. Arthur Giry, dean of the study of paleography and diplomacy, director of the École des Hautes Études, who provided expert testimony for the Dreyfusards at both trials, would remind the court at Rennes,

Je n'ai besoin de vous dire que, cet examen, je l'ai fait absolument sans parti pris; que j'ai opéré sur ce document sans tenir compte du fond du débat; que j'ai abordé ce problème de l'attribution du bordereau comme je l'aurais fait d'un problème d'histoire. [I don't have to tell you that I have undertaken this analysis completely without parti pris; that I have examined this document without considering the case itself; that I have addressed the question of the attribution of the bordereau as I would have handled a historical problem.] (Giry's testimony at the Rennes trial, Le Procès Dreyfus devant le conseil de guerre de Rennes, August 7-September 9, 1899 [Paris, 1900], 3:34)


37. For example, Jules Lemaître, president of La Ligue de la Patrie Française, would assert that the question dividing the French was not "une question de morale: C'est une question de fait" [a moral question but a question of fact]. The point was not to justify the punishment of an innocent man but to know if the ex-captain were innocent or guilty (Lemaître, Première Conférence, "La Patrie Française," January 18, 1899 [Paris, 1899], 5).

38. Pierre Quillard, Le Monument Henry (Paris, 1899), 172, includes Léautaud's letter to the Libre Parole, which had published the list, edited to read Pour l'ordre, la justice et la vérité, insisting on his original version. For Valéry's famous, or infamous, comment, see ibid., 175. Léautaud's recollections were related to Robert Mallet in Paul Léautaud, Entretiens avec Robert Mallet (Paris, 1951), 73-75.


45. See, for example, Lucien Goldmann, Structures mentales et création culturelle (Paris, Spitzer - Page 24 of 26
46. Quoted in Thomas, "Le Cas Valéry," 110.

47. Romain Rolland, quoted in Robert J. Smith, "A Note on Romain Rolland in the Dreyfus Affair," French Historical Studies 7 (Fall 1971): 284-87. See also Antoinette Blum, "Romain Rolland face à l'affaire Dreyfus," Relations internationales 14 (1978): 127-41; and Suleiman, "Literary Significance of the Dreyfus Affair," 128-29. David James Fisher refers to Romain Rolland's "sanctionymous rationalizations" (Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement [Berkeley, 1988], 20). From the distance of 1940 Rolland recognizes where he should have taken his stand but still more or less conveys his contempt for both camps (Rolland, Mémoires [Paris, 1956], 281-95).


54. Sorel, La Révolution Dreyfusienne, 57.


60. Maurice Barrès, Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme, 90.

61. Ibid., 52-54.


64. Barrès, Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme, 29-30.


67. In a letter to Péguy, Claudel praised Notre Jeunesse but could not share Péguy's sympathy for the Jews or the Dreyfusards: "Votre jugement sur le dreyfusisme serait peut-être différent si comme moi vous l'aviez vu de l'étranger, si vous aviez lu le nom de la France bafoué, insulté avec rage chaque matin dans toutes les langues du monde. Cela m'a suffi. On n'a jamais de faire du mal à sa mère" ["Perhaps your judgment on Dreyfusism would be different if like me you had seen it from abroad, if each morning you had read the name of France ferociously reviled and insulted in every language of the world. One never repudiates his mother"] (quoted in Henri de Lubac and Jean Bastaire, Claudel et Péguy [Paris, 1974], 132).

68. Barrès, Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme, 47-51; Maurras, Au Signe de Flore, 62; Daudet, Souvenirs, 2:110.


