

Altneuland **Theodor Herzl**

The novel "Altneuland" was written in 1902 by Theodor Herzl. One could see it as an illustration to his earlier book "Der Judenstaat"¹. While "Der Judenstaat" contains the theoretical background of the Zionist idea, "Altneuland" describes how exactly the realization of that theory might look like.

"Altneuland" is divided into five books, which might be seen as an analogy to the five books of the Torah. This also leads to the thought that "Altneuland" might be seen as the new torah, the new guide towards a new life, coexisting with the torah.

Herzl wrote "Der Judenstaat" as a solution for the problems Jews encountered worldwide. He saw it as a national problem² and therefore the only solution he could think of was the reunion of the Jewish people as one people³ in one national state, the Jewish state. By drawing the Jewish masses from their Diaspora states to a state of their own anti-Semitism would wane and the Jewish people would be recognized and honored as a nation like other nations⁴.

So how does Herzl use his characters to depict anti-Semitism from different points of view?

For the analysis book has to be divided into two parts. The first part contains the first of the five books. It deals with the life of the protagonist, Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg, in the year 1902⁵ in Vienna.

¹ First edition February, 14th, 1896 in Vienna

² "Der Judenstaat", p.13 " Sie (die Judenfrage) ist eine nationale Frage, und um sie zu loesen, muessen wir sie vor allem zu einer politischen Weltfrage machen.."

³ "Der Judenstaat", p.14 " Wir sind ein Volk, *ein* Volk.

⁴ "Der Judenstaat", p.92 " Nein, wenn wir auch nur beginnen, den Plan auszufuehren, kommt der Antisemitismus ueberall und sofort zum Stillstand. Denn es ist der Friedensschluss."

⁵ "Altneuland", p. 55 " Am Abend des 31. Dezember 1902 kamen sie ins Rote Meer."

The second part contains the books two to five, the experiences of Loewenberg in the year 1923⁶ in the new Jewish state.

Herzl shows anti-Semitism from different points of view by choosing characters which can be seen as representative for a stereotype of a certain group of people.

The protagonist Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg is a young assimilated Jew who suffers from the anti-Semitic attitude of early 20th century Austria⁷. His stereotype is already characterized by his name. Friedrich⁸ is a name derived from Old High German and was the name of several medieval kings, Prussian kings and German emperors. Loewenberg's parents evidently wanted their child to carry a "normal" assimilated name. His family name nevertheless is obviously Jewish, meaning "Mountain of the Lion". Herzl's choice of that name can be seen as a reference to the later mentioned lion of Judah who will gain power again⁹. The title Dr. shows us Loewenberg's position in society. He, as many other Jewish boys in his generation, has tried to get away from the traditional profession of the Jews, the trade and has studied at university in the hope to make a better life than his parents¹⁰. But as a Jew he isn't able to gain entrance into the Christian society¹¹ or obtain a position in public service¹². He spends his days unemployed, a fate he shares with many

⁶ "Altneuland", p. 58 "HAIFA, 1923"

⁷ "Altneuland", p.6 "Er war zu muede, neue Bekanntschaften zu schliessen, als waere er nicht dreiundzwanzig Jahre alt, sondern ein Greis gewesen, der schon zu oft hatte von lieben Leuten Abschied nehmen muessen."

⁸ <http://www.kunigunde.ch/cgi-bin/pick.pl>, fridu=der Friede, der Schutz, die Sicherheit; rihi=reich, mächtig, die Macht, die Herrschaft, der Herrscher

⁹ "Altneuland", p.40 "Juda hatte einst einen Loewen.."

¹⁰ "Altneuland", p.6/7 "Die Soehne sollten etwas anderes werden, als die Vaeter gewesen. Los vom Handel, von den Geschaeften. Da hatte ein Massenauszug des Nachwuchses nach den "gebildeten" Berufen stattgefunden."

¹¹ "Altneuland", p.23 "Die christliche Gesellschaft und eine christliche Klientel gehoerten zum Unzugaenglichsten in der Welt."

¹² "Altneuland", p.7 "...in Aemtern nicht unterschluempfen konnten, wie ihre christlichen Kollegen, ..."

other assimilated young Jews. His friends either have committed suicide or have emigrated to Jewish colonies¹³.

Loewenberg maintains contact to the circle of the higher Jewish society in Vienna. Those people stand for the stereotype of those who desire to become part of the gentile world to the extent that they distinguish themselves from being Jewish. Most of the mentioned names are recognizable Jewish. In the desire of assimilation one person already changed his name from the Jewish Veiglstock to the more neutral Walter¹⁴.

Jewish topics are not to be discussed openly, i.e. in the hearing of Gentiles, even servants¹⁵. Although the Viennese society is aware of anti-Semitism they don't take it seriously but see it cynically¹⁶. Even the report of a Rabbi about anti-Semitism in Moravia does not change their attitude and the idea of Zionism is only used as a basis for jokes¹⁷.

The exact opposite to that circle is painted in the description of the Littwak family. Living on the edge of existence, hardly having anything to eat, these Jews nevertheless believe that some day the Jewish people will rise again¹⁸. They still read the old books, pray in Hebrew, and give their children Hebrew names: David and Miriam. Interestingly they don't use Yiddish diminutives and the mother's name is not Rivka but

¹³ "Altneuland", p.6

¹⁴ "Altneuland", p. 18, p.191 " 'Frueher musste man den Vorurteilen Konzessionen machen, wenn man nicht geschunden werden wollte.' "

¹⁵ "Altneuland", p.20 " 'Wenn die Dienstboten dabei sind, sollte man lieber nicht ueber juedische Sachen reden.' [...] 'Entschuldigen, gnaedige Frau, ich hab' nicht gewusst, dass Ihre Dienstboten nicht wissen, dass Sie Juden sind.' "

¹⁶ "Altneuland", p. 18 " 'Ich sehe schon, wir werden alle wieder den gelben Fleck tragen muessen' "; p.20 " 'Ich bin stolz dass ich ein Jud bin...denn wenn ich nicht stolz waer, waer ich doch auch ein Jud'. Also bin ich lieber gleich stolz.' "

¹⁷ "Altneuland", p.17/18

¹⁸ "Altneuland", p. 40 " 'Was Juda gehabt hat, kann es wieder haben. Unser alter Gott lebt noch' "

the greek Rebekka. The Littwak family is also the first to use a Yiddish word¹⁹ although they normally speak in a non-Yiddish dialect contrary to the Jewish high society which uses neither Viennese dialect nor Yiddish. The Littwaks cannot see their situation cynically, they are desperate²⁰. They are dependent on the Gentile goodwill. It is from David that Loewenberger hears for the first time that a Jew mentions Palestine as the Jewish homeland; so far he knew that argument only from Anti-Semites²¹.

A child awakens the long lost feeling for the Jewish religion in Loewenberger²² as later in the book Fritzchen awakens hidden feelings in Kingscourt.

In connection with the Littwaks we meet also the first distinct Gentile person, the caretaker²³. Here Herzl shows the stereotype of a Gentile of the lower social classes. He behaves absolutely anti-Semitic towards Littwak but changes his tune very suddenly when he receives money from Loewenberg²⁴. It shows the situation that Jews in that society could buy their way in but were out as soon as they did not have any more money. The caretaker's speech is full of degrading expressions. The peddler is not addressed by his name but only as "the Jew there" or "Judenbagasch"²⁵. The caretaker also bullies the Jew, e.g. by not letting him in although that is one of his tasks²⁶.

¹⁹ "Altneuland", p. 24 " 'Ich wart' auf mein Taten' "

²⁰ "Altneuland", p.25 " 'Wenn man ein Jud is, soll man lieber gleich in die Donau gehen.' "

²¹ "Altneuland", p.44

²² "Altneuland", p. 31 "Diese merkwuerdige Begegnung aber weckte das Alte, Vergessene in ihm auf, und sekundenlang ueberflog ihn ein Heimweh nach dem starken Glauben der Jugendzeit..."

²³ "Altneuland", p.28

²⁴ "Altneuland", p.28 " 'Euer Gnaden hab' i net g'meint. Doe Juden da!' "

²⁵ "Altneuland", p.28

²⁶ "Altneuland", p. 27

Kingscourt is the other Gentile character introduced in the first book. Kingscourt also changed his name when he went to America but the important difference to the earlier mentioned Veiglstöck is that he just translated it instead of choosing a different name²⁷.

A Christian nobleman and former Prussian officer, he is depicted as having a negative attitude towards all people, regardless of nation or religion²⁸. He does not care that the companion he chooses for the rest of his life is Jewish²⁹, although that might be different if Loewenberg were religious and for example could not eat with him³⁰.

Nonetheless, a child of his time and culture Kingscourt often uses anti-Semitic expressions, even more remarkable in the second section, where Herzl uses the character to show the meaninglessness of those remarks in the new Jewish state. After knowing that Loewenberg is Jewish he talks to him as a person of the Jewish people instead, often generalizing with expressions like "you Jews"³¹. Kingscourt also very soon encounters the problem if the Jews are to be seen as a religion or a people³². He gives advice to Loewenberg how Jews could get more respect in society³³ and even thinks that it might be interesting being a Jew³⁴. This open-mindedness is very atypical for a man in that time with his background, but he is also atypical in the regard that he has problems to obey³⁵.

²⁷ "Altneuland", p.33 Koenigshoff/Kingscourt

²⁸ "Altneuland", p.45 "Troesten Sie sich, Doktorchen, ich hasse die Juden nicht mehr und nicht weniger als die Christen, Mohammedaner und Feueranbeter. Alle zusammen keinen Schuss Pulver wert.' "

²⁹ "Altneuland", p.37. "Eines muss ich Ihnen noch sagen, Mr. Kingscourt: ich bin Jude. Stoert Sie das nicht?' Kingscourt lachte: 'Hoeren Sie? Die Frage ist komisch. Ein Mensch sind Sie, das sehe ich.' "

³⁰ "Altneuland", p.38 "Aber wir koennten schon heute miteinander speisen.' "

³¹ "Altneuland", p. 45. "Wahrhaftig, ich verstehe euch Juden nicht.' "

³² "Altneuland", p. 45 "Da faellt mir 'ne Sache ein, die ich einmal mit einem Ihrer Landsleute oder Glaubensbrueder oder – hol' mich der Deibel – kurz mit einem Juden hatte.' "

³³ "Altneuland", p.46. "Ich, wenn ich an eurer Stelle waere, ich wuerde irgendwas Mutiges, Grosses unternehmen, dass auch die Feinde ihre Maeuler aufreissen muessten.' "

³⁴ "Altneuland", p.47 "es muesste ganz interessant sein, heutzutage ein Jude zu sein.' "

³⁵ "Altneuland", p. 33 "Ich kann's nicht leiden, dass ein fremder Wille ueber mir ist, und waer's der beste.' "

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He is the one who suggests a visit to Palestine³⁶, with the explanation that Loewenberg should see his "fatherland". The Christian sites are never mentioned. During their visit in Palestine it is Kingscourt who shows interest in the land and the people, and suggests a pioneer role for the Jewish people³⁷. To his character Herzl assigns the important moment of inventing the word that will be even the title of the whole book: Altneuland³⁸. The Gentile Kingscourt, not Loewenberg acts as a prophet for the future of the Jewish people.

In the second section of the book we meet many people again.

David Littwak, the former beggar child, has risen in the new society of the Jewish state and can now show Loewenberg and Kingscourt what the Jewish people were able to do³⁹. He personifies the new Jew⁴⁰, working hard to make a living, bodily fit, but also interested in art and literature, open-minded and tolerant. He explains to his visitors how it was possible to found the new state and gives a short review of what happened to the Jews after Loewenberg and Kingscourt left the world⁴¹. His character as well as the character of Kingscourt brings in anti-Semitic remarks⁴², but in this context they are used as a joke and free of their hateful undertone, thereby disarming anti-Semitic prejudices

³⁶ "Altneuland", p.44

³⁷ "Altneuland", p.57. " 'Und wissen, Sie, Mann, wer den Weg zeigen koennte? Ihr! Ihr Juden!'"

³⁸ "Altneuland", p.57 " 'Ihr koenntet das Versuchsland fuer die Menschheit machen - dort drueben, wo wir waren, auf dem alten Boden ein neues Land schaffen. Altneuland!'"

³⁹ Altneuland", p.91 " 'Nur wir Juden konnten es. [...] Nur wir waren imstande, diese neue Gesellschaft und diesen Verkehrsmittelpunkt zu schaffen.' "

⁴⁰ "Altneuland", p.77 "Ein frei und ernst schauender, gesunder, gebildeter Mann, der fest in seinen eigenen Schuhen zu stehen schien."

⁴¹ "Altneuland", p.72

⁴² "Altneuland", p.112/113. " Kingscourt kniff David in den Arm und schnauzte ihn lustig an:'Das Jeld habt ihr also nicht abgeschafft in eurer Gesellschaft? Haette mich auch von euch gewundert.' David war nun schon mit der Ausdrucksweise des Alten befreundet, und er gab in aehnlichem Tone zurueck:'Nee, Mister Kingscourt, vom Jelde haben wir uns nicht trennen koennen. Erstens, weil wir verdammt habgierige Juden sind. Zweitens, weil das Geld ein ausgezeichnetes Mittel ist.' "

and making them ridiculous. To this group of modern Jews also belong the Littwak family, the Steinecks, and Joe.

The character of Reschid tells the story of the new state from another point of view. Here speaks someone who belongs to the Muslim Turks and has been in the land even before the immigration of Jews started. His positive reception of the Jewish state is bound to make it clear to the reader that even the Muslim population will profit from the new state⁴³ and anti-Semitism will not be an issue for them⁴⁴.

Besides Kingscourt, who is not practicing the Christian religion the reader is introduced to three other representatives of the Christian faith: An Anglican reverend, a Russian-Orthodox pope, and a Catholic monk. Not only will all of them participate in the Seder and, except for Reschid, everyone drinks the wine and partakes in the ritual⁴⁵, but the Anglican reverend is even delighted to be taken for a Jew by Kingscourt⁴⁶. He also makes the final comment about the new state being the spring of humankind and enabling people from different religions to celebrate and live together in harmony⁴⁷. The remark of the orthodox pope even relates the new state to a Messianic age⁴⁸.

⁴³ "Altneuland", p.133. " 'Fuer uns alle war es ein Segen.' "

⁴⁴ "Altneuland", p.136. " 'Die Juden haben uns bereichert, warum sollten wir ihnen zuernern? Sie leben mit uns wie Brueder, warum sollten wir sie nicht lieben?' "

⁴⁵ "Altneuland", p.202. "Kingscourt wuergte einige Deibel hinunter, hatte aber Humor und gute Lebensart genug, die sonderbaren Gebraeuche dern uebrigen Gaesten gleich zu befolgen. Die christlichen Seelsorger schlossen sich auch nicht aus."

⁴⁶ "Altneuland", p.178. "...und er freute sich zum groessten Erstaunen Kingscourts, als dieser ihn zuerst irrtuemlich fuer einen Juden hielt."

⁴⁷ "Altneuland", p. 209. "Reverend Hopkins erinnerte seine geistlichen Kollegen von den anderen Kirchen an den Osterstreit des Altertums, und wie sich all der muessige Hader nun in Harmonien aufgeloeset habe. Heute koennten sie als Christen friedlich im Hause eines Juden zusammenkommen und naehme keiner Anstoss ans den Anschauungen des anderen. Denn ein Fruehling der Menschheit sei auferstanden

⁴⁸ "Altneuland", p.209. " 'Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!' sagte der Pope von Sepphoris."

We also meet again the Viennese high society. Here we find Jews who fit the picture of anti-Semitic remarks⁴⁹ but it is made clear that those people are the minority among the Jews and are also not favored. They serve as a contrast to the honest, diligent people who really built the land and are depicted as being stuck in their old behavior from times long gone⁵⁰. One of them, Dr. Walter, gives a speech with the explanation how the foundation of the Jewish state reduced respectively vanished anti-Semitism, but Herzl makes it very clear that this character only repeats the thoughts and actions of others as his opinion thereby dragging his part of society even more into the ridiculous although not the topic of the speech⁵¹.

The reader experiences everything through the main character of Loewenberg. In the first part two groups of recipients of anti-Semitism are opposed two groups of potential anti-Semites. The reader sees how anti-Semitism influences the life of the the lowest socioeconomic level as well as the high society. He also sees the anti-Semitic behavior from lower and higher Gentile classes, although Kingscourt represents more the way Herzl wished the higher classes to be. Kingscourt's character is enlightened, rational and tolerant and open to change his opinions. The most anti-Semitic remarks are brought into conversation either by Kingscourt⁵² or by Jewish characters. Anti-Semitic symbols

⁴⁹ "Altneuland", p.187. "...die Juedinnen mit den Edelsteinen! Mir war schon bange danach. Ich dachte mir, das Ganze ist vielleicht doch eine Fopperei, und wir sind gar nicht im Judenland. Nun seh' ich erst, es ist wahr. Da sind die wandelnden Federhuete, die grellen Seidenkleider, die Juwelenisraelitinnen.' "

⁵⁰ "Altneuland", p.188 " 'Geniert uns gar nicht, Mr. Kingscourt! Solche Bemerkungen konnten uns in frueheren Zeiten verletzen, aber jetzt nicht mehr, Sie verstehen? Frueher hat man die Promenadenjuengelchen, die Protzen und Juwelenhebraeerinnen als die Vertreter der Judenschaft angesehen. Jetzt weiss man, dass es auch andere Juden gibt. Jetzt koennen Sie ueber dieses Gelichter schimpfen, soviel Sie wollen, edler Fremdling! Wenn es finster wird, schimpfe ich mit.' "

⁵¹ "Altneuland", p.191 ff.

⁵² "Altneuland", p.256. "Kingscourt ass wacker mit von den ungesaeuerten Broten und schimpfte zwischendurch, dass man ihn, einen christlichen und deutschen Edelmann, ganz und gar verjude."

and remarks are first treated sarcastically⁵³ and then changed to the positive in the second part as the Jews gain the power to do so⁵⁴.

In the second part we meet different members of the new state, Muslim, Christian and Jewish and get to know their thoughts about anti-Semitism. The Jews are represented by two different groups: The 'modern' Jew, a worthy member of the new society and as a contrast the members of the former Viennese high society.

Expressly anti-Semitic characters are not used in the second part because only: "Wenn **ihr** wollt, ist es kein Maerchen⁵⁵" and the evil always have to resign at the end of a fairy tale.

Bibliography

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⁵³ "Altneuland", p.18. " 'Ich seh' schon,' rief Laschner, 'wir werden alle wieder den gelben Fleck tragen muessen.' "

⁵⁴ "Altneuland", p.288. "(Ueber den Orden der juedischen Akademie) 'Die Farbe aber soll uns an die schwersten Zeiten unserer Volksgeschichte erinern und uns noch im Erfolge zur Demut mahnen. Aus dem gelben Fleck, den unsere ungluecklichsten, standhaften Vaeter tragen mussten, aus dem Zeichen der Schande haben wir das Zeichen der Ehre gemacht.' "

⁵⁵ "Altneuland", flyleaf, bold accentuation by me