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The Study of Antisemitism in the Modern Jewish and Judaic Studies Context

Contrary to my usual practice of honing in on a particularly illustrative close reading of relevant material, this chapter will consist of seventeen fairly apodictic bullet points of varying length, which take a programmatic rather than descriptive approach to the topic in question. That said, the explicit and implicit criticisms I make are obviously predicated on an analysis of the erroneous ways in which antisemitism is all too often treated. My arguments draw on and utilize the approach to antisemitism developed by and in the tradition of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.¹

(1) Antisemitism is a product of, not a fundamental aberration from, the values prevalent in Western and Muslim societies. Both Western culture, whether in its pagan or Christian inspiration, and Muslim culture have developed their self-understanding in no small measure by contrasting themselves to what they conceived of (or rather: constructed in their imagination) as being negative Jewish traits.² In the West, both the Enlightenment's proponents and its opponents have contributed to the perpetuation of this tradition. In both cultures, the transformations required to put an end to antisemitism are so fundamental that they far outstrip what any of us could possibly imagine. If, hypothetically speaking, it were possible to erase all the products of Western and Muslim culture tainted by antisemitism at one stroke, both cultures would effectively have to start from scratch. I am skeptical, then, as far as the goal of putting an end to antisemitism any time soon is concerned. This does not, however, change the fact that it needs

1 For a basic introduction to the Frankfurt School's grappling with antisemitism, see L. Fischer, "Antisemitism and the Critique of Capitalism," in *SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, ed. B. Best, W. Bonefeld, and C. O'Kane (London: Sage, 2018), 2:916–31. For further reading, see E.-M. Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie: Die Frankfurter Schule im amerikanischen Exil* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009); J. Jacobs, *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); R. Fine and P. Spencer, *Antisemitism and the Left: On the Return of the Jewish Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 44–71; M. Jay, "The Jews and the Frankfurt School: Critical Theory's Analysis of Anti-Semitism," *New German Critique* 19 (1980): 137–49; A. Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 166–98.

2 For an overview, see, for example, D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The History of a Way of Thinking* (London: Head of Zeus, 2013).

to be combatted and contained wherever it rears its head. Moreover, it would certainly help if we all at least stopped promoting it, however inadvertently or unintentionally. To this end, I have formulated (as requested in the initial invitation to speak at the conference in Vienna) a set of specific recommendations, which is based directly on my discussion.

(2) There is a reason why some of us dedicate our entire working lives, or at least a sizeable proportion of them, to the study of antisemitism—and I can assure you, it is not because the study of antisemitism lightens the mood. Antisemitism is a serious issue; it is a strong, complex, and resilient force whose causes and momentum are deeply rooted in Western and Muslim culture and the functioning both of modern society and of those social, political and/or religious projects, which programmatically reject modernity but, in fact, of course remain part of it. It is, in short, a highly complex issue that requires careful and sustained study or, to put it differently: the academic study of antisemitism is a discipline in its own right, and its practitioners are scholars with a specialization that requires a fairly high measure of intellectual sophistication and is not easily emulated in passing.

(3) The fact that you are a Jewish or Judaic Studies scholar, in and of itself, makes you no more qualified to speak in academic (as opposed to political or moral) terms about antisemitism than any of your colleagues, say, from the Physics or the Music department. To be sure, antisemitism has repeatedly affected Jews, in some cases in a dramatic fashion, and you should probably be in a position to offer an accurate account of that impact. Depending on your area of specialization, you may also need to be able to say something meaningful about the ways in which Jews have responded to antisemitism. There is, however, no reason why you should need to be a scholar of antisemitism in order to be a consummate Jewish or Judaic Studies scholar.

By way of an analogy: you do not need to be an engineer or a geologist to offer a sound account of the impact of an earthquake on the residents of a particular area struck by an earthquake and/or of the subsequent relief efforts. You do, however, need to be a geologist to offer a sound account of why earthquakes occur and how they might be more accurately anticipated—and an engineer to figure out how buildings might be rendered more secure and resilient in case an earthquake strikes.

There are only so many specializations any one scholar can acquire, and there is absolutely no shame in being a Jewish or Judaic Studies scholar who does not count the study of antisemitism among his or her specializations. Let us not forget that antisemitism is above all else a non-Jewish problem, even though non-Jews frequently succeed in turning it into a problem for Jews as well. However, if you are a Jewish or Judaic Studies scholar (or, of course, a

scholar from any other discipline) who, for whatever reason, cannot claim a specialization in the study of antisemitism, then have the courage to say so—and own it.

It is one of our biggest problems that everybody thinks they ought to have something to say about antisemitism. That may be right in political and moral terms. In terms of the actual scholarly treatment of antisemitism *and* its productive application to the non-academic world, however, it is a disaster. To share a personal experience: I have attended a fair number of job interviews in the last two decades and most of them were effectively over before they had begun because every single person on the interview panel felt the need to inform me of their own profound take on antisemitism at the outset, thus rendering further serious scholarly discussion virtually impossible before I had even been asked a single meaningful question. I very much doubt that historians of the medieval book or early modern liturgy face similar problems.

Everyone may be entitled to their opinion, as the saying goes. But unless you are equally convinced that your own specialization renders your findings no more meaningful or insightful than those of any lay person interested in your topic, please pay the same respect to scholars of antisemitism as you would expect for your own specialization. By presenting yourself as a scholar of antisemitism when in fact you are not one, you will invariably cause more confusion and do more harm than you possibly could by recusing yourself.

Just to clarify: I am by no means trying to argue the case here for some haughty form of academic gatekeeping. In fact, some of the most important scholars currently engaged in the serious critical study of antisemitism have had a hell of a time finding or keeping academic positions and some of them have been unable to secure or maintain a foothold in academia altogether. What I *am* saying is that antisemitism is far too serious an issue for it not to be taken seriously as one that requires specialized in-depth study.

(4) It should be clear from my initial remarks that antisemitism is not a whimsical orientation that can be switched on or off as ever one fancies. It fulfills, both for individuals and for social groups, important functions that help them make sense of the world and their position within it. For some, to quote Adorno, “charging the Jews with all existing evils seems to penetrate the darkness of reality like a searchlight and to allow for quick and all-comprising orientation.”³ We therefore need to address the question Adorno formulated as fol-

3 Th. W. Adorno, “Prejudice in the Interview Material,” in *The Authoritarian Personality*, ed. Th. W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswik, D. J. Levinson, and R. N. Sanford (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 619.

lows: “What good [...] accrue[s] to the actual adjustment of otherwise ‘sensible’ persons when they subscribe to ideas which have no basis in reality and which we ordinarily associate with maladjustment?”⁴

(5) Just as there will always be people who still think Father Christmas exists or who do not yet know how babies are made, there will always be people who do not yet know what the problem with antisemitism is. Where this is genuinely the case, conventional educational work may be effective. This is, however, the exception. Studied or feigned ignorance has long been one of the most popular devices deployed by antisemites who, for whatever reason, shy away from professing their antisemitism, at least for the time being. By taking that studied or feigned ignorance seriously and responding to it in a reasonable or didactical manner we already concede ground to the antisemites and veer into the territory of apologetics. It is true that historically Jews too accepted the notion that there was such a thing as a “Jewish Question.” This does not, however, make it a valid concept. Any approach that incorporates the concept of a “Jewish Question” or “Jewish Problem” other than in order to critique it, regardless of its proponents’ intentions, is highly likely to facilitate continued antisemitic stereotyping. Let me quote Adorno again:

The term “problem” is taken over from the sphere of science and is used to give the impression of searching, responsible deliberation. By referring to a problem, one implicitly claims personal aloofness from the matter in question—a kind of detachment and higher objectivity. [...] As soon as the existence of a “Jewish problem” is admitted, anti-Semitism has won its first surreptitious victory. [...] While the veneer of objectivity is maintained, the implication is that the Jews are the problem [...] It is but one step from this position to the implicit notion that this problem has to be dealt with according to its own special requirements, i.e., the problematic nature of the Jews, and that this will naturally lead outside the bounds of democratic procedure. Moreover, the “problem” calls for a *solution*. As soon as the Jews themselves are stamped as this problem, they are transformed into objects [...] To call for a “solution of the Jewish problem” results in their being reduced to “material” for manipulation.⁵

Unprejudiced subjects try to restore the objective, “sociological” meaning of the term, generally insisting on the fact that the so-called “Jewish problem” is actually the problem of the non-Jews. However, the very use of the term may be partially indicative, even with unprejudiced persons, of a certain ambivalence or at least indifference.⁶

4 Ibid., 618.

5 Ibid., 620.

6 Ibid.

The man who speaks about the “problem” is easily tempted to say that there are two sides to every problem, with the comfortable consequence that the Jews must have done something wrong, if they were exterminated.⁷

(6) Antisemitism is not primarily a matter of personal attitudes towards Jews but fundamentally a social (and socially mediated) phenomenon. Hence, it is rarely adopted and assimilated individually, nor is it merely or even principally a question of the subjective intentions of those who articulate or propagate it. To varying degrees, depending on one’s political, social and cultural immediate, mediate and global background, context and orientation, it is likely to have become part and parcel of the package of basic assumptions about the world, which we generally tend to take for granted without actively reflecting upon them and often without even being aware of them. (Nobody would have to think twice about this if my topic were racism rather than antisemitism.)

This also means that Jews are perfectly capable of being antisemites, and we need to stop pussyfooting around this fact and trying to make excuses for Jews who subscribe to antisemitic positions and engage in antisemitic activism. Nor do we need to resort to some fanciful construction of Jewish self-hatred to explain this. Identification with the oppressor is a common phenomenon prevalent in all walks of life. In fact, it is arguably the single most important cohesive force that ultimately holds our societies together. Jews’ Jewishness is a hindrance to engaging in antisemitic activities only insofar as the non-Jews may not like it and intervene to stop them. Other than that, there is no reason why Jews should not be able to subscribe to, propagate, and engage in antisemitism just like non-Jews.

(7) Where the mechanisms that generate antisemitism have become entrenched, neither educational or didactical approaches nor intergroup contact can effect change. Again I quote Adorno:

It is often advocated as the best means of improving intercultural relations that as many personal contacts as possible be established between the different groups. While the

⁷ Ibid., 621. As Holly Case points out in the preface to her recent book on *The Age of Questions*, the “drive to settle or solve questions reveals something essential about them: they were construed as problems. The ‘question’ had become an instrument of thought with special potency, structuring ideas about society, politics, and states, and influencing the range of actions considered possible and desirable. This potency is evident in another familiar formulation, one which nineteenth-century commentators arrived at quite early: the ‘definitive’ or ‘final solution.’” H. Case, *The Age of Questions: Or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), xiv–v.

value of such contacts in some cases of anti-Semitism is to be acknowledged, the material presented in this section argues for certain qualifications [...] There is no simple gap between experience and stereotypy. Stereotypy is a device for looking at things comfortably; since, however, it feeds on deep-lying unconscious sources, the distortions which occur are not to be corrected merely by taking a *real* look. Rather, experience itself is predetermined by stereotypy. The persons whose interviews on minority issues have just been discussed share one decisive trait. Even if brought together with minority group members as different from the stereotype as possible, they will perceive them through the glasses of stereotypy, and will hold against them whatever they are and do. Since this tendency is by no means confined to people who are actually “cranky” (rather, the whole complex of the Jew is a kind of recognized red-light district of legitimized psychotic distortions), this inaccessibility to experience may not be limited to people of the kind discussed here, but may well operate in much milder cases. [...] Optimism with regard to the hygienic effects of personal contacts should be discarded. One cannot “correct” stereotypy by experience; he has to reconstitute the capacity for having experiences in order to prevent the growth of ideas which are malignant in the most literal, clinical sense.⁸

And yet, to this day, virtually all publicly sponsored practical initiatives to counter antisemitism hinge on the assumption that personal familiarity and intergroup contact can achieve precisely what Adorno deemed impossible and, leaving Adorno to one side for a moment, also cannot be explained logically: what might actually get people to perceive of something that contradicts their worldview not as the exception that confirms the rule but as a reason to draw not the experience but that worldview into question? To be sure, individuals may subjectively experience a change of heart as though it had been precipitated directly by a new and unexpected experience but unless they already went into that experience with a willingness (potentially) to change their mind, the experience simply cannot have that effect on them. The unexpected experience, then, may be the point at which individuals first become aware of their change of heart or the point at which it first shows an effect, but it certainly cannot cause it. As yet, we have no developed concepts as to how this insight might be used to develop practical initiatives suited to counter antisemitism; this results from the fact that the sort of concerted effort and thorough research and reflection required to develop such concepts does not readily attract funding, given the preoccupation of potential funders with easy answers and instant demonstrable impact.

(8) What inferences one can reasonably draw from so-called “philosemitism” is a closely related issue. I think it is fair to say that virtually all scholars in the field would now agree that non-Jews have frequently been conflicted, to varying degrees, and rarely entirely negative in their attitudes towards Jews.

⁸ Adorno, “Prejudice in the Interview Material,” 617.

Nor can there be any doubt that the negative attitudes have generally received rather more attention than their positive competitors. A number of scholars have proceeded in recent years to round off the bigger picture by giving these positive sentiments their due.⁹ Studies in this vein undoubtedly contribute to a fuller and richer account of Jewish/non-Jewish relations.¹⁰ There is, however, a tendency to play these positive attitudes off against the negative ones, implying that the former invariably blossomed to eradicate the latter. Yet positive encounters with Jews (real or imagined) have had (and in some cases still have) an enormous potential to generate subsequent regret, embarrassment, feelings of guilt and the desire to compensate for one's temporary lapse in judgement, sometimes more or less instantly, in other cases over time. What the study of "philosemitism" illustrates above all is how little even quite significant positive attitudes and encounters were ultimately able to achieve against their negative counterparts and the deeply rooted social and cultural predisposition towards antisemitism.

(9) As difficult as this may be for scholars and dedicated university teachers to stomach, where the aforementioned "reconstitution of the capacity to have experiences" (Adorno) cannot be achieved, outright repression can become the only possible alternative. For rather obvious reasons, continental Europeans tend to have a fairly hard time comprehending the radical Anglophone approach to freedom of speech on this score. From the German or Austrian perspective, it is rather difficult to be as confident as one can perhaps be from the perspective of the US or the UK that giving antisemites a free rein will not endanger the stability of the democratic order and Jewish life in the diaspora. Would we much rather live in a society in which antisemitic ideas and activities genuinely no longer attract support? Absolutely. Barring that, it is, alas, still better to live in a society in which the existing antisemitism is, if need be, curtailed by means of repression than in a society in which it is allowed to go on the rampage unchecked. As Samuel Salzborn has noted, to the extent that antisemites actually do display authoritarian character structures, repression is in any case their preferred language and may arguably act not only as a deterrent but even effect a change in attitudes.¹¹

9 The obvious first port of call for those interested in redressing this balance is J. Karp and A. Sutcliffe, eds., *Philosemitism in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011).

10 See, for example, the late Jonathan Hess's outstanding study, *Deborah and Her Sisters: How One Nineteenth-Century Melodrama and a Host of Celebrated Actresses Put Judaism on the World Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

11 S. Salzborn, "Repression oder Bildung? Zu den strukturellen Kontextbedingungen der Entstehung und Bekämpfung von Antisemitismus," in *Gebildeter Antisemitismus: Eine Herausfor-*

(10) Our discussions in university classrooms are never primarily about *what* we think but above all about *how* we think, that is, how we arrive at particular inferences and conclusions. Unless his or her utterances give rise to serious concerns regarding the security of his or her peers or society at large, no student should feel that what he or she says in the context of a university course will have disciplinary or legal consequences for him or her. This does not mean, however, that we should not alert students, where applicable, to the fact that outside of university classrooms their views might well become subject to repression—and explain why this repression, though far from creating an ideal state of affairs, is, for pragmatic reasons, legitimate and necessary.

(11) Antisemitism is not, as the poststructuralists and postmodernists would have us believe, one of many expressions of a universal and arbitrary desire to engage in the othering of difference per se, regardless of specific individualization processes.¹² Nor, for all that they share certain generic features, is antisemitism a form of racism. In their study on antisemitism among American workers, the Frankfurt School identified “a difference in the texture of prejudice” setting antisemitism and racism apart.¹³ All other things being even, this needs to be stressed because the claim that antisemitism is a form of racism all too often serves simply as an excuse not to deal seriously with antisemitism in its own right and to grant oneself a clean bill of health on the grounds that, as an upright anti-racist, one could not possibly be susceptible to antisemitic ideas.

(12) As the earlier remarks on stereotypy indicate, antisemitism does not reflect actual Jewish/non-Jewish interaction nor does it even require the presence of actual Jews. The critical analysis of antisemitism therefore depends fundamentally on the ability to distinguish reflective from pathic projection.¹⁴

derung für Politik und Zivilgesellschaft, ed. M. Schwarz-Friesel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015), 288. As Jan Weyand has pointed out, the role antisemitism comes to play in the attempts of modern society to grapple with its own contradictions depends “not on truth but on power”: “The best one can do is to delegitimize it [antisemitism], i.e., ostracize it socially and criminalize it.” J. Weyand, *Historische Wissenssoziologie des modernen Antisemitismus: Genese und Typologie einer Wissensformation am Beispiel des deutschsprachigen Diskurses* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), 338–39.

¹² G. Scheit, *Quälbarer Leib: Kritik der Gesellschaft nach Adorno* (Freiburg: Ça Ira, 2011), 28.

¹³ See L. Fischer, “A Difference in the Texture of Prejudice”: *Historisch-konzeptionelle Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Antisemitismus, Rassismus und Gemeinschaft* (Graz: Leykam, 2016).

¹⁴ See M. Horkheimer and Th. W. Adorno, “Elemente des Antisemitismus,” in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, ed. M. Horkheimer and Th. W. Adorno (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947); M. Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. A. Schmidt and G. Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1987), 5:217–30; “Elements of Antisemitism,” in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, trans. E. Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 154–65.

There has also existed, and continues to exist, an alternative school of thought. Its proponents contend that antisemitism results not from what Horkheimer and Adorno termed pathic projection but that a kernel of truth inheres in the antisemites' perceptions of the Jews. To be sure, the antisemites blow things out of proportion, and they are prone to exaggerated and distorting generalizations, but their negative attitudes towards Jews are ultimately based on genuine Jewish characteristics and behaviour observed by the antisemites and/or genuine conflicts of interest between Jews and non-Jews. This approach is also known as the correspondence (or "realist") theory of antisemitism, that is, it assumes a genuine *causal* correspondence between the antisemitic image of the Jew and actual Jews. Not least, this results from an inability or unwillingness to distinguish between the historical reasons that help explain why Jews seemed suited to serve as a foil for antisemitic projections in the first place, on the one hand, and the antisemitic notions subsequently projected onto that foil, on the other.

On a more fundamental level, however, the notion of a direct reflection of reality in human perception is in any case nonsensical, not only when it comes to antisemitism. I take it for granted that we always need to apply conceptual skills to make sense of what lies before us but that these conceptual skills cannot simply be derived from what lies before us. Otherwise we would have to assume that someone who meets only unpleasant Jews would be entirely justified in becoming an antisemite. Moreover, anyone who meets both pleasant and unpleasant Jews would have to develop multiple personality disorder, and people who never meet a Jew would be incapable of subscribing to antisemitic ideas—which is patently untrue.

As Shulamit Volkov noted in her discipline-shaping article on antisemitism as a cultural code, published in 1978, what I call the kernel-of-truth approach to antisemitism is incapable of explaining how the qualitative leap from partial realistic observation to patently untrue generalization supposedly transpires. "Only if one assumes that the antisemites' claims were truthful [...] only then is one exempt from the effort to show how men, who were perhaps not sufficiently alert to the dangers of indoctrination but who were not necessarily psychopaths or morally inept, succumbed to the patently false world-view of antisemitism. Even the assertion of the partial accuracy of this view, questionable and unproven, does not provide a sufficient explanation." Volkov then added: "No serious historian of antisemitism has argued in this vein."¹⁵ In this assessment, Volkov was clearly rather too optimistic.

15 S. Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23 (1978): 36.

At a time when the primacy of Jewish agency in the writing of Jewish history still seemed contested and many scholars of Jewish history were firmly committed to asserting this primacy, the kernel-of-truth approach seemed, to some, to offer a way out of the dispiriting impasse created by the fact that antisemitism in general, and the Shoah in particular, had massively impacted the Jews *regardless* of what Jews had actually done or not done. For some scholars, then, acceptance of the kernel-of-truth approach was born of the understandable but misguided desire to assert Jewish agency even where for all intents and purposes there had been none. For some, this approach doubtless also resonated with the notion that European Jews who had failed to heed the call of Zionism ultimately had only themselves to blame for their fate at the hands of the Nazis.

This is all the more ironic, given that today the kernel-of-truth approach is particularly popular with *anti-Zionist* scholars. Steven Beller's *Very Short Introduction to Antisemitism*, published by Oxford University Press, stands paradigmatically for this trend. He not only dismisses but positively mocks the notion that antisemitism constitutes a form of pathic projection. This is only possible because he offers a potted history of various conceptualizations of antisemitism that jumps straight from early positivistic ineptitude to postmodern whateverism and simply leaves out the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory altogether. This is the equivalent of writing a history of Western art music that covers only Hildegard of Bingen and Dame Judith Weir but leaves out Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schoenberg.¹⁶

(13) Scholars and academic institutions engaged in research on antisemitism need to be more responsible in their dealings with the public. To be sure, I would like to see them all agree with me in everything they put out, but that is not what I am driving at here. Rather, we should develop a framework allowing both fellow scholars and institutions and, once sufficiently educated, the interested public, to identify at a glance what conceptual assumptions underlie any given public statement on antisemitism. To take a concrete example, the Pears Institute affiliated with Birkbeck, University of London, published a report in 2018 claiming that the considerable influx of migrants from the Middle East in recent years has led neither to an increase in antisemitism in Europe nor in any way changed its character. If I find this a counter-intuitive suggestion the question arises: am I

16 For a detailed discussion of Beller's little book, see L. Fischer, "Unpublishable Review Article: Conceptualizing Antisemitism," https://www.academia.edu/36999474/Unpublishable_Review_Article_Conceptualizing_Antisemitism, accessed August 2, 2019. We have to assume that Beller's *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* is now the most-purchased and most-read single work on antisemitism worldwide, which should be deeply troubling to anyone committed to combatting rather than whitewashing antisemitism.

surprised by the actual research findings or do I simply disagree with the authors' definition of what does and does not constitute antisemitism? Put bluntly: if they applied my definition of antisemitism, would their claims still stand? To answer this question, I have to go beyond the headline-grabbing stuff and peruse the fine print. It seems to me that this is not a helpful state of affairs.

Rather than simply telling the public that nothing has changed or, for that matter, that something has changed, the responsible approach would surely be to tell the public that these respective statements are true provided one accepts a handful of fundamental presuppositions. It should be more than evident that I think the Pears Institute, to return to the example, is fundamentally wrong in categorically excluding animosity towards Israel from their definition of antisemitism. Then again, it is obviously the institute's prerogative to do so. My point is that the public should surely know (without having to go to the fine print first) that the institute's claims about antisemitism are based on this assumption—and I would insist that it is the institute's responsibility to ensure that it does. To be sure, we will have an uphill struggle sensitizing the interested public to these fundamental conceptual issues but as long as scholars and academic institutions themselves do not stress them in a transparent manner their interaction with the public may well serve propagandistic ends (and impress donors or research councils), but it will contribute precious little to informed debate and the struggle against antisemitism, quite the opposite.

I know this will initially sound like a strange suggestion, but I imagine we could develop a sort of taxonomy that straddles the existing conceptual controversies and would make it possible to label all publications on antisemitism in a way not dissimilar to food labels telling the customer how much of their daily recommended intake of various nutritional elements any given product contains. Ideally, every time a scholar or academic institution makes a statement regarding the causes, development, and dynamics of antisemitism, I would like to be able to see instantly in a schematized form the conceptual underpinnings on which that statement rests. Do(es) the author(s) assume that antisemitism is a form of pathic projection or that a kernel of truth inheres in the antisemites' perceptions? Do(es) the author(s) assume that animosity towards Israel is always, mostly, sometimes, rarely or never antisemitic? Do(es) the author(s) assume that antisemitism only really becomes a problem when it translates into antisemitic activism or that antisemitic sentiments and attitudes need to be combatted in earnest, no matter what? Do(es) the author(s) assume that is it antisemitic to liken Israeli actions or policies to those of the Nazis? How many antisemitic statements did those questioned have to affirm before being considered antisemitic? There would be no need for straightforward yes/no options and gradations (never, rarely, mostly, always) would allow for a reasonable measure of nuance.

It should not be too difficult to devise a taxonomy of this kind nor should this be in any way a controversial process, given that it would merely turn what currently tends to be in the fine print into an instantly recognizable shorthand. Nor does it require anyone to subscribe to any one given definition of antisemitism, it would merely make transparent to which definition any given author or group of authors does subscribe. At the very least, this exercise would save scholars in the field the enormous amount of time and effort currently expended on talking past each other.

(14) “Criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” You will find this statement both in the so-called *Working* and now *International Definition of Antisemitism* and its adaptation by the US State Department. And yet the self-styled critics of Israel and anti-Zionists persistently claim that these definitions stifle legitimate criticism of Israel. What their claim clearly indicates is that these critics of Israel think that legitimate criticism of Israel does in fact need to go beyond “that leveled against any other country.” Theirs is therefore quite obviously an inherently antisemitic claim. This is all the more evident from the fact that its proponents have long since moved on from claiming that they are prevented from criticizing specific Israeli policies or governments to insisting on the right to criticize the State of Israel, the Jewish state or Israel as a Jewish state. I have already pointed to Steven Beller’s *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction*, which is a particularly shocking example of the extent to which this approach has infiltrated the academic mainstream. The same obviously holds true of the BDS campaign.

(15) It turns out that people who have been to death camps and their descendants are not invariably better people than those who were spared this experience and their descendants. It would be grotesque and perverse to expect otherwise. All other things being even, Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish state because Jews have the same right as anyone else to enjoy the protection of a country in which they can be as brilliant and pathetic, as courageous and cowardly, as gentle and aggressive, as single-minded and distracted, as ethically high-minded and corrupt, as reasonable and reckless, as socially-minded and egotistically neo-liberal, as pacifist and warmongering, as inclusive and exclusive as non-Jews are the world over without anyone questioning the existence of their countries as a result. A world in which non-Jews do not measure their own characteristics and activities by the same standards they apply to Jews is an inherently antisemitic world.

(16) I would be surprised if we are more than two years away from the point at which numerous established liberal and left-wing scholars, including a sizeable minority if not the majority of Jewish and Judaic Studies scholars, along with major mainstream political parties in the West, begin to call openly for

the destruction—or, as they prefer to call it, the “dismantling”—of Israel. The endlessly futile, phony debates over whether Iran and organizations like Hezbollah, Hamas, and Fatah really want Israel to disappear from the map or not will finally be over and what we have long known to be the truth about their sinister aspirations will be widely embraced as a good thing. The Left in the West has a long and well-established tradition of finding everything it considers oddly tolerable about nationalisms elsewhere (not to mention their own) utterly intolerable in Zionism, and of wanting Jews to earn rights they themselves take for granted by jumping through hoops they would never dream (nor most likely be capable) of jumping through. In some ways, it will be good to have all this out in the open. At least we will no longer have to spend so much of our time playing cat and mouse with our enemies.

(17) There is no case to be made for the destruction (or even a boycott) of Israel that does not hinge crucially on the application of double standards to the Jewish state. Any such demand is therefore inherently antisemitic. Some of Israel’s critics will presumably continue to argue that there have always been Jews opposed to Zionism and the State of Israel and that, consequently, this opposition cannot be inherently antisemitic. Yet, as I have already pointed out, Jews are in any case perfectly capable of being antisemitic. More importantly, while one did not need to be an antisemite to voice opposition to the possible future establishment of a Jewish state in the first half of the twentieth century, opposing the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state today is obviously something altogether different. Our biggest problem, however, is going to be this: most of Israel’s detractors are not going to care one iota what scholars of antisemitism think of them. As yet, I have no idea what to do about this. One thing I do know, however: we had better think of something soon!

How not to Facilitate or Promote Antisemitism: Practical Recommendations

1. Never ever hyphenate antisemitism, doing so suggests that there actually is such a thing as “semitism,” which might be (legitimately) opposed.
2. If you cannot in good conscience call yourself a scholar of antisemitism, re-cuse yourself and own it.
3. Do not portray antisemitism as an ultimately incomprehensible phenomenon totally alien to Western or Muslim values. Antisemitism is not from Mars. It springs from the fact that our societies are organized in a way that renders antisemitism a way of making sense of life and seemingly taking control of it that can be more effective and comforting than many others.

4. Do not accept the suggestion that this releases individuals and/or groups from responsibility for choosing this particular coping mechanism.
5. Never ever concede that a “Jewish Question” or a “Jewish Problem” exists.
6. Never engage in apologetics.
7. Never, ever resort to or legitimize the kernel-of-truth approach to antisemitism.
8. Always distinguish clearly between the reasons that help explain why the Jews were singled out in the first place and the content of antisemitic projections.
9. Do not make excuses for the antisemitic utterances and activities of Jews. Their utterances and activities are no less antisemitic for their being Jews.
10. Do not be unduly squeamish about the role of repression in the struggle against antisemitism. Concede both the ultimately limited range of repression and its necessity and legitimacy.
11. Never ever succumb to or tolerate the assumption that Jews/Israelis should be better people because of the experience of the death camps.
12. Do not allow the specificity of antisemitism to be concealed by subsuming it under the category of racism.
13. Never ever tolerate the application of double standards to Israel.
14. In the later modern context, only refer to Jews and Christians, rather than Jews and non-Jews, if you are confident that the non-Jews in question would have identified themselves as Christians and their relevant attitudes and actions were motivated by their Christianity. If you are referring to the fact that Western culture is deeply shaped by Christianity, even though many are no longer aware of those Christian roots, make it clear that this is what you mean when you use the term “Christian/s.” Otherwise you risk turning antisemitism into a religious issue, which may be part of the problem but really is only part of the problem.
15. If, as a scholar of antisemitism, you engage the public, always be absolutely transparent about your criteria and proactively make them part of your communication strategy.

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