

Religion or Citizenship? Beyond the Binary; Lessons after a Century of Disagreement

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This article describes how different approaches to religion (institutional and cultural) lead to startlingly different conclusions when analyzing how religion shapes the republican citizen. Through a genealogical discourse analysis, I examine educational reports issued by Argentinean authorities in the early twentieth century that made the Jew out to be a dangerous other, as well as the Gerchunoff's account of the everyday life in Jewish colonies, to show how Jewish narratives intersected and assembled in the construction of the Argentinean republican citizen. In times when non-Western institutional religions are raising fears and anxiety in many Western countries, this article illustrates how a cultural historical approach to religion is essential for a comprehensive analysis of how religion shapes the republican citizen.

If there really is a relationship between religion and politics in modern western societies, it may be that the essential aspect of this relationship is not found in the interplay between Church and the State, but rather between the pastorate and government. (Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*)

This essay follows Foucault's intuition, as expressed above, to explore how a noninstitutional notion of religion shapes the ways we see, live, and act citizenship. In contrast to secularist traditions¹ that tended to place religion outside the borders of "the political" (Sorkin 2008), this article shows the importance of Jewish religion for European immigrants to give form to the notion of Argentinean citizenship in the early twentieth century. Since the nineteenth century, and with somewhat renewed energy after 9/11, many Western nations are promoting legislation attempting to exclude institutional religion, which has been perceived as an opponent, from public life.

My concern is that stakeholders and educational leaders ignore how relevant religious narratives are in giving intelligibility to republicanism. Al-

¹ In Butler et al. (2011), Habermas specifically discusses the social contract tradition, which had stripped the concept of "the political" of any serious reference to religion (23).

Received June 24, 2015; revised November 17, 2015; May 23, 2016; October 21, 2016; and March 3, 2017; accepted March 14, 2017; electronically published December 18, 2017

Comparative Education Review, vol. 62, no. 1.

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0010-4086/2018/6201-0007\$10.00

though I am focusing on the Argentinean case, the scope of the article aims beyond Argentinean borders. A hundred years ago, educational authorities attempted to ban Jewish religious culture from schools, overlooking the significance of Jewish cultural heritage for the fostering of republicanism and national belonging.

At this point, I would like to enumerate some reasons that compel me to study how religion as a cultural practice shapes the construction of Argentinean republicanism. First, enlightenment traditions tended to place religion outside the borders of academic debate (Masuzawa 2005; Sorkin 2008). Therefore, these enlightenment traditions—when they did deal with religious issues, which was not often—focused merely on the institutional aspects of religion. By contrast, my approach to religion as a cultural practice shifts the scope of analysis, placing religion and citizenship at the forefront of the study. Second, religion is still a crucial element in contemporary society, and it seems most likely that it will continue to be relevant. In this regard, my study follows the current trend of studies that rethink the power of religion in the public space (Butler et al. 2011). Third, analyzing how religion plays out in the construction of the republican citizen could potentially elevate the discussion beyond fruitless antagonisms such as secular policing versus religious dogmatism that place religion and republicanism at odds in strict roles as competing actors.

Throughout the study, I deal with the dilemma of analyzing religion, without getting trapped either in an a priori essentialized signification or in an untranslatable consideration of the term *religion*. At the same time, my aim is to move the discussion beyond institutional religion understood merely as an actor for institutional analysis. I believe that religion plays a fundamental role in forging Argentine identity when religion is considered a cultural practice. Initially, this decision to analyze noninstitutional aspects of religion moves the study to the realm of the sociology of religion. However, this approximation does not imply a certain isolation of the religious discourse from other realms. I consider such dissociation between the religious and the political to be problematic and deceitful. In fact, “the fundamental concepts that often permit us to isolate or to pretend to isolate the political . . . remain religious or in any case theological-political” (Derrida and Vattimo 1998, 25). Therefore, in order to grasp a broader picture of how religion is playing out, I work with a rather broad definition of religion.

The goal of the essay is to consider a twofold approach to understanding religion. From an institutional perspective, national authorities perceived the Jewish religion and the Jew to be a threat to Argentinean national homogeneity. The existing literature dealing with religion from a comparative perspective presents typologies that categorize how different countries handle religious education in public schools (Glanzer 2009). Authors such as Zachariah and Mehran (1996) take a similar approach to religion as an “in-

stitutional” issue, focusing on the debate about religious education in schools as a legitimate way to instill moral values. However, understanding religion as a cultural practice opens the door to a whole array of possibilities. For example, Jewish colonial discourses could be interpreted as narratives that helped shape the Argentinean citizenship of thousands of Jewish immigrants. Through a genealogical discourse analysis, I focus on exploring and denaturalizing how different viewpoints of religion—institutional and cultural—shaped Argentinean citizenship. The essay draws upon the work of Gorski (2003) and Tröhler (2011), who analyzed how religious elements move beyond the religious institutional setting, carrying with them subjectivation practices and ideals of politics and social order. The examples above show, with different nuances and emphases, the poignancy of noninstitutional approaches, particularly when considering issues regarding religion, schooling, and citizenship.

As religion has a twofold approach, republicanism shall be considered not as a stable entity but as a moving playing field. In the Argentinean case, Inés Dussel (2011) distinguishes three republican “moments”: first, when republican ideals are endorsed against the Spanish colonial domination; second, during the organization of the country, when republicanism was considered the cement of the country aligned with a civilizing discourse; and third, the emergence of an exclusionary nationalism that put the nation above republicanism. The controversy of the anti-Argentinean schools is an example of the tensions raised in this exclusionary nationalism.

In contrast with the forecasts made by social scientists, religion has proved to be very resilient. Recent events have shaken the confidence of secularist predictions of the end or marginalization of religion as an institution. The emergence of radical American evangelism in the United States, the rapid spread of Pentecostalism in the global South, the Iranian revolution, and the strength of Islam challenge the secularization thesis. Regardless of the fact that “classic” secularist approaches seem to go against the events of social life, the academic debate about secularization and its scope in the contemporary world miss another layer of religion that reaches into the cultural fabrics of secularization itself. The array of opinion goes from authors who claim we are in a period of secularization, to Habermas, once an icon of secular rationalism who claimed the world had entered a “post secular age” (Gorski and Altınordu 2008). Latour (2013), in his book *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, pointed out the limits of an institutional approach when dealing with religion. He states that the modernist distinction between scientific and religious values is based upon a categorical mistake. The secularization theory ignores the specific mode of existence of religion, and the veracity of religion is judged in terms of the conditions of veridiction of a scientific mode of existence (18). The fact that secularization theory ignores religion has not reduced its power to shape republicanism. Paradoxically, this secularist trend

that would exclude religion from the public sphere has made religion immune to critical analysis (Masuzawa 2005, 2). Hence, the task at hand is to rethink the role of religion as a cultural practice in shaping the republican citizen. Throughout the essay, I approach schooling as a system of ideas that normalize and construct the rules according to which the Argentinean soul is organized (Popkewitz 1997) and a particular kind of citizen is “made up” (Hacking 2006).

In Argentina, home to the largest Jewish community in Latin America, the Jewish religious discourse is placed within the grid of Catholicism and is a crucial element in the analysis of nation-building and citizenship because it allows several points of entry from different historical contexts. The first point is how Jewish students enacted their citizenship under a governmental policy that promoted a melting pot. The next point is how this situation changed as of the early twentieth century when Argentinean cultural nationalists began to voice anti-Semitic ideas and attack Jewish schools (Avni 1991). And the final point is how religious discourse was enacted or articulated with specific notions of citizenship following the foundation of the modern state of Israel in 1948. These discontinuities allowed me to reveal the complexities of religion throughout Argentine history as well as religion’s shifting effects on how national identity is molded.

In this discussion, I analyze a passionate controversy that pervaded the headlines of Argentinean newspapers in the early twentieth century. “Anti-Argentinean Schools” (1908) was how editors of the newspaper *La Prensa* chose to describe schools managed by Jews. Jewish schools were attacked by mainstream media and national educational authorities because they were being partially funded by the state and did not teach even basic Argentinean instruction—Spanish language, history, or geography. Argentinean national educational authorities did not hesitate to describe the Jewish religion as fanaticism and chauvinism. However, Alberto Gerchunoff’s book *Los Gauchos Judíos* (The Jewish Gauchos) painted a completely different picture of the same period (1890–1910) in its description of life in Jewish colonies. Gerchunoff was a Jewish European immigrant born in the Russian Empire in 1883. He came to Argentina with his poor family and years later excelled as a famous Jewish-Argentinean writer. According to Gerchunoff’s stories, Jewish religious heritage contributed to the shaping of the Argentinean citizen. The book was published in 1910 and became a bestseller, with 10 editions and several translations. In addition, it is listed among the “100 Greatest Works of Modern Hebrew Literature” selected by the National Yiddish Book Center. It is not the intention of the essay to place on the same level Gerchunoff’s autobiographical text with the one of a sustained policy, repeated over decrees and media discourses. On the contrary, the stories of the author are analyzed as a noninstitutional entrance to describe how religious narratives are deployed in the citizen understood as a relational field.

Though this took place in the early twentieth century, it can be relevant to reflect upon the current situation, in which many Western and non-Western countries perceive religion as a national threat. For example, in Europe, the controversy that arose in France regarding the use of the hijab in public spaces, such as schools, shows to what extent Western democracies are perplexed and hesitant to articulate satisfactory values of religious pluralism with certain notions of citizenship.

Religion, Identity, and State Formation through Education

In this section, I move to the history of Argentinean education. My goal is to investigate how religious themes were traditionally posed in Latin American and Argentinean educational historiography.

In her comprehensive collection of history of Argentinean education, Adriana Puiggrós focuses on the alternative pedagogies understood as the variety of elements opposed to the centralized national educational system. This dominant model has as its main feature the fact that the system is monopolized by the state bureaucracy, authoritarian, hierarchical, and not inclusive of the oppressed actors of society. She states that the alternative category doesn't aim to construct a parallel history (Puiggrós 1990, 23) but to deconstruct the dominant discourse in order to insert fragments of the alternative model to transform the whole discourse. In her periodization she establishes nine different periods, primarily following Argentinean political events. Because of her goal of producing an alternative history highlighting its democratic events, religion and secularism are described as institutional categories that are subordinated to the interests of the centralized national educational system.

In *La Educación Argentina* (Argentinean education), Martínez Paz analyzes the history of Argentinean education through the lens of "principles and ideologies that have tried to unify education in Argentina" (Martínez Paz 1979, 9). These unifying principles or ideologies intend to give internal cohesion to the national education system. His book describes four historical unifying principles or stages: laicism at the beginning of the system (1878); religious education around 1943, when the military regime established mandatory religious education in schools; Peronism doctrine around 1949; and finally educational pluralism after the coup d'état that brought down the second presidency of Perón. In his developmentalist narrative, laicism and religious affiliation appear as opposing principles struggling for supremacy in Argentinean education. In his narrative, these principles (laicism/Catholicism) are taken as universal categories or theoretical totalities that could be applied to explain various social phenomena ignoring the complex processes of how they have been historically produced through contingent cultural practices.

From the history of Argentinean education, I should include the works of scholars that specifically engage in the controversy regarding the role of religion in Argentinean schools. A clear example of this “tradition” arguing in favor of religious education was Guillermo Fúrlong in the book *La tradición religiosa en la escuela argentina* (The religious tradition of the Argentinean school) (Fúrlong Cárdiff 1957). He affirms through a historical reading of Argentinean legislation that the Argentinean Constitution of 1853 is very clear in describing Argentina as a Catholic country and consequently any attempt to forbid religious education is unconstitutional.

These kinds of approaches tried to find the “real origin” of the educational system, ignoring the contingencies and discontinuities of how religion was enacted and traveled throughout Argentinean history. Moreover, they ignore the role of the Enlightenment in constructing the notion of private and public life and I want to emphasize that “the separation of the two (private-public) is an Enlightenment assumption” (King 1999, 14), but public and private life are not disentangled domains in everyday life. Just as an example, while the church as an institutional actor could be hypothetically expelled from the public sphere, these approaches ignore that religion as a cultural institution could not be locked or sealed and continually acts upon the grid of intelligibility. In fact, many times public banning is nothing but a reinforcement of religious narratives or rhetoric.

Finally, in Argentina, Ruben Cucuzza’s work *Leer y rezar en Buenos Aires aldeana* (Reading and praying in the village of Buenos Aires) (Meda et al. 2010) tackles issues of nation-building and religion. Through the analysis of colonial catechisms and textbooks, he studies reading practices during Argentinean educational history. Throughout his research, the catechisms and scholarly textbooks act as a conundrum to explore pedagogical and historical ruptures. In his account, he describes features of a patriotic secular religion through reading practices in the learning of the first letters. He states that “textbooks are a source to certify the final objective sought by the patriotic secular religion in the production of national identity” (Meda et al. 2010, 294). The richness of the sources (catechisms and scholar materials) makes his work of great value since his narrative historicizes reading practices. The same asset of his work sometimes seems to narrow broader analysis regarding how all these changes regarding reading practices became possible.

The previous works regarding Argentinean history of education show a critical issue. While certain authors have tackled themes of nation-building linked to religious practices in the United States (McKnight 2003) or Europe (Gorski 2003), in Argentina, beyond the work of Cucuzza through the analysis of schoolbooks, studies regarding religious issues are circumscribed to history of the Church or approaches that do not consider religion as a cultural practice. As a consequence of this understanding, they approach religion as

something manageable and concrete while ignoring that “the very fact that religion affects the way we think, talk, and write about education without visible and identifiable signs does not make it less effective but even more so” (Tröhler 2011, 3).

It is not unusual in contemporary Argentina to utilize religious-based images in order to express ideas to the general public. For example, there is a famous phrase attributed to Nestor Kirchner, former president, who expressed this after the 2001 crisis, “Argentina is just getting out of hell.” Later, he returned to this image with the saying: “We are finally out of the hell but we are still in the purgatory.” These religious mottos were used constantly to recall the extent of that economic default and undoubtedly were oriented to discipline expressions of dissension. It is clear how religion as a cultural practice remains a key methodological lens with which to understand power relations related to the Argentinean citizen.

Discourse Analysis: A Genealogical Approach

The kind of genealogical discourse analysis I am engaging was developed most notably by Foucault (1977). In his essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault develops his understanding of genealogy. The genealogical approach emphasizes how a specific system of thought transitions to another one. In his essay on genealogy, Foucault explains how transitions from one way of thinking to another are not the result of an established logic, but of a series of contingencies. In the realm of educational research, Popkewitz (1997) describes the genealogical approach as the historicization of the subject through examining the discursive practices that confine the possibilities for agency. In decentering the subject, the genealogical approach problematizes the modern notion of agency and progress that pervades educational reason. In a Latin American educational scenario, Caruso and Dussel (1999) deploy a genealogical method to historically describe the different discourses that made possible the emergence of the classroom as a major educational technology in schools.

I use the genealogical method to interpret religion as embodying cultural narratives that provide ways of thinking about the republican citizen as a relational field where political theories about the citizen connect and assemble through Catholic and Jewish discourses. Therefore, throughout the essay, I do not seek the origins of the Argentinean citizen with the goal of finally finding its secular or religious roots; instead, I focus on the conditions of possibility that made the Argentinean citizen intelligible in each historical moment, and on the role religious narratives play in those grids of intelligibilities. In sum, since I am focused on how religious narrative merged with citizenship narratives, the genealogical approach has allowed me to study how the religious principles shaped the construction of the Argentinean

citizen, avoiding the trap of essentialized notions of religion or republicanism.

The article approaches the controversy over the Argentinean citizen and Jewish schools as an event. “Eventalization” “works by constructing around the singular event, analyzed as a process, a ‘polygon’ or, rather, ‘polyhedron’ of intelligibility” (Foucault et al. 2001, 227). Therefore, an event is not a battle, a movement, or a philosophy, but the forces or relations that make possible, for example, the emergence of Jewish schools as a danger to national homogeneity (Foucault 1977, 154). For this purpose, the description of events is oriented to answer the following question: How it is that suddenly the Jew appeared to be considered the dangerous “other” in Argentine schools?

The eventalization process has two key methodological movements: descent and emergence. The movement of descent “permits the discovery, after the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad of events through which, thanks to which, against which they were formed” (Foucault 1977, 146). This process does not imply a reordering of the events. On the contrary, it supposes maintaining the dispersion of such events. For example, regarding this study, the aim of descent is not the erecting of foundations or the restoring of an original stabilization of the Argentinean citizen, but seeks to disturb what was previously considered immobile about it: “making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant . . . to show that things weren’t as necessary as all” (Foucault 1977, 226).

The movement of emergence “stands as the principle and the singular law of an apparition” (Foucault 1977, 148). In the same way that it would be a mistake to search for descent in an uninterrupted continuity, we should not consider emergence as the final term of a historical sequence. The movement of emergence considers a singular assembly of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to center stage, acknowledging its uniqueness (150). Hence, I analyze which diverse set of relations and principles made possible the emergence of a discourse that framed an educational controversy—Jewish schools as a threat to Argentinean national identity. Within this genealogical perspective, the understanding of this tipping point in Argentinean history implies the process “of rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, play of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary” (Foucault et al. 2001, 227). This particular conformation of emergence could be understood as a nonplace, in the sense that no one can attribute the origin of Argentinean citizenship. Rather, it is the result of substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals (Foucault 1977, 151) that make possible the grid of practices that constitutes the Argentinean citizen. In these two movements, descent and emergence, genealogy appears as “the opposite of the Christian world, spun entirely by a

divine spider, and different from the world of the Greeks, divided by the realm of the will and the great cosmic folly" (Jenkins 1997, 125).

In order to understand the Argentinean republican citizen, the genealogical method does not seek its origin, but rather the fluid grids of narratives that make the Argentinean republican citizen possible. The genealogical approach does not imply a separation between ideas and reality or between theory and practice. In Foucault's words:

It was a matter of showing by what conjunctions a whole set of practices—from the moment they become coordinated with a regime of truth—was able to make what does not exist (madness, disease, delinquency, sexuality, etcetera), nonetheless become something. . . . It is not an illusion since it is precisely a set of practices, real practices, which established it and thus imperiously marks it out in reality. (Foucault 2008, 19).

The two elements, a set of practices and a regime of truth, are assembled and unthinkable by themselves. It is in the everyday linguistic and nonlinguistic practices that I seek how these conjunctions structure social life (Friedrich 2010, 43). It is only through this specific set of practices that I am able to grasp the embodied regime of truth that established the Jew as the noncitizen or dangerous other.

Immigration as National Policy and the Dangerous Other: The Jew

European immigration was highly encouraged by the Argentinean Constitution (1853), and liberal policies of the late twentieth century focused on fostering it. For decades (1860–1910), the number of immigrants who arrived on Argentinean shores each year was a sign of political success and national pride. There was an economic rationale behind this process: the exportation of crops and cattle at a massive scale was only possible if the infinite landscape of the Argentinean pampa was able to produce it, and a vast increase in manpower was necessary to fulfill this national strategy. Between 1889 and 1914, over 2.5 million immigrants arrived in Argentina (Faulk 2008, 53).

A relevant layer of this national policy was the focus on schooling. The vast populations who came from the most distant places on earth would become Argentinean citizens through public education. Therefore, the role of the school in the forging of national identity was crucial. In a country where immigrants were constantly arriving without any knowledge of the country, its language, or its law, the school was the primary space in which to shape an Argentinean citizen.

The study focuses on a region from the province of Entre Rios in which the Jewish community had 23 private schools, whereas the rest of the province had only 3. Of the 3,400 children who lived in the Jewish colonies, only 180 attended the provincial schools, while 1,450 attended the Jewish schools.

In these Jewish schools, the majority of the students were Jewish; however, the children of Argentinean agricultural workers sometimes attended them as well.

The dream of these liberal policies was to construct a white, European, civilized Argentina. However, for several reasons, the landscape of immigration changed drastically in the early twentieth century. For instance, the immigrants who arrived were not the civilized Europeans that had been expected and hoped for, but rather the lower, illiterate classes, mostly from Italy and Spain. The utopic dream of the melting pot lost its footing. In fact, in the early twentieth century, national authorities were beginning to evaluate the negative social outcome of their massive immigration policies (Avni 1991, 42). In this convoluted social environment, a wave of over 100,000 Jews came to Argentina, mostly due to anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire.

National educational authorities perceived religion as an institutional “reality” that they could act upon. Thus, the Jewish religion was viewed as a threat to the project aimed at shaping a homogenous republican citizen. In 1908, the Argentine daily newspaper *La Prensa* published a column called “Anti-Argentine Schools.” A deep controversy arose in the public opinion. The mainstream media spread the term, arguing that such schools were receiving funding from the state, and not even basic Spanish was being taught. The educational magazine *El Monitor*, issued by national educational authorities, dedicated two articles to the topic. The first column, “Foreign schools in Entre Rios” affirmed that a “national political issue” was at stake. The article referred to the lack of fundamental principles of Argentinean national identity in the Jewish schools under examination. The second article (1909) had the same title but was longer, with more than 40 pages that tackled notions of cosmopolitanism, the role of the state, Jewish colonization in Entre Rios (a northern province of Argentina), and the work of Jewish schools.

I analyze the anti-Argentinean narratives as a set of distinctions from the national authorities that were making (Hacking 2006) a kind of person—the dangerous Jew—in opposition to the Argentinean “citizen.” The documents and reports from educational authorities included voices from different actors: the national educational authorities, local and national educational superintendents, Jewish colonists, the Jewish Colonial Association (JCA), and its educational superintendents. These private schools were sponsored by the JCA, who provided the building, furniture, didactic materials, teachers, and even superintendents. However, the province also provided funding to those schools, and this point gave rise to the heated controversies, because the Jewish schools had specific features that did not foster, in their words, “education of a national nature” (Bavio 1908).

In the second article, Juan Nissen, the general superintendent, argued that Jewish schools should be closed for several reasons. First, Jewish schools

devoted the majority of their school days to teaching Hebrew (Bavio 1908, 20). According to Juan Nissen's report, students were taught Argentinean history for only seven hours in the entire school year, and not 55, as required by educational regulations. In a similar vein, students received only 14 hours of Spanish language instead of the required 90. Furthermore, due to Jewish holidays, the academic calendar was far from reaching 100 of instruction—around 53. Finally, the school week from Sunday morning to Friday noon, because of the Sabbath, contravened the National Academic Calendar, which stated that schools should close on Sundays. In sum, officials stated that Jewish schools gave priority to Hebrew education instead of the secular or laical education fostered by the state. Jewish schools favored the teaching of Hebrew, Jewish religion, and the ancient and contemporary history of the Israelites (Bavio 1908, 25). Therefore, officials stated that the Jewish—and Argentinean—students attending those schools were forming a “totally Hebrew and mystical soul, without any Argentinean feelings or the generous instincts common among the people who grow in this land of freedom [Argentina]” (Bavio 1908, 26). As a double gesture, the fear of a Jewish mystical soul opposed the generous instincts of an Argentinean.

The superintendent mentioned that students preferred the Hebrew language to Spanish. In Jewish schools, the majority of the instruction was in Hebrew, and left instruction in Spanish behind. Therefore, results in the Spanish language were insufficient. According to Bavio, the instruction could never have been successful (1908, 31) with foreign teachers that had a weak knowledge of Spanish. The priority of Hebrew was justified by the JCA, which argued that immigrants were extremely conservative. In Argentina, the Spanish language was the mandatory language that all schools in Argentina should use for instruction. Within the latest pro-Hispanic nationalistic trends, educational authorities believed that the appropriate medium to foster national identity was the Spanish language, and without it any national education was fruitless. In this regard, Ernesto Bavio asserted “the first duty of the Argentinean elementary schools, whatever the citizenship of its teachers, is to teach the country's language, which is the most powerful bond of nationality” (Bavio 1908, 599). Therefore, instruction in Hebrew was unacceptable for educational authorities. Within these narratives, language was another distinction that produced difference. In fact, in the narratives that built the dangerous “other,” the Hebrew language was a threat to the building of an Argentinean nation.

A report by Angel F. Schenone, the provincial educational superintendent (1908), claimed that Jews were “indolent due to idiosyncrasy,” “religious fanatics,” and “bound to their language”; hence he considered Jewish colonists unable to assimilate to the Argentinean environment (Bavio 1908, 11). In a similar vein, Superintendent Juan Nissen stated, “[Jews] are adverse

elements to Argentina, very different from immigrants from other countries, who contribute to our stable development" (Bavio 1908, 13). In the same article, the province inspector insisted that the Jewish population was incapable of assimilation and noncompliant to the Argentinean way of life and mores (Bavio 1908, 35). Both articles issued by the *Educational National Journal* describe how the Jew was constructed in opposition to the "true" Argentinean citizen. Educational authorities were opposed to anything that could be considered Jewish culture. In sum, from all the distinctions that built a dangerous "other," religious fanaticism and language were the main features that shaped the Jew as an anti-Argentinean.

Schooling and the Hope of Remaking the Citizen

Educational authorities issued several recommendations to ameliorate the situation. Although one superintendent recommended closing all the Jewish schools (Bavio 1908, 20), a milder solution was adopted. In order to reconstruct the "Argentinean feelings" (39) the authorities recommended, (a) Jewish religious instruction should be outside the school building; (b) compulsory celebration including singing the national anthem in national memorials; (c) flag raising ceremony every day, (d) diffusion of patriotic readings, such as "Argentinean Soul" or "National Events"; and (e) the use of an Argentinean badge during national ceremonies. The governmental approach aspired to eliminate all the singularities of the Jewish culture, erasing all kind of differences. The hope was, and still is, that said policies would be able to remake the citizen. Schooling was perceived as a somehow "magical" box, in the sense that it could eventually transform the indolent Jews—difference—into true, generous, Argentinean citizens—sameness.

Los gauchos judíos

In this section, I will illustrate how a cultural and historical approach to religion sheds light on the role Jewish religious narratives played, merging within the grids of narratives that shaped the Argentinean "secular" citizen. Gerchunoff's account shows how the Jewish religious narrative got assembled into "secular" notions of the Argentinean republic and the Argentinean citizen. At this point, to describe the extent to which religious salvific narratives silently shaped the Argentinean citizen, I will change from an argument about agency and voice, represented by the school authorities and its reports, to one of cultural practices decentering the subject. From a cultural perspective, I understand power to be not so much a matter of imposing constraints upon citizens, but of "making up" citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom (Rose and Miller 1992, 174; Hunter 1994, xix). The Jewish immigration in Argentina demonstrates the extent to which the

power of religion goes beyond the bureaucratic borders or physical coercion of the state apparatus.

Alberto Gerchunoff was born in Proskurov, Ukraine, in 1884. At age 5, he immigrated to Argentina with his family, who settled in the city called Moisesville, one of the colonies sponsored by the JCA. The impoverished family moved to Buenos Aires after the tragic murder of his father. In Buenos Aires, Alberto Gerchunoff rapidly excelled as a journalist and writer. His most famous book, *Los gauchos judíos*, describes through several short stories the everyday life of those first Jewish colonists with long white beards that lived in the midst of the Argentinean pampas. Gerchunoff's book reflects the enthusiasm that these Jewish settlers had, and their interactions with an entirely new environment full of challenges and opportunities.

Gerchunoff is considered the founder of Jewish Latin American writing, and he was the founder and first president of the Argentine Writers' Association. The discourse that his "voice" expresses has helped me describe how Jewish religious narratives finely merged with "secular" discourses of the Argentinean citizen, producing a different quality and nuance in the assembly of who the Argentinean citizen was. In the previous section, I describe how the national educational authorities—from an institutional perspective—made the Jewish colonists out to be a dangerous other, incapable of respecting and loving Argentina. However, Gerchunoff's stories show a rather different perspective regarding the role of Jewish religion in the assembly of the Argentinean citizen.

The Argentine's Passover or Zion

The first line of the *Los gauchos judíos* is from a reading from the Passover Haggadah: "With an outstretched arm the Lord delivered us from Pharaoh, in Egypt" (Gerchunoff 1910, 39). The pogroms that Jewish colonists recently suffered in Russia were the "Egypt" that Jewish immigrants had experienced. Immediately after, Gerchunoff says: "Remember how, back in Russia, ye set tables to celebrate the ritual of the Passover? This [the travel to Argentina] is a greater Passover" (Gerchunoff 1910, 38). Time and again the writer uses the Passover to exemplify the situation of the Jews in Argentina. Hence, a Jewish soteriology was crucial in providing intelligibility to Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe to Argentina. The religious Passover became the narrative that Gerchunoff chose to illuminate the colonist's journey from Russia to Argentina. Therefore, since the Passover was the journey from Russia to Argentina, a whole range of expectations—later considered utopic—and feelings would arise in the subjectivity of those colonists. If Passover was their travel from Russia, Argentina became their new Promised Land, the Zion that would nurture them with care and love. Jewish religious discourses about Egypt's Passover triggered in the Jewish

immigrants a metamorphosis that transformed Argentina into Zion. Embedded in the stories are images that portrayed the gratitude of Jewish immigrants toward Argentina, the Zion that gave them a land of milk and honey.

In another story called “The New Immigrants,” Gerchunoff describes old Jewish colonists awaiting the arrival of new colonists in the city train station:

Everyone in the crowd relived the morning of departure from the Czar’s cruel empire and the day of arrival in the Promised Land, in the Jerusalem extolled in sermons and acclaimed in leaflets whose Russian verses, printed under the portrait of Baron Hirsch, praised the excellence of the soil:

To Palestine and to the Argentine,
We’ll go, to sow,
We’ll go, brothers and friends,
To live and be free . . . (Gerchunoff 1910, 58)

Suddenly, Argentina was equated with Palestine as the holy land of Hebrew history. Its soil and freedom made it the new Zion, the announced Jerusalem in the rabbinic preaching. Argentina acquiring features of the Promised Land is a theme that was already present through Catholic narratives.²

By describing Argentina as the new Zion, the connections of Jewish salvation themes and political theories of the state shaped a different notion of the Argentinean citizen. Argentina was the actual Zion for Jewish colonists. The Jewish religious tradition of Zion gave an even brighter gleam to the Argentinean exceptionalism that, ironically, came from Catholic narratives—though it had already been secularized. The fine assemblage of Jewish narratives was possible because previously the republic had incorporated and naturalized religious ingredients—Catholic salvific narratives such as the Promised Land or the Garden of Eden—in the modern understanding of the Argentinean republic (Gomez Caride 2014).

The National Anthem and the Argentine Independence Day

In the last chapter of his book, Gerchunoff describes how the settlers learned about Argentinean Independence Day. In a trip to the city, they saw that the main street of the city, called Gualeguay, was decorated with Argentinean flags and arches. So, after a meeting of the elders they decided to hold the celebration and prepared their first national celebration. Gerchunoff describes the scene and the rationale Jews used to celebrate the Argentinean civic celebration:

² In the nascent Argentinean republic (1810–30), the Promised Land shaped the grids of discourses of the Argentinean republic.

The colony realized that the 25th was the Argentine Independence Day. The date was approaching and the elders gathered to decide if they will hold a celebration. They decided to celebrate. The dialogue between two colonists says: "I remember" he said, "how after the massacre of Jews in the city of Elizabetgrad, we closed the synagogue because we didn't want to bless the czar. Here, no one is forcing us to bless the republic and its president; we do so gladly, of our own free will." No one knew who the president was, but that did not matter very much. (Gerchunoff 1910, 168)

The description reflects another feature of the Jewish religious experience: their immemorial sufferings and oppressions. The Russian pogroms were still very fresh in the memories of the colonists. The fact that Argentina was, so far, a safe place, moved the colony to celebrate and adhere to the civic ceremony. After Jacobo spoke on behalf of the Jewish colony, the civic authority answered:

In response, Don Benito [police chief of the colony], recited several stanzas of the national anthem. The Jews did not understand what he was saying, but the sound of the word "liberty" rekindled bitter memories of centuries of suffering. With their hearts and their mouths, just as they did in the synagogue, they responded with a resounding "Amen!" (Gerchunoff 1910, 169)

The civic dimension represented by the national anthem and the religious one characterized in the "Amen" are intertwined. Paradoxically, the Jewish colonist expressed a religious obedience to the civic republican hymn. The republican adherence of Jews was of a religious nature because their religious language was the bridge that helped them become republican citizens. In the scene described above, the borders between the secular civic realm and the religious one that educational authorities had proclaimed disappeared. In that moment, the Jewish religious heritage of the Jewish immigrants made possible their acceptance of the Argentinean republican dogma. The national anthem and the "Amen" of the Jewish immigrants merged, and the word "liberty" had a crucial significance. It is interesting to compare the educational authorities' criticism of Jews who did not know the Argentinean national anthem. Gerchunoff's description shows the extent to which Jewish colonists were eager to comply with their civic duties.

The "Amen" of Jewish immigrants shows how the republic was treated as a deity and describes a crucial aspect of Jewish soteriology: the importance of developing an ethical life. In Jewish ethics, religious freedom, such as practicing the Sabbath, is essential. As with the Promised Land, Catholic narratives also helped to shape the republic as a salvific space at the beginning of the May revolution (1810). The nascent republic described as the Promised Land placed South America in a different spatiality. The "salvification" of the republican space was so important that the nascent Argentina was depicted as the happiest state possible (Gomez Caride 2014). The

Jewish religious narratives merged with such salvific narratives toward the republic, but with a somewhat different horizon. During the Spanish colonial domination, liberty was a prevalent theme of republicans against Spain. However, once the threat of Spain was superseded, liberty lost its momentum in the public debate. The notion of liberty brought by Jews was broader, and hence their understanding of liberty incorporated a new nuance to the narratives about the Argentinean citizen. Jews' acceptance of the Argentinean republic was dependent on freedom from the religious persecution they experienced. In the Argentinization of Jews, Jewish narratives brought to the table a dimension of religious liberty that was rather new in the Argentinean scenario, in which Christians—Catholics and Evangelicals—were a clear majority.

Conclusion: State, Power, and the Intersections with Religious Discourse

From an institutional perspective, Jewish religious narratives were perceived as an obstacle to national identity by Argentinean educational authorities. However, from a cultural perspective, Gerchunoff's account of everyday life in the Jewish colonies shows how Jewish narratives intersected and assembled in the construction of the school and the Argentinean citizen. The Jewish religious narratives were assembled along with those regarding the Argentinean citizen, "adding" a new nuance to the construction of the Argentinean citizen.

Nowadays, I could enumerate many examples all around the world in which religious controversies arise around schooling as heated and unsettled issues. For example, in December of 2011 the US Supreme Court refused to intervene in New York City's prohibition on the use of religious buildings by public schools. In support of this court decision, Udi Ofer, the advocacy director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, stated that "the Department of Education is right to erect a wall between religious worship and our schools" (Ofer 2012). Beyond cases such as this and their nuances, many times the rationale of the religious problem is framed in institutional terms, such as "minority rights," usually depicted as the powerless subjects against the powerful authoritarian state. The outcome of this institutional rationality is a need to distinguish legitimate and illegitimate forms of nationalism (McDonough and Cormier 2013) or an emphasis on equality education to counterbalance the membership aspect of citizenship (Ruitenberg 2015): for example, the right to pray of minority Baptist students in Argentinean public schools, or the anti-minority religious rhetoric in South Asian textbooks. The issue is that in such an institutional framing, the debate overlooks how religious discourses shifted from the religious institutional setting to republican notions, producing a "common" sense about who the educated republican citizen is.

This essay documents the extent to which a notion of religion as a cultural practice somehow invisibly amalgamates and gives intelligibility to the Argentinean citizen. For example, ideas of Argentina as the Promised Land and the republic as a space of freedom link together notions of progress, the enlightened republic, and the child as capable of pedagogical intervention. The poignancy of a cultural and historical approach to religion shows a broader palette of colors in times when politicians and stakeholders are particularly anxious regarding institutional religion and the making up of a national citizen.

The way in which religion is framed constructs different outcomes regarding the notion of citizenship. For example, educational reports and Gerschunoff's stories show the extent to which religious narratives can be perceived as fanaticism and stubbornness (in line with the account made by educational authorities) and, at the same time, as a complex grid of different narratives—Jewish, Catholic, and so forth—that intersect in the shaping of the Argentinean citizen understood as a relational field. Beyond the contrasting perspectives of national authorities and Jewish immigrants, the different outcome regarding religion was based on understanding the significance of religion in the shaping of the Argentinean citizen. When considered from an institutional perspective, religion was perceived as a threat to Argentinean national homogeneity. However, from a cultural perspective, Jewish religious discourses of the colonists can be understood as overlapping narratives that shape the Argentinean citizen.

The essay describes how Jewish salvation themes moved toward the notion of the Argentinean citizen, and education was no longer tied to religious institutions but seen as the worldly path to a great nation and individual well-being and progress. The Jewish stories revise the salvation themes of the republic, but that revision is done in relation to the salvation themes of republic and its moral scripture. The "citizen" is always constructed as a relational field in making a kind of person. In the relational field of citizenship is where political theories about the citizen connected and assembled through Catholicism and its reassembly with Jewish discourses, shaping an Argentinean citizen.

Educational policy makers should be aware of these "invisible" narratives and their implications in the educational domain. Even the institutional secularization of Argentina that banned the teaching of Catholicism from public schools did not imply a cultural secularization of the narratives about the Argentinean republican citizen. Similar outcomes can be found in many other Western countries, such as the United States (McKnight 2003).

In the current context of increasing religious controversies in relation to national identity, the problematization of institutional secularization and the power of religion as a cultural practice appear to be two interesting fields for further research. Institutional secularization or patriotic education, such as

citizenship tests for immigrants, seems to be the answer that many Western countries are applying nowadays, ignoring the power of religion as a cultural practice. The controversy raised by the “anti” Argentinean schools and the state’s failure to bridge the gap between immigrants and the Argentinean republic still resonates one hundred years later.

The experience of Sweden enacting a more sophisticated approach to immigrant culture might be an interesting case to explore. A 1979 amendment to the Swedish constitution encourages immigrants to maintain and develop their ethnic identity, language, and religion (Taguma et al. 2010). The Swedish migrant education policy is geared toward this policy goal, that is, to develop skills in his/her own language and culture and promote development as bilingual individuals, to help build self-esteem, and to allow them to follow developments in the home country (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research 2009). Understanding religion as a cultural practice and the “citizen” as a relational field can disrupt the framing of religion and citizenship as competitors or even enemies.

A more nuanced attitude from governments and stakeholders regarding institutional secularization should promote a more sophisticated approach capable of registering citizenship as a relational field in which religious narratives shape the educational landscape. For example, what religious narratives or principles are fostering equity, tolerance, fairness, and eventually notions of national belonging in millions of immigrants who are willing to live peacefully in a republic?

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