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Educated Anti-Semitism in the Middle of German Society

Empirical Findings

'From a realpolitik German perspective à la Merkel I must say that seven million dead Jews, as horrible as this might be, is soberly considered still better than seven billion dead people caused by the Jews' brutal world domination.'

(“Aus Sicht eines realpolitischen Deutschlands a la Merkel muss man sagen, dass sieben Millionen tote Juden, so schlimm das auch wäre, aber nüchtern betrachtet besser wären als sieben Milliarden tote Menschen wegen der jüdischen brutalen Weltherrschaft.”)¹

The experience of the Holocaust and dealing with the lethal ideology that led to Auschwitz did not bring the strategies of verbally dehumanizing and demonizing the Jews to an end. Such strategies prevail and are frequently used in modern discourse even by highly educated people from mainstream society. More, anti-Semitism is on the rise, both in Germany and in Europe. In the twenty-first century, the official ban on anti-Semitic utterances has lost its influence: The articulation of traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes by projecting them on Israel has increased significantly. At the same time, there is a noticeable rejection of the results from research on anti-Semitism in mainstream society. One of the dominant strategies of dealing with actual anti-Semitism in German public discourse is to deny the very existence of it. This article shows that the age-old basic Jew hatred is alive in the middle of German society and that is by no means a sole phenomenon among Right- or Left-wing extremists. Based on extensive empirical data, it is explained how anti-Semitism under the guise of criticism of Israel is articulated also in the public space: Bashing Israel by evoking traditional judeophobic stereotypes is by now the most common strategy of contemporary anti-Semitism. In spite of the knowledge about the Holocaust, as well as to what consequences rhetoric of hate and hostility might have, Jews are frequently attacked verbally in contemporary discourse. Anti-Judaism proves to be to be both a persistent and a central way of thinking and feeling in the Western tradition – neither unshaken nor destroyed by the experience of Auschwitz.

¹ IBB 21.2.2013; e-mail from a social scientist with a PhD; member of the political party DIE LINKE, sent to the Israeli embassy in Berlin, February 2013.

Conceptual and Verbal Anti-Semitism: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

There is a long and cherished illusion in modern German society that anti-Semitism after 1945 is either a past historical phenomenon or is nurtured in its contemporary form only by Right-wing extremists at the edges of society. Yet, recent empirical findings of extensive corpus studies show that anti-Semitism exists at the center of German society as well.²

Hostility towards Jews in modern society, known as anti-Semitism, has many manifestations: For hundreds of years, this hostility has led to physical violence against Jews and Jewish institutions and to social discrimination of Jews.³ It has been articulated through manifold utterances that stigmatize and abuse Jews.⁴ Through the vehicle of language, anti-Semitic stereotypes have been kept alive for hundreds of years. By repetitive use of certain linguistic patterns, prejudice against Jews is preserved along the ages and transported to modern discourse, often without reflecting the consequences. Hence, anti-Semitism can be seen as a cultural code engraved in collective memory.⁵

In postwar German society, following the collapse of the Nazi regime, the issue of Jew-hatred was stigmatized and treated as a taboo in public discourse, however, the official ban and social taboo against anti-Semitism are beginning to lose their grip. A significant increase in verbal anti-Semitism can be noticed on the internet, especially on common home- and webpages etc. that are frequently used in everyday life.⁶ Facilitated by the nature of electronic communication, traditional stereotypes and the old blood libels and conspiracy theories about Jews are now widely spread on the Internet.

‘Why are Jews always so very mean?’ (“Wieso sind Juden immer so böse?”)⁷

This question presupposing and stating the collective malevolence of Jews as a fact was not articulated by some neo-Nazi or extremist on the internet but posted

² Schwarz-Friesel / Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft*, 2012; Bundesministerium des Innern (ed.), *Antisemitismus in Deutschland*, 2011.

³ Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, 1979; Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, 1985; Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism*, 2006.

⁴ Bering, *Der Name als Stigma*, 1991; Reisigl / Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 2001; Hortzitz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft*, 2005.

⁵ Volkov, *Antisemitism as a Cultural Code*, 1978.

⁶ Schwarz-Friesel, “Juden sind zum Töten da,” 2013.

⁷ www.gutefrage.net, asked by ‘MissSchool’, January 1, 2011.

in a forum ('Good Question') used by high school students searching for background knowledge. It could be seen and commented on for almost two years in spite of the rebuking and critical comments by some of the users. In mainstream press, letters to the editor that contain judeophobic argumentation have tripled in the last ten years.⁸

There is an increased acceptance of anti-Semitic beliefs in the appearance of anti-Israelism in public discourse at every level of society, including the universities, the elite and mass media. Accordingly, recent polls show persistently that more than 40 percent of the persons asked hold the opinion that Israel is conducting a war of extermination against the Palestinians and are no better than the Nazis.⁹ Caricatures and cartoons presenting Israelis as bloodthirsty murderers and evil tyrants oppressing and killing children are frequently exhibited in the public sphere (see, for instance the "wailing wall" [*Klagemauer*] in Cologne) and also published in the media (see the caricature of Israel as a monster published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*¹⁰). Today, while racist anti-Semitism is still a tabooed subject and widely rejected in mainstream society, there are no restrictions whatsoever in rhetoric and hate speech when it comes to bashing Israel by means of verbal anti-Semitism.

Dealing with anti-Semitism in the twenty-first century leads to the following questions: Which traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes are still articulated in modern discourse? Have new stereotypes and argumentation patterns emerged and become a matter of habit? Have years of coping with the past, years of remembrance and education, socially tabooing and legally-banning anti-Semitic utterances from public discourse brought about any significant changes? Does the collective awareness regarding the dangers of discriminating rhetorics and hate speech prevent the use and articulation of such verbal means and communicative strategies in mainstream society? At least, do educated people show some responsibility in their use of language?

Our research group has been examining the verbal manifestations of contemporary anti-Semitism in Germany since 2002. We analyzed thousands of utterances in contemporary discourse on both Jews/Judaism and on Israel. The data was described within the interdisciplinary framework of cognitive science and combined with the results of the historical research on Jew-hatred.

⁸ Schwarz-Friesel / Friesel / Reinharz (eds.), *Aktueller Antisemitismus in Deutschland*, 2010; Schwarz-Friesel, *Explizite und implizite Formen*, 2013.

⁹ See ADL – Anti-Defamation League (ed.), *Attitudes Toward Jews in Seven European Countries*, 2009; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (ed.), *Antisemitism*, 2009.

¹⁰ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 2, 2013, p. 15.

The underlying assumption is that language plays a crucial role in activating and re-activating judeophobic resentment and that verbal utterances give significant insight into their underlying mental stereotypes. Thus, to identify the semantics of anti-Semitic utterances is to understand the mental attitude towards Jews. Verbal structures do not only construct negative conceptualizations of Jews but they also reproduce them continually and hence validate the existence of mental anti-Semitism in the cultural and communicative memory of society. According to our definition, anti-Semitism is a hostile conceptualization of Jews based on mental stereotypes. Many of those stereotypes have a long tradition and they are passed from generation to generation by the repetitive use of verbally expressed clichés. Historical research has shown that hostility towards Jews never has been restricted to the lower classes; rather, it has always been articulated also by people with a high educational level.¹¹ Focusing on the nineteenth century, it shows that hostility against Jews was articulated by philosophers like Hegel, writers like Fontane, artists like Wagner, historians and professors like Treitschke, politicians and preachers like Stoecker.¹² Thus, anti-Semitism never has been, only or mainly, a phenomenon at the edges of society. In fact, history reveals that anti-Jewish thought can be found at the very foundation of Western worldviews.¹³

Fundamentally, conceptual anti-Semitism is to be understood as a negative attitude towards Jews and Judaism that is deeply influenced by representations of collective memory and has a strong emotional component. It functions as a belief system that strongly determines the world view of anti-Semites. The basis of this mental model is a distorted picture of Jews as ‘the evil others’ that has nothing to do with facts or experience. An utterance like an e-mail sent to the Central Council of Jews in Germany in 2009, reflects this phenomenon clearly:

‘Personally, I don’t know any person from Israel or of Jewish belief, but I hate you for being so cruel to the poor Palestinians.’

(‘Ich kenne persönlich keinen einzigen Menschen aus Israel oder jüdischen Glaubens, aber ich hasse Sie, weil Sie so grausam mit den armen Palästinensern umgehen.’)¹⁴

The concept ‘Jew’ is based on an abstract representation, on a conception of Jews which has nothing to do with facts. Jews are not discriminated against because

11 See Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, 1980; Almog, (ed.), *Antisemitism through the Ages*, 1988; Volkov, 1978.

12 For examples of such utterances see Schwarz-Friesel / Reinharz, 2013, chapter 3.

13 See Wistrich, *Antisemitism*, 1991; Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession*, 2010; Schwarz-Friesel / Reinharz, 2013; Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 2013.

14 ZJD_Gaza 2009_66/816_Her.

of what they did or do, but *because* they are Jews. Their mere existence is seen as a threat to mankind, a provocation to society, a challenge to cope with. Exactly this ideology led to the ‘final solution’ and the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Thus, anti-Semitism is a specific, a unique phenomenon which is not to be equated with other forms of prejudice or discrimination. The uniqueness of hostility to Jews does not only lay in its long history of two thousand years but also in its mental representation and its ideological basis, which are deeply engraved in the collective memory of the West. Whatever Jews did in history, they were scolded for doing it. No single group of people, except for the Jews, has ever been singled out and blamed simultaneously for mutually-exclusive developments (e.g. capitalism and communism, or assimilation and separation at the same time). The main concept at the core of the anti-Semitic belief system is the stereotype of Jews as ‘strange creatures outside normal society’, as ‘the evil others.’

‘You Jews are the biggest filth of mankind.’
 (“Ihr Juden seid der größte Dreck der Menschheit.”)¹⁵

‘The Jew is not a person, he is a product of decay’
 (“Der Jude ist kein Mensch, es ist eine Fäulniserscheinung.”)¹⁶

This total negation, using the metaphor of decay, is presently projected onto Israel. Scolding Israel but meaning all Jews is for many years, the most frequent and dominant strategy of modern anti-Semites no matter whether they belong to the Right, the Left or mainstream society.

‘Israel is the filth of the world!’
 (“Israel ist der Abschaum der Welt!”)¹⁷

The mental images of Jews and of the Jewish state in the mind of anti-Semites reveal a strong gap between the mental constructions and reality. They do not rely on generalizations (which is the case in other forms of prejudice) but on mental constructs, on fictions not grounded in reality. Think about the stereotype of the blood libel or on the conspiracy theories such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that are inventions, mere fictions. Anti-Semitism does not focus on single aspects or characteristics of Jews, but on the existence of Jews as Jews in general. This makes anti-Semitism unique among all other kinds of hostility towards minorities. In the mental model of the anti-Semitic worldview, Jews fill the conceptual slot of ‘one not

¹⁵ IBD (Israeli Embassy in Germany) 2008; postcard.

¹⁶ IBD_01.08.2006_Mar_001.

¹⁷ IBD_02.08.2006_001_Gar_001.

belonging to the human race' or 'one not belonging to our society.' This categorization goes hand-in-hand with the wish of erasing the Jewish existence:

'Hopefully, one day all Jews will have vanished from earth.'
 ("Hoffentlich werden alle Juden mal von der Welt verschwunden sein.")¹⁸

The negative conceptual attitude is reflected in verbal anti-Semitism. Verbal anti-Semitism comprises all utterances that explicitly or implicitly, with or without intention, invoke judeophobic stereotypes and show patterns of anti-Semitic argumentation. Verbal anti-Semitism is a form of language use that (re)produces prejudice against Jews and keeps judeophobic resentments alive. In this respect, it is a form of mental violence against Jews by using language in order to discriminate and offend them.

Which data help us best to understand verbal anti-Semitism? The traditional research on anti-Semitism frequently focuses on a few remarks of individual persons, although this does not give us a representative insight. Alternatively, there is the reliance on opinion polls, but these have methodological shortcomings: One is the influence of the political awareness: due to political correctness candid answers may be avoided (like expressing racist views) even in anonymous opinion polls. Another is *priming*, namely, to influence the answer through the formulation of the question. Last, the loss of spontaneity and naturalness, since polls are built on artificially triggered answers to a few statements (usually two to five sentences asking people to say 'yes', 'no' or 'I don't know') that are far from covering the full range of verbal anti-Semitism and the authentic production of anti-Semitic utterances.

Thus, our method is based on corpus studies, by now one of the most important empirical methods in cognitive science.

Corpus studies supply natural, authentic data in vast quantities. The material gained is to be considered representative for the discourse phenomenon at hand. Our research is based on three kinds of corpus material: about 50,000 internet texts (from internet forums, commentary sections to online versions of newspapers, chats, YouTube, social networks, focusing on mainstream internet users); about 100,000 texts from the German mass media (the mainstream press) that covered the Middle East conflict; about 14,000 letters and e-mails sent between 2002 and 2009 to the Central Council of Jews in Germany (*Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland*) and between 2004 and 2012 to the embassy of Israel in Berlin; about 2,000 e-mails sent between 2010 and 2012 to the embassies of Israel in Vienna, Bern, The Hague, Madrid, Brussels, London, Dublin, and Stockholm.

¹⁸ IBD_2006_ano_026.

The advantage of having naturally produced texts is that the writers articulate themselves in their own words, that they manifest themselves on their own initiative and are by no means influenced by outer factors as in opinion polls. Thus, we have authentic verbal utterances.

As to the letters and e-mails, more than 65 percent of the writers could be identified as belonging to the middle of society; only 3 percent as belonging to the extreme Right and about 13 percent belonged to the Left. Most of the examples discussed here are taken from this corpus. They give access to the various forms and manifestations of contemporary anti-Semitism and they reveal constant, timeless patterns of Jew-hatred and their modern adaptations.

Judeophobic Stereotypes and their Verbal Manifestations in the Twenty-first Century

The Language of Extremist anti-Semites. In discourse of Right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis, Jews are explicitly being verbally attacked and devaluated as Jews. Typical of the views of the vulgar and aggressive speech acts is a racist ideology usually linked to a strong nationalism. This kind of anti-Semitism is strongly condemned by all political parties and all institutions in Germany. Still, it is worthwhile to have a look at some representative examples of utterances typical of extremists in order to show not only the difference but also the common denominator between the racist anti-Semitism and the hostility towards Jews by mainstream writers. Stereotyping and devaluating is one of the most significant characteristics:

‘Deicides, thieves, frauds, pack of Jews: ‘chosen people!’
 (“Christusmörder, Diebe, Betrüger, Judenpack: auserwähltes Volk!”)¹⁹

‘Simply an inferior race!!!!!!’
 (“einfach eine niedere Rasse!!!!!!!”)²⁰

As in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, German Jews are not accepted as German citizens embedded in everyday life but rather discriminated as strange and inferior people not belonging to the German society:

¹⁹ IBD_31.07.2006_Luh_001.

²⁰ IBD_25.10.2006_ano_001.

‘You are a guest in this country, so behave like one and stop your persistently impertinent agitation against the hosting people.’

(“Sie sind als gast in diesem land, also benehmen sie sich auch wie ein solcher und beenden sie ihre ständig wiederkehrende impertinente hetze gegenüber dem gastgebenden volk.”)²¹

Dominant among the traditional stereotypes in texts of extremists is the concept of ‘the eternal Jew’, which sticks to certain negative characteristics of all Jews.

‘That’s just the way Jews have been for more than 2 thousand years.’

(“Juden sind halt so seit über 2 Tausend Jahren.”)²²

Anti-Semitism is seen as legitimate, revealing the continuity of a very old discrimination pattern of Jew-hatred. Jews are defined not only partially but totally bad by nature, that is, their bad traits are incorrigible. Because of their bad nature Jews have to be considered not as individuals but as a collective menace.

‘YOU AREN’T HUMAN BEINGS...!’

(“IHR SEID KEINE MENSCHEN...!”)²³

Jews are seen as an unchanging evil in the world. Additional classical stereotypes frequently articulated, are Jews as ‘deicides,’ ‘murderers of little children,’ ‘blood libel users,’ ‘shylocks,’ ‘traitors,’ ‘liars,’ ‘disloyal parasites,’ ‘greedy profiteers,’ (*geldgierige Wucherer*), ‘sly conspirators’ (*hinterhältige Verschwörer*), ‘vengeful Holocaust exploiters’ (*rachsüchtige Nutznießer/Holocaustausbeuter*). Jews are dehumanized and referred to as ‘pigs, rats, microbes, plague, boils’ etc. They are demonized as ‘brutes’ (*Unmenschen*), ‘devils’ (*Teufel*), ‘fiends’ or ‘monsters’ (*Unholde*).²⁴

The articulation of such medieval stereotypes goes hand in hand with a specific pattern of argumentation that confirms the belief systems of anti-Semites: Jews are hated because of the way they are.²⁵

‘Why do you have to control the whole world with all might?’

(“Warum müsst ihr mit aller Macht die ganze Welt beherrschen?”)²⁶

Typical of texts of extremists are threatening speech utterances and ‘solutions’ that resemble the ‘Final Solution’ plan of the Nazis:

²¹ ZJD_22.03.2007_ano_001.

²² ZJD_12.03.2007_Kli_001.

²³ IBD_00.05.2010_ano_024.

²⁴ See Befu, *Demonizing the ‘Other’*, 1999

²⁵ See Wistrich (1991); Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 2001.

²⁶ ZJD_28.09.2007_Sch_001.

'Perish!!!!'
 ("Verreckt!!!!")²⁷

'Get out of Germany, get out of Gaza, get out of this world, get out of the universe!'
 ("Raus aus Deutschland, Raus aus Gaza, Raus aus dieser Welt, Raus aus dem Universum!")²⁸

'One day you will FINALLY be exterminated... The world prays for it.'
 ("Eines Tages seid ihr ENDLICH ausgerottet... Die Welt betet dafuer.")²⁹

'Solution plans' apply both to Jews and to the state of Israel. One of the markers of contemporary anti-Semitism is the shifting of old stereotypes to Israel, now in the role of the new collective Jew:

'The Israelis are the rats of the world and should all be poisoned with potassium cyanide because that is how you treat rats.'
 ("Die Israelis sind die Ratten der Welt und sollten allesamt mit Zyankali vergiftet werden, wie man das bei Ratten so macht.")³⁰

'Free the Middle East from the Jewish plague!'
 ("Befreit den nahen Osten von der jüdischen Pest!")³¹

'I wish the Iran would throw the bomb on Israel!'
 ("Möge der Iran endlich die Bombe auf Israel werfen!")³²

Accordingly, Israel and Israelis are described as 'creature of dung, creature of plague, creature of filth, plague ulcer, criminal vermin, international disease, subhuman rabble, rabble of parasites, rabble of monsters, cripple-state, subhuman state, super-rag-filth-people, cripple-people of members of the master race' (*Mistgeburt, Pestgeburt, Dreckgeburt, Pestgeschwür, Untermenschengesindel, Parasiten-Pack, Monsterpack, Krüppel-Staat, Untermenschenstaat, Superlumpen-dreckvolk, Herrenmenschen-Krüppel-Volk*), etc.

Holocaust denial that has been taken so many years to be one of the main distinguishing features of right-wing anti-Semitism no longer seems to be significant: Many right-wing extremists do not deny the Holocaust but rather regret that:

"Hitler could not fulfill his task to wipe out the Jewish devil from the earth."³³

27 ZJD_10.01.2009_Her_001.

28 ZJD_Gaza2009_102/816_ano_001.

29 ZJD_Gaza 2009_401/816_Jar_001.

30 IBD_11.04.2007_Dro_001.

31 IBD_12.07.2006_ano_003.

32 IBD_03.01.2012_Hil_003.

33 Postcard to the IBB, January 2013.

Remarkably, the texts of Left-wing extremists resemble those of Right-wing extremists in all aspects discussed. The only difference found is that writers from the Left deny being anti-Semitic or racist but transfer their hostility exclusively to Israel and Zionism. Thus, they do not use the word *Jew* in their hate speech but refer to “the Zionists” or the “Zionist oppressors.”

The extremist kind of verbal anti-Semitism shows four main characteristics.

First, the semantics of exclusion. Jews are singled out as people different from the group the writer belongs to:

‘Can’t Jews finally leave us Germans alone?’
 (“Können Juden Deutsche nicht endlich in Ruhe lassen?”)³⁴

Second, fixation by stereotypes. Herewith, all Jews are defined and described by specific characteristics.

‘For the last two thousand years, you have been robbing land and killing people!’
 (“Seit zwei Tausend Jahren betreiben Sie Landraub und Mord!”)³⁵

Third, devaluation. Hence, Jews are evaluated negatively as inferior to the group of the writer:

‘You are the most inferior thing God ever did to mankind.’
 (“Ihr seid doch das Unterste was Gott der Menschheit antun konnte.”)³⁶

Fourth, Jew-hatred is fiercely expressed as anti-Israelism. (‘cripple-state,’ ‘horror-state,’ ‘most evil state in the world’).

Summing up, Right- and Left-wing extremists tend to manifest their anti-Semitic belief systems as hatred toward Zionism and the State of Israel. This new face of anti-Semitism, however, relies on old stereotypes. The source of the hostility has not changed: At its core, anti-Semitism is still grounded on the mental figure of the ‘eternal Jew’ as the incarnation of cosmic evil.

However, an important question is whether there are indeed crucial differences between the fierce and radical anti-Semitism of extremists and the new forms of anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism commonly found in mainstream society.

³⁴ ZJD_29.07.2006_Bur_001.

³⁵ IBD_11.09.2007_Mar_001.

³⁶ IBD_22.07.2006_ano_007.

Educated Anti-Semitism: Stereotyping Coupled with Strategies of Denial and Legitimization

Many of the people writing to the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Israeli embassy belong to the middle of the German society. They are economically well-off, (often highly) educated, politically belonging to one of the mainstream parties. Hence, they are teachers, lawyers, priests, managers, physicians, bankers, students, editors, politicians, journalists and many academics from the university sector, with doctorates or professorships.

They do not articulate themselves through open hate speech or vulgar death threats. Their e-mails and letters very often are long and elaborated with a certain kind of seemingly sophisticated argumentation. Most frequently, educated writers claim to write moved by moral integrity and uprightness. Their speech acts are purporting to be ‘advice,’ ‘care,’ ‘written out of concern and anxiety,’ or on behalf of ethical reasons:

‘Please do not take my letter as an attack, but as an amicable piece of advice.’
 (“Betrachten Sie mein Schreiben bitte nicht als Angriff, sondern vielmehr als freundschaftlichen Rat.”)³⁷

Hence, they fiercely deny being prejudiced by nature and strongly negate any kind of racist or anti-Semitic attitude (“I am not an anti-Semite!” is one of the most frequent statements articulated in the corpus). They claim to write only due to the best of motives, out of worry or uneasiness, and call themselves ‘humanists’ (*Humanisten*).

Crucial in the argumentation of educated writers is always the strategy of legitimization: to justify their verbal anti-Semitism, they give themselves the image of being responsible, prejudice-free citizens (often explicitly referring to their high level of education as an expertise to criticize both the Central Council and the State of Israel). Another frequent strategy of legitimization is the reference to information from the mass media or from prominent figures in public life (preferably Jewish intellectuals who strongly criticize Israel³⁸):

‘Every day I have to read and hear about your disgusting, brutal and murderous actions in Israel.’
 (“Jeden Tag muss ich lesen und hören, was Sie an widerwärtigen, brutalen und mörderischen Taten in israel anrichten.”)³⁹

³⁷ ZJD_07.08.2006_Hön_001.

³⁸ On the issue of Jewish intellectuals active in anti-Israel campaigns, see Friesel, *On the Complexities of Modern Jewish Identity*, 2011.

³⁹ IBD_19.03.2009_See_001.

‘[Günther] Grass is right!’
 (“Grass hat Recht!”)⁴⁰

However, a close and critical look at their texts reveals an attitude towards Jews that in content is not very different than the fierce hostility of the extremists. The correspondents from the mainstream society evoke the same old stereotypes in their texts but they either do it in a less vulgar way or they do it implicitly, using indirect speech that convey the anti-Semitic content through implicatures:

‘Is it possible that the excessive violence in Israel, including the murder of innocent children, corresponds to the long tradition of your people?’
 (“Entspricht womöglich die exzessive Gewalt in Israel, die auch den Mord an Kindern einschließt, der langen Traditionslinie Ihres Volkes?”)⁴¹

‘Do you have human feelings at all?’
 (“Habt ihr überhaupt menschliche Gefühle?”)⁴²

Those speech acts often come as (rhetorical) questions and their semantics include allusions to traditional judeophobic stereotypes, formerly attributed to Jews (such as the incorrigibility of Jewish behavior, the tradition of being child murderers or the lack of human feelings).

Oftentimes, there is no differentiation made between the German Jews and the Israeli Jews. Accordingly, a frequent stereotype of educated writers is that Jews are disloyal citizens who do not really belong to Germany. It connects to the nineteenth century notions of the Jews as “non-Germans”. Now the concept is related to German Jews as Israelis. Often, no differentiation is drawn between Jews and Israelis, they are mentally equated, the lexemes *Jew* and *Israeli* used as synonyms:

‘You are the last of all people who have a right to give us advice! Attacks by Right-wing extremists in Germany are regrettable, but your country is the last of all countries which has the right to denounce other countries. For your country, that is ISRAEL, permanently commits state terrorism and doesn’t even know what human rights mean [...]’⁴³
 (“Betreff: Sie sind die absolut Letzten die ein Recht haben uns Ratschläge zu geben! So bedauerlich rechtsradikale Übergriffe in Deutschland auch sein mögen, Ihr Land ist das absolut Letzte das ein Recht hat andere Länder anzuprangern, weil Ihr Land, sprich ISRAEL permanent regelrecht Staatsterrorismus betreibt und sowas wie Menschenrechte nicht mal kennt [...]”)

⁴⁰ IBD_17.01.2012_Mar_001.

⁴¹ ZJD_06.09.2002_Sch_001.

⁴² ZJD_Gaza 2009_34/816_Zon_001.

⁴³ ZJD_25.10.2006_Sch_001.

Common stereotyping rests on the concept of Jews as arrogant and disloyal (to the country in which they live). See the following writing to the Central Council of the Jews in Germany:

'I am a social scientist and your comments increasingly cause negative emotions about your association. Keep in mind the consequences your know-it-all explanations will have in the long term!'

("Bei mir als Sozialwissenschaftler lösen Ihre Kommentare immer mehr negative Gefühle über Ihren Verein aus. Bedenken Sie, welche Folgen Ihre besserwisserischen Ausführungen auf Dauer erzeugen!")⁴⁴

Typical, too, is to blame the Jews for the existence of anti-Semitism:

'The Central Council of Jews should stop interfering because this kind of behavior creates anti-Semitism.'

("Der Zentralrat der Juden sollte zukünftig diese Einmischungen unterlassen, da er dadurch Antisemitismus erzeugt.")⁴⁵

Another allegation is that hatred against Jews is justified, and that Jews are collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel:

'And I get annoyed at myself for having always believed that the Jewish people were persecuted wrongfully.'

("Und ich ärgere mich, daß ich mein lebenslang glaubte, daß das jüdische Volk zu unrecht verfolgt wurde.")⁴⁶

'In the past I did not understand what caused anti-Semitism. But your teaching examples concerning murderers and war criminals do explain this insanity.'

("Ich verstand früher nicht wie es zum Antisemitismus kam, aber Eure Lehrbeispiele in Sachen Mörder und Kriegsverbrecher lassen diesen Wahnsinn ein Gesicht geben.")⁴⁷

The equation of Zionism with Nazism commonly occurs. The texts of educated writers contain many Nazi comparisons devaluating Israel, too such as *SS-Israel* and 'Your Nazi methods' (*Ihre Nazi-Methoden*). In addition, Jewish and Israeli citizens are painted with cliché-loaded brushes and negative stereotypes are expressed which rest on anti-Semitic attitudes of a time which was assumed to have been overcome. The following example is from a journalist and Left-wing politician from Munich:

44 ZJD_16.04.2007_Sch_004.

45 ZJD_07.05.2007_Zie_001.

46 ZJD_01.08.2006_Sch_003.

47 ZJD_01.08.2006_Sch_003.

'You learned well from Hitler and his Nazi regime.'
 ("Sie haben gut von Hitler und seinem NS-Regime gelernt.")⁴⁸

Analogies such as the following are often communicated: 'The Israeli military uses methods of the SS'; 'Gaza reminds me of Auschwitz.' Drastic vocabulary like 'villain state' (*Verbrecherstaat*), 'murderous regime' (*Mörderregime*), 'orgies of violence' (*Gewaltorgien*) is used. Many writers use hyperbolic terms such as 'the most barbaric, brutal and despicable deeds,' 'worst war criminals' (*schlimmste Kriegsverbrecher*), 'the most evil wrongs' (übelste Schandtaten). Frequently, Israel is depicted as 'the most eminent threat to world peace.' This de-realized way of looking at Israel is a mere continuation of the old stereotyping Jews as cosmic evil.

Medieval motifs show up when Israelis are described and demonized as 'brutes' (*Unmenschen*), 'devils' (*Teufel*), and 'fiends' or 'monsters' (*Unholde*). Quite frequently, Jews are described as Holocaust profiteers:

'The common abuse of the Holocaust for present purposes has a counterproductive effect on a normal coexistence of Jews and Gentiles.'
 ("Der häufige Missbrauch des Holocausts für gegenwärtige Zwecke ist kontraproduktiv für ein normales Zusammenleben zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden.")⁴⁹

This stereotype is often articulated in combination with the rebuke Jews would suppress any kind of free speech in Germany when it comes to Israel. Many argue that the new concept of anti-Semitism defines legitimate criticism of Israel too narrowly, and that the Jews exploit anti-Semitism in order to silence a critical debate.

'Who among us dares 'to think aloud' and to voice his personal opinion?'
 ("Wer wagt den bei uns, laut zu denken' und seine persönliche Meinung zu sagen?")⁵⁰

At the same time, the cliché that the press is absolutely controlled by Jews brought up in the nineteenth century by Marr and Treitschke, is very often articulated. Obviously, the writers do not notice that these two statements stand in contrast to each other. As our analysis shows, irrational contradictions are a central part of anti-Semitic argumentation along the ages.

The following e-mail sent by a law professor to the Central Council of Jews in Germany is typical of the argumentation of many educated writers (holding Jews

48 ZJD_09.03.2008_Str_a_001.

49 ZJD_11.03.2008_Zen_001.

50 IBB_10.04.2012_Per_001.

collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel, demonizing and de-evaluating Israel and evoking traditional anti-Judaic stereotypes):

‘Due to the fact that you have demonstrated your solidarity with Israel for the last few days without any criticism, you cannot expect anybody anymore to distinguish between the Central Council [of Jews] and Israel. ... all your crimes...The reason for this must be the Zionist idea to be the chosen people.’

(“Da Sie sich dieser Tage ohne jede Kritik auf die Seite Israels stellen, ist nun wenigstens die Forderung aus der Welt, man müsse zwischen dem Zentralrat und Israel differenzieren. ...alle Ihre Verbechen... Hintergrund ist wohl die zionistische Idee, ein auserwähltes Volk zu sein.”)⁵¹

Educated writers from the middle of society rely on the semantics of exclusion, fixation and devaluation just as extremists do. Further, the concept of the eternal Jew is evoked in many letters by alluding to the stereotype. Here is one from an academic with a Ph.D. in history:

‘The world is fed up with the State of Israel’s professional breeding of terrorists. [...] Why have the Jews been persecuted for centuries! This is a question you have to ask yourself. [...] Do not call me an anti-Semite because it would not be true.’

(“Die Welt hat langsam genug von der vom Staat Israel professionell betriebenen Terroristenzucht. [...] Warum werden die Juden seit Jahrhunderten immer wieder verfolgt! Das müssen sie sich schon selber fragen. [...] Nennt mich nicht einen Antisemiten, denn das trifft nicht zu.”)⁵²

Using the strategy of contrast, humanistic values are evoked, while the Jews are disqualified of their lack of it:

‘We Germans, we have learned from the past! We cling to humanistic values now and refuse any kind of racism. The Jews, however, obviously did not learn from the Holocaust. They are the most disgusting racists now and behave like Nazis.’⁵³

‘I can only hope for the Jews to come to their senses again as fast as possible and to start thinking and acting like human beings!’

(“Ich kann nur hoffen, das die Juden sich so schnell wie möglich besinnen und das Humanität in ihren Gedanken und Handeln wieder einzieht!”)⁵⁴

51 ZJD_27.07.2006_Rau_001.

52 IBD_04.07.2006_Str_001.

53 IBD_27.03.2011_Has_001.

54 ZJD_Gaza 2009_214/816_Sch_001.

In connection with this strategy, a very dominant form of anti-Semitism among educated people involves missionary activity directed at Jews. Accordingly, many writers are prone to patronizing moral advice:

“A friendly advice: We cling to moral values of the Western world, Christian values of love, respect, kindness. If you adept to our values, you would gradually stop being hated.”⁵⁵

“Circumcision... Get rid of this atavistic behavior. Reach the 21.century and drop this barbarian ritual of molesting little children. Then you will be accepted in our Western civilization.”⁵⁶

Denying Jews the right to self-determination (e.g. by claiming that the existence of a Jewish state of Israel is a racist crime and circumcision is a barbaric uncivilized act to be prohibited), is a modern repetition and adaptation of the old urge in Western thought to erase genuine Jewishness.

There is a strong emotional dimension in educated anti-Semitism, reflected in utterances with intensive affective vocabulary: the writers ‘feel so much empathy with the victims of the brutal Israeli violence,’ they are ‘utterly shocked and disgusted,’ ‘without words,’ ‘speechless due to disgust, repulsion and anger,’ ‘deeply moved,’ ‘shocked, concerned,’ ‘deeply felt empathy and sorrow for the suffering of the poor, mistreated Palestinians,’ they express ‘pity, sickening, nauseating, compassion, sincere concern,’ ‘burden on their conscience,’ as ‘humanists they sincerely suffer, are depressed, they simply felt the strong urge to write about this,’ etc.

At the same time, they are ‘not concerned with the contemporary anti-Semitism of only a few right-wing extremists,’ they are ‘fed up being constantly reminded of the Holocaust’ and they call ‘for an end of the excessive and unnecessary culture of remembrance in Germany.’ The ‘deeply moved’ writers almost never express feelings of empathy when they write about the victims of the Holocaust or Israelis as targets of terror attacks.

“Enough! There must be a stop to this excessive Holocaust remembrance!”⁵⁷

This total lack of empathy is reflected also widely on the internet, especially in commentary sections of online press. In 2011, three little Israeli children were brutally murdered in their sleep in a settlement. A comment as the following was articulated not randomly, then:

55 IBD_24.07.2012_Kar_001.

56 IBD_03.11.2012_Bir_001.

57 E-mail to the IBB, January 2013.

‘Who sows violence reaps violence. This should be known to the Jews who are well versed in the Bible.’

(“Wer Gewalt sät, erntet Gewalt. Das müßte den bibelfesten Juden doch wohl bekannt sein.”)⁵⁸

Anti-Semitic texts of mainstream educated writers are not as vulgarly formulated as extremists’ writings. They avoid death threats, but instead propose indirect genocidal solutions in the name of “humanity” as in the following e-mail of a professor from humanities:

“The state of Israel is an anomaly. It has to be dissolved in a peaceful way. Please do accept this for the sake of us all!”⁵⁹

In the end, the “solution for the Jewish problem,” no matter whether expressed as vulgar death threat, moral advice or the call for dissolving the Jewish state Israel, always means one thing: the extinction of Jewish existence.

Surprisingly, the old and by now well-known anti-Semitic stereotypes are recycled in a pattern of repetitiveness and obsession by educated writers, as well. Their knowledge of the Holocaust and of the dangers of prejudicial world views does not prevent them from articulating verbal anti-Semitism. The awareness of the Holocaust, however, drives modern educated anti-Semites to use communicative strategies of denial and legitimization in order to keep up the image of noble, upright citizens.

Of course, there is a difference between the radical and vulgar hate speech of extremist and educated people from the middle of society, but this difference lies only in the form not in the content. The semantics of anti-Jewish devaluation is the same. The common conceptual ground to be found between the Jew-hatred of extremists and the anti-Semitism (albeit denied by its communicators) of the educated Bourgeois from the middle of society is that Jews are perceived as ‘the other’ connected to a deep emotional mistrust and feeling of aversion.

The educated type of anti-Semitism still rests on old judeophobic concepts, but is contextually shaped by actual events (e.g., the Middle East conflict, the debate on circumcision, the coping with the German past). Those events are nothing but a trigger for the old European fantasies on Jews. Unchanged by time or experience, education and knowledge, is the semantics of devaluation and discrimination that is deeply rooted in the ideology of ‘the Jew,’ engraved in Western thought and emotion and preserved in collective memory. There are continuities

58 12.03.2011_17:23_Raimon.

59 ZJD_21.07.2009_Has_001.

on the level of the stereotypization of Jews and of Israelis as collective Jews at all political and ideological levels of society.

Reactions to Anti-Semitism on the Internet and in Public Discourse: Denying and Marginalizing the Obvious

However, there is a strong tendency to deny the very existence of contemporary hostility against Jews in the German society. The concept of anti-Semitism in public opinion still rests on the historical phenomenon of racism. Thus, 'true anti-Semitism' is seen and recognized only at the outer edges of society. It is widely ignored or vehemently marginalized that today's judeophobia has developed into new manifestations.

In Germany, this became quite evident in a public debate in April 2012, on a poem of the German Nobel laureate Günter Grass in which he attacked and bashed Israel (and not the Iran) for being a 'threat to world peace' because of its nuclear program. Although the poem borrowed judeophobic clichés and projected them on Israel, many people commenting on it were not able or willing to recognize anything anti-Semitic in the text. Since the text focused on the nuclear power of Israel and the word *Jew* did not occur once, many defended it as 'simply critical,' 'giving just facts,' or a 'manifestation of free speech.' The text showed main characteristics of modern verbal anti-Semitism in the disguise of critique of Israel. Claiming to just criticize Israeli politics, but using at the same time judeophobic stereotypes and argumentation patterns, is by now one of the most prominent and most common manifestations of contemporary Jew-hatred. The debate flamed up anew in January 2013, when Jakob Augstein, a Leftish journalist and columnist for Spiegel Online, appeared on the Wiesenthal list for "2012 Top Ten Anti-Semitic/Anti-Israel Slurs" ranking him ninth for his public attacks on the State of Israel. Instantly, many in German mainstream media rushed to defend Augstein without even having read his columns.

However, the texts of Augstein, that frequently employ a rhetoric found in the writings of classical anti-Semites, do not simply fall under the category of critical journalism, since they implicitly invoke stereotypes of classical Jew-hatred. Although Augstein admitted never having been to Israel, he frequently condemns and demonizes the country. Having no personal experience whatsoever in the conflict, he nevertheless feels competent enough to vehemently bash Israel. He stated, for instance, that orthodox Jews follow 'the law of revenge' (thus repeat-

ing a very old anti-Jewish stereotype) and implied that some ominous Jewish force determines political decisions through ‘lobby groups’ (hence, leaning on conspiracy theories). Further, he communicated conceptualizations and images associated with classic anti-Semitism to characterize Israel and Israelis. He called Gaza a ‘camp’ and abused Israel of ‘breeding terrorists.’ This kind of language use in the middle of society, articulated in mainstream press can trigger and re-enforce prejudice and evoke sentiments against Jews even if those processes are not intended. Since language in mass media has a mental power of its own and is capable to subconsciously influence the collective mind to a large degree, it is not a matter of the intention that lies behind a text but above all the text and its content itself, its cognitive implicatures and associations that make it verbal anti-Semitism or not.

There is a sharp distinction to be made between honest and legitimate political criticism based on knowledge of facts, without using stereotypes and verbal anti-Semitism under the guise of critique of Israel that uses argumentation patterns typical of classical anti-Semitic discourse and that applies generalizations that are hostile to Jews, and evoke old judeophobic sentiments. Nevertheless, public opinion tends to ignore or marginalize this dimension of persuasive rhetoric.

It is instructive to observe the reactions of people in Germany, as expressed on the internet both to public debates on anti-Semitism and to reports from current research on anti-Semitism.

In January 2012, an expert’s report of the German parliament (*Bundestagsbericht der Expertenkommission*)⁶⁰ was published stating that approximately 20 percent of all Germans are explicitly or implicitly prejudicial against Jews. In summer 2012, the political TV series *Fact* reported on every day’s anti-Semitism in Germany presenting empirical facts on the topic.

It turns out that we find the same strategies of denial and downplay in public discourse and on the internet that we noticed in our e-mail corpus. One typical reaction is denial:

‘What a load of garbage! I have never heard anything against Jews in my life. Hatred towards foreigners and Germans is certainly more common. The persecution of the Jews is history, enough with invoking evil spirits... Reality is definitely different.’

(“So ein Schwachsinn! Hab in meinem ganzen Leben noch nichts gegen Juden gehört. Ausländerhass oder Deutschhass ist wohl eher verbreitet. Die Judenverfolgung ist Geschichte, es reicht böse Geister zu beschwören... Die Realität sieht definitiv anders aus.”)⁶¹

⁶⁰ Bundesministerium des Innern (ed.), 2011.

⁶¹ www.focus.de, Peter, January 23, 2012.

Another reaction is relativization and trivialization:

‘Again, they pull some experts out of the hat and make very unspecific accusations against the German population.’

“(Da werden wieder irgendwelche Experten aus der Schublade gezogen und sehr allgemein gehaltene Vorwürfe gegen die deutsche Bevölkerung erhoben.)”⁶²

Some writers reframe the issue and communicate de-realizing re-interpretations:

‘Whoever is brave enough to tell the truth about Israel just isn’t a friend of Jews anymore.’

“(Wer es wagt die Wahrheit über Israel zu sagen ist eben kein Judenfreund mehr.)”⁶³

‘Every criticism of Israel is very easily being put on one level with anti-Semitism.’

“(Jede Kritik an Israel wird doch sehr schnell mit Antisemitismus gleichgesetzt.)”⁶⁴

Many express aversion and weariness:

‘I know many people who do not want to talk about the spectrum Judaism anymore.’

“(Ich kenne viele Menschen die sich über das Spektrum Judentum nicht mehr unterhalten wollen.)”⁶⁵

In many comments that deny the very existence of contemporary anti-Semitism, anti-Semitic stereotypes simultaneously are confirmed and validated:

‘Examine ‘The Israel Lobby’, you should never underestimate [...] the power of the Jews’

“(Untersuche die ‘Israel-Lobby’, die Macht der Juden [...] soll man nicht unterschätzen)”⁶⁶

‘If, as mentioned in the article, the Jews are persecuted already for more than 2000 years, the question should be put if they have not contributed something to the aversion against them.’

“(Wenn, wie im Beitrag erwähnt, die Juden schon über 2000 Jahre verfolgt werden, muss man sich schon mal die Frage stellen, ob die nicht auch was zu der Abneigung gegen sie beigetragen haben.)”⁶⁷

A recent strategy to downplay contemporary anti-Semitism is to make fun of it. Accompanying the debate on Augstein, in the media one can see or hear commentators who tell the audience that anti-Semitism in Germany is harmless and

62 www.focus.de, Kritiker, January 23, 2012.

63 www.focus.de, Surfer2007, Januar 23, 2012.

64 www.focus.de, emeinung, January 23, 2012.

65 www.focus.de, Ursachenforschung, January 23, 2012.

66 www.youtube.com, lieblich85, October, 2012.

67 www.mdr.de, Kommentar von hillus zur Sendung Fakt, September 18, 2012.

is not to be considered a real problem for society. Some comments even handled the whole phenomenon as a joke:

“This can only be regarded as a joke.”⁶⁸

“I want to get on that list, too!”⁶⁹

Summary

Stereotypes and feelings of hatred against Jews still exist and are verbalized, this in spite of all the efforts to eliminate anti-Semitism and to erase the distorted and false picture of Jews and Judaism in years after the end of the Second World War. Worse, stereotypes already used in the Middle Ages to abuse Jews are to be found also in modern discourse not merely articulated by right-wing extremists but communicated at all levels of society. Verbal constructs of classical Judeophobia prove to be enduring and persistent. In contemporary discourse, one finds many words and phrases in speech act hostile to Jews that were elaborated centuries ago and passed from generation to generation.

Our corpus study shows that regarding to verbal anti-Semitism no real change has occurred regarding the semantics of exclusion, fixation and devaluation. Jews are still conceptualized by anti-Semites as ‘the others,’ as ‘the most vile and mean creatures on earth,’ and are perceived as a threat to mankind. A modern version of this conceptualization concerns the state of Israel, the most vital symbol of present-day Jewish existence and survival: the negative picture of the eternal Jew is being projected on the Jewish state. Much of what purports to be criticism of Israel in fact turns out to be the old anti-Jewish sentiments. Claiming to just criticize Israeli politics, but using at the same time judeophobic stereotypes, is by now one of the most common manifestations of contemporary Jew-hatred. In spite of the knowledge as to what consequences a rhetoric of hate and hostility may cause, it happens that Jews (and in reference shifting speech acts, Israelis) are verbally discriminated and devaluated in contemporary discourse. Verbal abuse and discrimination of Jews does not only show up within texts of extremists, but also in the middle of society. One may find verbal anti-Semitism articulated by people with high education, too. The difference between radical extremists and educated anti-Semites lies in the style, the less radical language use, but the semantics of

⁶⁸ Tina Mendelssohn commenting the listing of Augstein by the Wiesenthal Center, KulturZeit, 2013.

⁶⁹ Harald Martenstein, in: Tageszeitung, January 2013.

devaluation is the same. Anti-Semitic texts of mainstream educated writers are not as vulgarly formulated as extremists' writings. Due to political correctness and the bashing of openly articulated anti-Semitism in Western societies, implicit forms of it are preferred in public discourse. Thus, the word 'Jew' often may not even occur in verbal utterances conveying content hostile toward Jews. Anti-Semites from mainstream society prefer to use indirect speech (rhetorical questions, allusions of specific kinds and reference shifting) to express their hostility towards Jews and/or Israel. They avoid death threats, but instead propose indirect genocidal solutions in the name of "humanity." This implicit verbal anti-Semitism, however, evokes the same traditional stereotypes as in the texts from extremists. Hence, those indirect forms are as dangerous as direct, manifest forms of Jew-hatred to the collective mind of a society. Even more so, since many people are not able or willing to recognize the more subtle forms as verbal anti-Semitism, their manipulative and persuasive power might be even greater.

In the twenty-first century, anti-Judaism with both its classical patterns of conceptual stereotyping hostility and its modern adaptations, is alive and influential in the midst of the German society. Our empirical findings clearly show, that in spite of the collective awareness of the catastrophe in the Holocaust, the lethal semantics of anti-Semitism is still found in modern discourse and it is spread in the public and on the internet without meeting any vehement opposition. At the same time, today's anti-Semitism manifested as anti-Israelism is vehemently denied or marginalized.

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