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Addressing Antisemitism in Germany: Challenges and Possibilities in Society, School, and Education

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Abstract

We begin by explaining the need for educational measures targeting antisemitism in its own right, distinct from anti-racist programs. We then provide succinct sketches of the evolution of contemporary antisemitism and the social parameters governing antisemitic communication in Germany. This is followed by a discussion of both individual and collective defense and evasion strategies that obstruct the necessary critical treatment of antisemitism and form an obstacle to antisemitism prevention work more generally. The extent to which Jewish life is respected at school tends to be determined directly by the extent to which such defense mechanisms are allowed to prevail, and it is of crucial importance that educational measures targeting antisemitism do not selectively instrumentalize Jewish input. Having discussed these challenges against the backdrop of the parameters governing the public communication of antisemitism, we conclude with a short summary of our principal recommendations.

Keywords: civic education; political education; Jewish life at schools; prevention of antisemitism

Public perceptions of antisemitism in Germany (and in Europe more generally) are strongly incident-based. Relevant incidents include instances of physical violence against Jews or military activities in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that routinely occasion antisemitic communication across a range of groups and social settings. Empirical research renders a multidimensional account of antisemitic attitudes in Europe and the threat perception of Jewish populations. A significant proportion of the Jewish population has thought about emigrating; in surveys, their share ranges from forty-four percent[1] to sixty-one percent.[2] Most Jews are either very or extremely concerned about antisemitism.[3] The majority refrains from displaying Jewish symbols in public.[4] The Jews in Germany are most concerned "about becoming a victim of verbal insults, harassment or physical attack in the next 12 months because of being Jewish," closely followed by their French peers.[5]

For the longest time, school curricula have addressed antisemitism merely as a historical phenomenon. Only in recent years has the insight gained ground that schools must also cover contemporary forms of antisemitism in their own right and with due attention to their

specific dynamics in order to achieve sustainable changes.[6] In what follows, we are concerned with the social contexts of educational measures targeting antisemitism. While we draw specifically on the school system and articulation of antisemitism in Germany, that is, in the country that perpetrated the Shoah, we assume that the issue ought really to be tackled at a European level. We hope that our account of the specific dynamics of continuity and change governing expressions of antisemitism in Germany will provide a useful point of comparison, both in terms of similarities and distinctions, for other European contexts and pan-European debate.

In the course of the last two millennia, antisemitic resentment has consistently adapted to changing political, economic, religious, and cultural circumstances.[7] At each juncture, drawing on and incorporating pre-established tropes, accommodation and reinvention have been inextricably linked. Enmity towards Jews exists both as a comprehensive explanatory instrument that makes sense of the world in its entirety[8] and in the form of fragmented convictions and motifs. Antisemitism is therefore a heterogeneous phenomenon. It can be subdivided and classified in terms of a range of political, historical, ideological-philosophical, moral-normative, and religious categories.[9] Yet the common denominator throughout is anti-Jewish hostility, even as it may change its guise to match current social and cultural assumptions specific to any given context. In order to make sustainable inroads educational measures targeting antisemitism therefore need to sensitize students not just to specific expressions of antisemitism but also to the mechanisms that govern its shapeshifting capacity.

In what follows, we begin by explaining the need for educational measures targeting antisemitism in its own right, distinct from anti-racist programs. We then provide succinct sketches of the evolution of contemporary antisemitism and the social parameters governing antisemitic communication in Germany. This is followed by a discussion of both individual and collective defense and evasion strategies that obstruct the necessary critical treatment of antisemitism and form an obstacle to antisemitism prevention work more generally. The extent to which Jewish life is respected at school tends to be determined directly by the extent to which such defense mechanisms are allowed to prevail, and it is of crucial importance that educational measures targeting antisemitism do not selectively instrumentalize Jewish input. Having discussed these challenges against the backdrop of the parameters governing the public communication of antisemitism, we conclude with a short summary of our principal recommendations.

1. The Need for Educational Measures Targeting Antisemitism

One of the questions that has arisen in recent debates about the standards teaching materials developed for political education measures need to meet is that of whether more broadly based measures can adequately deal with antisemitism or whether it actually needs to be covered in its own right. The answer to this question could not be clearer: there is a pronounced need for specific educational measures targeting antisemitism and existing materials are unlikely to meet requisite standards. Insights from other fields of civic and anti-racist education cannot simply be transferred to the treatment of antisemitism. Antisemitic tropes such as the notion of Jewish control of, and undue influence in, the financial sphere or the media, for example, can hardly be addressed with anti-racist methods and concepts. While racism tends to identify racialized individuals with their external and inner nature, portraying them as idle, incapable of reigning in their urges, and lacking in civilized refinement, antisemites identify "the Jews" with power, domination, and a passion for manipulation. Yet, conversely, antisemites may also be envious of the qualities to which Jews supposedly owe their ostensible position of power: a strong sense of

family and community, eloquence, and intellectual as well economic ingenuity.[10] Antisemitic hostility frequently goes hand in hand with envy regarding positive qualities ascribed to Jews.[11]

The US-American historian David Nirenberg has shown that the ways in which various societies have perceived of, and thought about, Jews in the course of the last two millennia have had very little to do with actual Jews. Jews have consistently served non-Jews as a foil when defining their own relationship to other groups and shoring up their own sense of self-righteousness. Nirenberg has drawn attention to the instrumental and self-sustaining content of antisemitic narratives constructed to explain the world: "Ideas about Jews and Judaism become tools with which a culture . . . makes sense of the world."[12] Antisemitism, in other words, is not a matter of lacking or erroneous knowledge but of historically established unconscious patterns of thought and perception imprinted on society's cultural memory. Consequently, educational measures targeting antisemitism primarily need to address conjunctive, that is, non-reflective and implicit, assumptions. Intergenerational distinctions notwithstanding, neither students nor teachers are themselves likely to be entirely free of antisemitic patterns of thought, perception, and sensation. When it comes to perceptions of Jews, cognition and emotion are inseparable factors. References to "the Jew" may be characterized by admiration or envy, they may be articulated in the form of hostility or rage, which, in turn, may translate into action. They may be lacking in empathy, but they are rarely dispassionate. This is why Jean-Paul Sartre characterized antisemitism as being "first of all a *passion.*"[13]

2. From Racial to Israel-Related Antisemitism

Survey data points to a consistent basic level of classical racial antisemitism among the population. The currently more virulent forms of Israel-related antisemitism or antizionism are apparently more difficult to discern and classify. In ideological terms, Israel-related antisemitism tends to manifest in a variety of seemingly learned and academic guises and has therefore been identified by some as a new form of antisemitism. Yet, as Monika Schwarz-Friesel has emphasized, "There is nothing new about the much-cited new antisemitism: it is merely the age-old hostility towards Jews once again taking on a new guise to match changing circumstances. Antisemitism is a chameleon and, as one would expect, its countenance, colors and surfaces may vary."[14]

Historically, antisemitic resentment has consistently adapted to society's changing power structures and general requirements. This suggests that Israel-related antisemitism, rather than being merely one current form of antisemitism, may in fact have the capacity to rehabilitate and rejuvenate racial antisemitism. The anti-Israeli positions articulated in the social media during the conflict between Israel and Gaza in 2021 clearly pointed in this direction. One-sided affirmations of the Palestinians as Israel's entirely innocent victims proved appealing to young TikTok users ordinarily preoccupied with dance videos and make-up advice. Opposition to Israel was presented as a moral duty for anyone who rejects injustice and war. The requisite template is firmly established and readily available. Claims of the kind that Israel is an illegitimate colonial endeavor and enjoys murdering children are emotive and evocative. They render balanced consideration and dialogue obsolete and lend themselves to only one possible, self-evident conclusion. This anti-Israeli stance is attractive not least because it can easily be adopted through the use of relevant avatars and hashtags and promises to draw in additional followers equally eager to be on the "right" (that is, the anti-Israeli) side. Moreover, it lends the user additional moral stature, given that opposition to Israel and identification with the allegedly voiceless Palestinian underdogs is considered rebellious and subversive. This assemblage of pre-prepared attitudes and judgements is complemented by the conceit that, while it has

hitherto been impossible to combat constant manipulation by the pro-Israeli mass media, social media has finally provided a forum for pro-Palestinian grassroots activists to join forces and collectively set the record straight.

Hostility towards Israel in fact plays on several classical antisemitic tropes: the notion of unjustified Jewish power and influence in politics and the media, the illegitimate appropriation of wealth (in this case, the land of the Palestinians), and the alleged penchant for the killing of children. Israel-related antisemitism taps into these well-established tropes, rejuvenating them and lending them new plausibility and force. It also merges, in some respects, with a modernized variant of the racial antisemitism that, if surveys are to be believed, has been a taboo in Germany since the Shoah. The unfettered will to persecute and annihilate has always been perceived by its protagonists as a legitimate and necessary revolt they are duty-bound and compelled to undertake against some imagined overwhelming evil. The logic that supposedly rendered classical antisemitism plausible is thus transferred to, and utilized to underpin and consolidate, its current variants. Classical motifs are recycled and adapted and their substance is thus preserved. The chameleon[15] takes on new colors and comprehensively changes its appearance to match its surroundings and refine its charisma, and yet it always stays the same. The late Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offered a similar account of the way in which antisemitism, throughout its history, has adapted to changing social moods and vogues, morphing from anti-Judaism into ostensibly scientific antisemitism and now taking the form of a so-called "criticism of Israel" that exploits the concept of universal human rights to delegitimize the Jewish state.[16]

3. The Parameters of Public Antisemitic Communication

Since West Germany was established in 1949, the parameters governing the public communication of antisemitism have repeatedly changed quite considerably. Initially, official disapproval severely curtailed the public communication of antisemitism though obviously not the antisemitism itself. Even after the defeat of the Nazis, it reverberated in the cultural sphere and was handed down in families, all the while finding new forms of expression. To some extent, antisemitic tropes were inverted. What previously spoke against the Jews now seemed to speak for them. The result was an ostentatious form of often hollow philosemitism that Ernst Bloch likened to an "amiably sewn on Star of David."[17] Yet the antisemitic tropes remained as readily available to be tapped into as ever. They morphed into an instinctual refusal to acknowledge German guilt and collectively memorialize the annihilation of European Jewry. This was complemented by several newly configured tropes directed from the outset against the State of Israel established in 1948.[18] Israel-related antisemitism may currently be particularly virulent, new it is by no means. Attempts to delegitimize Jewish nationalism abounded even before the State of Israel was created. Israel-related antisemitism, too, constantly reinvents itself to adapt to changing historical circumstances and stay cutting-edge in its use of technology.

Against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, teachers and instructors are often at a loss as to how best to deal with students' and/or colleagues' potentially antisemitic and/or emotive responses more generally. Yet Israel-related antisemitism is the currently dominant form of antisemitism, it is the specific form of hostility towards Jews victims of antisemitism report most often, and it is the form of antisemitism most frequently not recognized as such. This is so because the way in which antisemitism has habitually been approached in the past tends to prevent an adequate response.

4. Individual and Collective Defense Mechanisms

One means of evading the confrontation with the complex problem of antisemitism is recourse

to a position of neutrality. It allows individuals to rationalize, relativize, and downplay antisemitism and distances them sufficiently from the issue to lessen the anxiety it might otherwise create. When it comes to the continuity of antisemitism in Germany, rationalization based on ostensible neutrality is clearly recognizable as a defense mechanism. That the grounds are shifting in terms of possible antisemitic communication in public can be demonstrated empirically, as can the persistence of antisemitic resentment and its (encoded) forms of expression. Antisemitism owes its durability precisely to its flexibility and is in no way dependent on the presence of any actual Jews. Even where the Shoah eradicated Jewish life almost entirely, it persists as *antisemitism without Jews*. Yet since the Shoah, it also exists, in an important sense, as a form of *antisemitism without antisemites*: antisemitic utterances now need to be presented as legitimate, urgent, and supposedly non-antisemitic interventions.[19]

Continuity and change have always been inextricably linked in the history of antisemitism. Even among those who identify as leftists, among those who consider themselves critical minds, take it for granted that they are free of prejudice and are firmly committed to human rights, the critical treatment of antisemitism is all too often crowded out by the yearning for a sanitized German identity. This is not a matter of personal guilt or shame. What is at stake is a fundamental willingness to engage critically with the various forms of denial, relativization, and whataboutism developed and adopted by individuals, families, and society at large and to scrutinize one's own attitudes towards Jews and antisemitism. How important this is, is demonstrated by recent surveys: forty percent of fourteen-year-olds did not know what Auschwitz-Birkenau was and forty percent of respondents agreed that Jews brought up the Holocaust far too often.[20] Social, familial, and individual entanglements and narratives clearly play their part and continue to have an impact.

Many descendants of the perpetrators continue to respond defensively when it comes to the role of their grandparents or great-grandparents in the Nazi era. As this defensiveness indicates, relevant emotive response patterns have by no means subsided. They have been handed down by individuals, families, and society at large and continue to impact youngsters who are obviously no longer in any way directly connected to National Socialism. In this intergenerational communication, "suffering" plays a peculiar role. The defensive and evasive strategies developed in order to maintain the silence regarding the crimes or complicity of one's own relatives in the Nazi period and the context of the Shoah perpetuate emotions such as guilt and shame and carry them over into subsequent generations.[21] Rosenthal has detailed the familial dynamics among the children and grandchildren of the Nazi generation that result from these forms of denial and defensiveness.[22] The younger generations are thus burdened with the secrecy surrounding their forebears' implication in the Shoah and the Nazis' other crimes. Their forebears' "experiential knowledge" has been handed down to them "in the form of verbal cues, non-verbal communication, and familial expectations,"[23] and they would ideally need to find a way of dealing with this legacy that does more than detract from the evasion in the private sphere with the kind of impersonal, guilt-neutral public phraseology typical of memorial culture in Germany.[24]

By placing the suffering (real or imagined) of the Nazi perpetrators and sympathizers center stage in familial and social discourse, emphasis on suffering frequently functions as a means of defense in its own right, displacing the suffering of the victims and drawing attention away from the agency and responsibility of the perpetrators. Indeed, this can go as far as the construction, direct confrontation with clear-cut evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, of family narratives in which Nazi perpetrators and sympathizers are viewed as the real victims.[25] A similar mechanism is at work in the presentation of

"war" as essentially a force of nature, the great equalizer that transcends all forms of agency and voids all historical, political, military, and ideological considerations and standards.

Educational measures generally pay nowhere near enough attention to the ways in which the Nazi legacy continues to work itself out in German society. As Chernivsky (2017) has noted,

> So-called intergenerational entanglements—conflicts, ambivalences, emotions—can be handed down to subsequent generations both explicitly and implicitly and thus enter the stream of biography and identity. This concerns not just explicit contents consciously passed on but also implicit ethical standards, emotive contents, and attitudes.[26]

This suggests that educational measures targeting antisemitism need to give more consideration to the role and impact of defense mechanisms, notably to forms of rationalization and projection. Here, the ability to respond to the entanglement of cognitive and socio-emotive factors is of crucial significance. Educational measures designed to nurture students' mature reasoning in this context need to facilitate a treatment of individual and collective defense mechanisms that is framed by both acceptance and drawing of boundaries.

Consequently, both students and instructors consistently find themselves playing a double role. The students and their subjective approach and preconceptions, their political and religious self-perception need to be taken seriously, yet at the same time they also need to be shown clear boundaries. Educational border-drawing strategies, in turn, depend on increased open learning spaces and opportunities to facilitate the treatment of ambiguities, of a lack of knowledge, or, indeed, of specific antisemitic fragments. This concept refers to antisemitic tropes picked up from the reservoir of cultural knowledge by individuals who neither knowingly harbor antisemitic resentment nor subscribe to a form of ideological antisemitism. The controversy that recently ensued when the US-American entertainer Jon Stewart noted critically that the portrayal of the goblins in the Harry Potter novels and movies resembles the presentation of moneygrubbing Jews in Nazi propaganda[27] indicates how topical an issue this is. There is nothing to suggest that J. K. Rowling consciously picked up this trope, and yet the question arises whether this presentation unwittingly reinforces images in the collective imagery bank relating to avaricious and anti-social agents that ultimately still carry an antisemitic charge. Even though such fragments can be disentangled from antisemitic intentions, they cannot simply be dismissed as harmless. For, regardless of the intentions of those who may be tapping into them unwittingly, they too have the capacity to reactivate the potential for anti-Jewish contempt, vilification, discrimination, and violence to the point of full-scale annihilation. The goal must be to empower all participants to recognize and repudiate expressions of antisemitism past and present under their own steam.

This, then, is the challenge inherent in the instructors' double role. On the one hand, it is their duty to cut off antisemitic utterances. On the other hand, taking antisemitic fragments for their point of departure, they need to contextualize these fragments and facilitate a critical understanding of how they function if we want children and adolescents to acquire the ability to repudiate them. Antisemitic utterances do not merely reflect antisemitic attitudes. Each and every one of them assails Jews. At school, Jewish students are affected by them and must be able to rely on the teaching staff to protect them against such utterances, regardless of whether they may also offer an opportunity for some kind of pedagogical intervention. Where exactly the best possible balance lies in such situations can only be determined on a case-by-case basis but should always take into consideration the vantage of those (potentially) at the receiving end of antisemitism.

Another form of defense is the pursuit of the all too easily recognizable and denounceable

antisemitism of others. This may take the form of demonizing antisemites who, as foreigners or by subscribing to Nazi ideology, are so remote from one's own self-perception that one's opposition to them goes without saying, or whom one already considers one's (political) opponents on other grounds. All too often, the "struggle" against antisemitism manifests as a struggle against other people's antisemitism. Confronting antisemitism in one's own private and professional environment continues to pose a massive challenge. As Josef Joffe has noted, "calling someone an antisemite is now considered a worse transgression than being one."[28] Whether one can make lasting inroads in combatting antisemitism will depend crucially on the opportunities society at large does or does not provide for the critical treatment of long-lasting and tenacious antisemitic tropes.[29] Schools can, or at least could, convey the requisite skills and competence. Where antisemitic fragments feature in individuals' thought, speech, and conduct, they can be critically reflected upon, and change is possible—though obviously not if one only ever spots the problem in others.

5. The Critical Engagement of Antisemitism—With or Without a Jewish Perspective?

Historically, the academic study of antisemitism owes "its fundamental insights in no small measure to Jewish authors and scholars."[30] Even so, Jewish perceptions of antisemitism past and present have, until quite recently, rarely been taken into consideration or given their due in the context of relevant educational measures. Yet educational measures that content themselves with speaking about rather than to Jews are not only underdetermined but also paternalistic. That said, the incorporation of Jewish perspectives can itself be paternalistic in nature. After all, historically, it is the norm rather than the exception for antisemites to rationalize their own antisemitic resentment by pointing to some Jewish or Israeli friend who (actually or supposedly) shares their misgivings.

All too often, both in theory and in practice, the Jewish vantage is subordinated prematurely to various generalizations and abstractions. The study of Jewish perceptions of antisemitism in Germany undertaken by Andreas Zick and his colleagues,[31] which comprises both interviews with individuals at the receiving end of antisemitism who speak about their coping mechanisms and quantitative survey material, presents important pointers for educational measures targeting antisemitism. Yet the crucial question remains: how does one avoid drawing on specific Jewish viewpoints to reinforce one's own politics and, instead, draw attention to the full range of Jewish positions?

Until quite recently, the academic engagement with antisemitism, too, seems to have got by just fine without paying any great attention to the Jewish vantage. The implication was that Jews lacked the requisite scholarly distance, were far too sensitive, and tended to overdramatize the threat of antisemitism. Yet a critique of antisemitism that draws on the real-life experiences of Jews only in an instrumental manner treats them not as subjects but as objects.[32] In this respect, on the political level, the report published in 2017 by the second Independent Experts Group on Antisemitism commissioned by the federal parliament (Bundestag) and the recommendations issued jointly by the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the Joint Commission of Federal and State Antisemitism Commissioners, and the Federal Conference of State Education Departments in 2021 have finally signalled a paradigm shift long called for by the Jewish community.[33]

6. Jewish Life at School

Jewish school teachers' accounts point to a range of challenges that affect Jewish life at school.[34] Few institutions are, in principle, as committed to non-discrimination on the basis of gender, descent, or religion as schools are. Yet, in reality, Jewish teachers, students, and parents are met with considerable unease and insecurity, which

once again indicates the extent to which the parameters of socially acceptable communication in society at large impact schools.

What does Jewish life at school look like today? In addressing this question, one might begin, to give just one example, with a question as simple as: has the school community, has the teaching staff discussed, and agreed on, a position on how to treat Jewish religious holidays? If not, what does this mean for Jewish students and what sort of signal does it send?

A significant proportion of the current generation of Jewish students are the children of Jews who came to Germany from the former Soviet Union where their religious freedom was severely curtailed.[35] Many of their families were profoundly shaped by the victorious Soviet struggle against the Nazis. Here, they are confronted with the legacy of the Nazis' persecution, expulsion, deportation, and industrialized annihilation of European Jewry. Life in the country of the Nazi perpetrators and sympathizers' descendants presents them with a number of challenges, not least in light of survey data indicating that their arrival was greeted with indifference at best. Even so, the move to Germany promised security and a future that would accommodate the Jewish lives (religious or otherwise) they wished to lead.

At school, this biographical background frequently leads to insecurities and a lack of clarity. To the extent that a reluctance to raise certain issues and inhibitions when dealing with Jewish parents genuinely results from a lack of relevant knowledge, the issue can be resolved by supplying the relevant information. Alternatively, it may take an opportunity to reflect on inhibitions that in fact result from one's familial implication in the Nazi era. Sometimes, teachers are also unaware of the fact that they are dealing with Jewish parents because they identify their students simply as the children of Russian immigrants. And some are simply indifferent, of course. Alas, indifference, for example, in the form of supposedly enlightened secularism, can easily engender religious discrimination. This may be reflected in utterances to the effect that it is not Jewish parents per se but only religious or orthodox parents who present a problem. Majority society's perceptions of "the Jews" are prone to become discriminatory and frequently come with antisemitic overtones not least because the widely envisaged ideal of the acceptable Jew throws the qualities of Jews not deemed acceptable all the more sharply into relief.

If institutions, teachers, and trainees fail to address relevant, widely circulating antisemitic tropes, Jewish students are likely to encounter a range of difficulties resulting from the unintentional reproduction of antisemitic projections and insensitive inquisitiveness. An example would be instances in which interest in Israel leads to Jewish students being viewed as ambassadors of the Jewish state and asked to explain or account for its actions. Identifying them with the Jewish state in this way, regardless of their actual connection (or non-connection) to Israel, clearly constitutes a form of othering.[36]

In summary: in a school setting, varying forms of knowledge can take on a variety of meanings and have a range of implications. The discursive treatment of antisemitic tropes in class must deconstruct each of them and clearly identify their exclusionary, discriminatory, and antihuman logic and implications.

7. The Critical Treatment of Antisemitism at School

Schools are tasked with fostering students' civic maturity, their respect for the principle of equality, and their willingness to stand up for what is right. As sites of both socialization and education, they introduce students to the workings of society and prepare them for their role in shaping its future, not least, in terms of the continued relevance established mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and attendant forms of discrimination may or may not have. Consequently, schools bear a considerable responsibility when it comes to empowering students to recognize and repudiate antisemi-

tism. Above all else, victims of any kind of violence must be able to rely (in our case) on their school to protect and support them. Yet recent research indicates that Jews often feel unsupported when they experience antisemitism.[37] Irrespective of the kind of school or their subject specialism, teachers are duty-bound to act when the school's democratic culture is threatened by antisemitism.

In the first instance, this requires the teaching staff, the students, and the school community at large to acknowledge that antisemitism is neither caused by Jews nor (where applicable) is it becoming a problem at school due to the presence of Jewish students, colleagues, or parents. This is the core insight that must underpin all endeavors targeting antisemitism. Antisemitism has nothing to do with the actual or imagined conduct, characteristics, ideas, or convictions of Jews. Antisemitic tropes reflect non-Jewish projections and phantasms about Jews. These tropes have a long history that educational institutions (potentially) have the capacity to cap. Yet they can do so effectively only if they are able and willing to grapple with the defense mechanisms the critical treatment of antisemitism may call on the plan, and the discomfort and vague sense of fear it may arouse in some. In their capacity as educational institutions, schools are well placed to provide truthful and substantive information about challenges faced by society. Students, of whom it will be expected that they play a mature role in society, should be able to take it for granted that schools qualify them to do so. They must alert students to long-standing and still virulent forms of antisemitic resentment in a manner suited to equip them with the knowledge required to identify and repudiate them on sound grounds.

While it goes without saying that schools cannot be expected to solve social problems, they certainly do have a duty to enable students to make sense of such problems and respond to them. A problem that has dogged society for millennia obviously cannot be resolved in one or two lessons. The sensitization of students to the psychological and social mechanisms that set Germany on the path to the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Question, however, is an eminently achievable goal. This endeavor must aim at more than encouraging students to distance themselves from antisemitism—something likely to take little encouragement anyway, given the taboo society officially continues to place on antisemitism. Much more important is an introduction to the specific functions and functioning of antisemitism. The extent to which students acquire the ability to recognize and repudiate various specific expressions of antisemitism in class and in the context of school life more generally will crucially impact the ability of society at large to combat antisemitism. The ability simply to rehearse the socially expected anti-antisemitic phraseology alone achieves very little in the fight against long-standing and widespread antisemitic tropes whose longevity in the face of what one might have thought was undeniable evidence to the contrary indicates that, for all their abhorrence, there is also something deeply compelling about them.

Students and (trainee) teaching staff must be able to take it for granted that the knowledge required to combat socially virulent antisemitic tropes is conveyed to them. If we want them to contribute in a competent manner to society, they need to be familiarized with the various forms of social inclusion and exclusion and empowered to recognize and repudiate antisemitism. Schools and teacher training institutions are uniquely placed to offer students and trainee teachers the space and time needed to acquire the awareness and skills this requires. In facilitating this, schools and teacher training institutions have the opportunity to make an invaluable contribution to the defense of liberties and the fight against the threats and violence designed to curtail them.[38] The critical engagement of antisemitism at school seeks to ensure that Jewish students and teaching staff feel accepted and included. Their non-Jewish peers' ability to recognize and effectively counter antisemitism is indispensable in ensuring Jews are able to

participate on an equal footing in school life and the life of society as a whole.

8. Outlook: The Critique of Antisemitism as a Basic Cultural Technique

Schools obviously cannot offer immediate solutions to problems society at large has been unable to resolve for millennia. They can, however, facilitate educational experiences that convey the knowledge and the critical skills required genuinely to assess the functions and functioning of antisemitism and the likely adequacy of possible counter-strategies. They are able to sensitize students to various historical and current guises of antisemitism, empowering them to recognize and repudiate them.

School lessons and school life more generally offers an opportunity to experiment, to think and play through social issues before they directly impact society at large. They offer a protected space in which crucial social skills can be explained, analyzed, and critically questioned before they need to withstand the test of real-life conflict and come up, not least, against long-standing antisemitic tropes whose validity is widely taken for granted. This is not a matter of rote learning but of educational experiences that allow students genuinely to grasp why they are expected to reject antisemitism and to deploy this knowledge in repudiating it wherever they encounter it in later life. More perhaps than any other country, Germany indeed needs to do everything in its power to commit students and (trainee) teachers to an agenda that expressly opposes antisemitism, but for this very reason it is profoundly irresponsible to equip them with little more than a ritually rehearsed and ultimately helpless anti-antisemitic phraseology. Only if they are genuinely empowered to recognize, call out and repudiate both virulent and latent antisemitic tropes will they be able to take an effective stance against antisemitism in practice.

Teachers have a significant role to play in this context. They are in a position to familiarize students with modes of thinking and evaluation that may differ from those they have acquired in the course of their familial socialization and that therefore allow them to approach long-standing assumptions prevalent in society in a new way.[39] This indicates how important it is that teacher training pays due attention to the knowledge teachers themselves need to empower their students to recognize and repudiate antisemitism.

There is no great difficulty involved in recognizing response patterns such as preemptive defensiveness, evasion in the name of ostensible neutrality or the never-ending, ever more elaborate and histrionic claims that perfectly innocent "criticism of Israel" is subject to constant censorship and persecution—claims that feature prominently in German discourse as well—for what they are. For the most part, they are simply a symptom of the very phenomenon they seek to evade. No one intent on countering antisemitic fragments and tropes that continue to resonate in society at large can afford to ignore Horkheimer and Adorno's insights concerning the projective nature of antisemitism. As they stressed, "The pathic element in anti-Semitism is not projective behavior as such but the exclusion of reflection from that behavior."[40] It is this exclusion of reflection that feeds the antisemites' unbounded desire to persecute and annihilate "the Jew." Education, by its very nature, is, or at least ought to be, predicated on the creation of opportunities to reflect upon and reconsider one's own assumptions and question what is taken for granted. And yet, it is clear that greater formal education does not necessarily translate into a greater ability to recognize and repudiate antisemitism.[41] Monika Schwarz-Friesel has offered an account of "educated antisemitism" and the various rationalizations it construes in order to identify Jews as the other per se, as innately evil and therefore deserving of persecution and annihilation.[42]

Educational measures can (potentially) impact and help curtail antisemitism's persistent barbaric promise. Against the backdrop of the conditions currently governing public communication, structural steps including the firm

establishment of educational measures targeting antisemitism in the curriculum are required. Long-standing and widespread antisemitic tropes can be curtailed in a sustainable fashion only if teaching staff and students alike are equipped with the requisite knowledge. Yet where do we expect teachers to acquire this knowledge if it does not form an integral part of their training? How do we expect students to head out into society and make a positive contribution if the knowledge and skills required to recognize and repudiate antisemitism are not firmly enshrined in the curriculum? Relevant research consistently stresses the deep-seated nature of antisemitic fragments and imagery. Against the backdrop of the conditions currently governing public communication, the critique of antisemitism, in its capacity as what ought to be a basic cultural technique, must be placed on a robust structural footing if we want future generations irrevocably to leave antisemitic tropes that have persisted for millennia behind.

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