

Presenter: Sergio DellaPergola, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Title: “**Antisemitism**”

Panel: Sociology and Social Sciences

What are the fundamentals of antisemitism? In contemporary discourse, Jewish excessive power, Holocaust denial, and Israel delegitimation are the three main types of antisemitism. A fourth type stressing the Jew as a physical and moral degenerate was important historically but is less central today. There are different ideological foundations to contemporary antisemitic stances – Pagan, Christian, Muslim, Left-wing, Right-wing, and Liberal-centrist. Christian and Muslim antisemitism views the Jew as an enemy, to be curbed and converted. Left and Right political theories, each with their particular emphasis, identify among Jews negative characteristics– often specular and symmetric the ones to the others. For Liberals, partly in the vein of early Pagans, their main quest is assimilation of the Jews. To orderly and systematically study the character and incidence of antisemitism one must note the number of events and the number of perpetrators. Antisemitism is a matter of violent behaviour and physical aggression to the extreme of murder, personal and community discrimination, and diffusion of negative prejudicial ideas. One needs to look at the number of people exposed to the event, or the multiplier of events and people exposed to such events. We need a comparative framework – time oriented – and we need to verify the existence of any association with external events – economic conjuncture for example. We also need to understand the selective incidence of antisemitism according to the geographic, demographic, and socio-cultural characteristics of the perpetrators. Finally, we need to look at the frequency and patterns of Jewish response to instances of antisemitism. Looking at past research experience, we detect studies of antisemitic acts, perceptions, and discourse., but these options have not been developed to the same and satisfactory extent. We should have a better mapping of the channels of diffusion of antisemitism, and a more systematic definition and monitoring of antisemitic discourse generated in the media and in academy. We need to start creating a coherent mapping sentence toward more integrated studies in the future. We must outline who is the active and passive actor; what are the main diffusion channels; and who pursues counteracting action after the initial antisemitic event.

How to react to antisemitism? Through educating people to Jewish values and history, doing good deeds and providing good behavioral examples, being politically active,

bringing people to directly know Jewish and Israeli realities, and – last resort – knowing how to use a big stick. Academic projects must be developed to get a better understanding perception of the phenomenology and the foundations for policies aimed at fighting antisemitism.