

Introduction

THIS BOOK INTERVENES NOT ONLY IN A DEBATE, but in a war, a real one, fierce and ongoing. In such conditions, claiming neutrality is—even unwittingly—an act of aggression. I therefore begin by declaring my position: the present critique of anti-anti-Semitism does not intend to defend anti-Semitism. On the contrary, it suggests a fundamental affinity, and so a certain complicity between a dominant critique of anti-Semitism and the criticized object, anti-Semitism itself, a complicity between these two wars. This book critiques a certain discourse that frames, organizes, and generates both anti-Semitism and anti-anti-Semitism.

It offers a philosophical meditation on anti-Semitism, which counters what Alain David recently described as “the absence of anti-Semitism in philosophy and among philosophers—for whom anti-Semitism doesn’t seem to be a theme for reflection or discussion, but rather a pathology, a sort of pendant to Jewish particularism.”¹ Indeed, this relation—the actual, possible, and impossible relation—of philosophy, theory, or thought to anti-Semitism, and to the Jewish, is a fundamental question underlying the following reflections.

1 Alain David, “Die Abwesenheit von Antisemitismus genügt keineswegs,” in *Heidegger, die Juden, noch einmal*, ed. Peter Trawny and Andrew J. Mitchell (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015), 224. For an important recent exception, which tries to consider Nazism and anti-Semitism philosophically, this too in the context of Heidegger, see Elliot Wolfson, *The Duplicity of Philosophy’s Shadow: Heidegger, Nazism, and the Jewish Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

Indeed, even as the following pages not only acknowledge the topicality of the debate on anti-Semitism but explicitly take a position in the struggle against it, they nonetheless take a step back from the immediacy of current affairs and attempt a more systematic contemplation.

This book therefore does not directly (although indirectly it does nothing but this) deal with or try to answer questions such as whether or not specific statements, actions, or positions (the BDS movement, critiques of the State of Israel, anti-Zionism or pro-Zionism and more) are anti-Semitic, or whether there is or isn't a rise of new or old anti-Semitism in Europe or in the United States or elsewhere and whether or not the government does enough to fight it. Rather, it examines the basic categories and notions that underlie and pre-configure this discourse, namely the way in which anti-Semitism is talked about, thought about, and fought against. It examines how these categories are interconnected to the basic categories that shape contemporary culture—first and foremost its politics and its knowledge. It is a basic critical observation of this book, concurring with Alain David, that discussions of anti-Semitism tend to avoid or even preclude this kind of examination. Engaging in such a questioning is thus in itself engaging in polemics.

POLITICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

The present inquiry suggests a defined conceptual framework for the critique of anti-anti-Semitism, so to speak, for its “anti-anti-anti-Semitic” thought. The critical effort of this book, its underlying anti-, is indeed situated within a concern that is designated throughout this book as “political epistemology” or “epistemo-politics.” As arises from its concept, political epistemology concerns the relations between the ways we understand and perform what was named in Greek *episteme* or *logos*, i.e., knowledge, science, philosophy, and so forth, and the ways we understand and perform—conceptually still Greek—*polis*, i.e., our political, communal existence.

The term “political epistemology” has been used over the preceding decades, with a noticeable increase in recent years, but without attaining any systematic or standard meaning. A common feature of current uses is that they presuppose the concept and thus the phenomenon or phenomenal complex, either of politics or of knowledge or of both, and engage in a more or less empirical observation of, say, the role of “political ideas and knowl-

edge” in “political action.”² The present critique of political epistemology aims, in contrast, at problematizing the conceptual matrix regulating the interrelations of politics and knowledge. It is closer to how Bruno Latour used the term “political epistemology” to characterize the basic question of Science Studies as not extending “politics to science, nor science to politics,” but rather trying “to understand where the difference comes from and how the distribution of skills among the different domains has been adjudicated.”³ Nonetheless, Latour seems to reduce both knowledge and politics to the categories of the social, which is perhaps the categorical difference between the sociology of science and the project envisioned here as “political epistemology.”

Political epistemology may be deemed as the philosophical pendant of political theology; the question of epistemo-politics or logo-politics is troubled by the same hyphen as theo-politics, which is perhaps also the same hyphen of bio-politics. Performed, however, within the realm of knowledge, within the institution or *polis* of knowledge, inside the university and academic discourse, the epistemo-political reflection is self-reflection, which experiences this troubled hyphen more readily as an *internal* split. In the present context, of particular interest for the following inquiry is a critical meditation on the *modern and contemporary* epistemo-political condition. In other words, it tries to observe and describe a certain difficulty, deficiency, or dislocation in the relation between knowledge and

2 See the petition to create a section devoted to political epistemology that was submitted in 2013 to the American Political Science Association: “The purpose of the section will be to encourage the empirical and normative study of political knowledge and information. Since the definition of ‘knowledge’ is often contested, political epistemology means the study of (1) the empirical role in political behavior of perceptions, theories, and other ideational factors; (2) the sources of these factors; (3) the accuracy of political actors’ perceptions and other ideas (the value of their knowledge and information); and (4) the normative implications of items 1–3” (<https://www.politicaepistemology.org>). The recently founded, more philosophically oriented “Political Epistemology Network” makes a more general call to “scholars working at the intersection of epistemology and political philosophy”; see <https://www.politicaepistemologynetwork.com/about-us>.

3 Bruno Latour, “The Netz-Works of Greek Deductions,” *Social Studies of Science* 38, no. 3 (June 2008): 449; see Duncan Kennedy, “Knowledge and the Political: Bruno Latour’s Political Epistemology,” *Cultural Critique* 74 (2010): 83–97.

politics in modernity, a fundamental disconnection, disassociation, and dis-relation between *episteme* and *polis*. Similar or perhaps the identical disconnection has been already noticed and analyzed by Hannah Arendt, who traced the split back to the very origin of philosophy: “The gulf between philosophy and politics opened historically with the trial and condemnation” of Socrates.⁴

The *locus* of the present critical reflection on modern political epistemology is the field of modern *episteme* that does explicitly concern the *polis*, namely political thought. Methodologically, its contemplation of contemporary political thought does not set out from the current doctrinal formulation of political science or political philosophy, nor does it attempt to offer such a formulation of political epistemology itself. Rather, the present investigation focuses on political thought itself as a happening, an *event* within the *polis*, a political, historical event of thought, knowledge, or discourse, an event of *logos*. The paradigmatic event of knowledge is not just “discovery” or “invention,” although these are no doubt constitutive happenings, but, so this book suggests, rather the *polemos*, the *machloykes* (Yiddish for “disagreement”)—the controversy. There is here an obvious epistemo-political affinity to the perception of the Political—by Carl Schmitt, for instance—as founded on war, *polemos*, against which however—and this is not a small war—I insist on *polemics*.⁵ The contemporary polemics taken here as the evental site for contemplating contemporary political thought is a double or second-order polemics, a war on war: anti-anti-Semitism.

Of course, it is easy to see how, since World War II, this polemics has functioned as a foundation of Western political thought. In the apocalypse of Auschwitz, anti-Semitism has become the paradigm of dystopia; the anti-

4 Hannah Arendt, “Philosophy and Politics,” *Social Research* 71, no. 3 (2004): 427. See also Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Alireza Shomali, *Politics and the Criteria of Truth* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), which focuses on the normative search for a “new epistemology,” providing a “criterion of truth that is attentive to the sociopolitical conditions that determine meaning” (6).

5 For a more articulated polemics with Schmitt, see Elad Lapidot, “Carl Schmitt’s Warring Wars: On the Political Epistemology of Political Theology,” *Philosophical Journal for Conflict and Violence* (2020): 36–53.

Semitic state, Nazi Germany, has become the paradigm of the bad state, the *kako-polis*, the exact opposite of the ideal *kalo-polis*. Anti-Semitism has thus become, for post-World War II political philosophy, a sort of negative *Politeia*; and war on anti-Semitism, accordingly, a fundamental operation of politics and political thought. In this context, reflecting on anti-anti-Semitism is a basic critical operation of contemporary political thought.

This is the horizon in which can also be located related critiques (see discussion below) on the War on Anti-Semitism (Gil Anidjar) or the Philosemitic Reaction (Ivan Segré) as figures of the West. The epistemological emphasis of the present inquiry, however, is particularly interested in the *conceptual* quality of what it therefore declaratorily calls “anti-anti-Semitism,” namely not primarily as a *figure* of the West but, on the contrary, as a conceptual constellation, an epistemology, or contemporary political epistemology, of which “the West” would be a figure.

ANTIHYPHEN

Examining anti-anti-Semitism as epistemology means examining it as knowledge of knowledge. That anti-anti-Semitism is knowledge seems to be obvious, surely for anti-anti-Semites, who *oppose* anti-Semitism, which assumes they *know* it. In fact, the “anti-,” a relation of opposition, resistance, and negation, would seem to constitute a central *epistemic* figure, a figure of knowledge, cognition, or consciousness, namely to use Husserl’s definition of *Bewußtsein*, an intentional relation *to* something, *Bewußtsein von*, knowledge *of*. Intentionality is graphically marked by the hyphen, a staple of phenomenological texts, i.e., the “anti”-.” *Anti-anti-Semitism* is therefore knowledge, and what it knows is itself, once again, knowledge—*anti-Semitism*. *Anti-anti-Semitism* is accordingly knowledge of knowledge, epistemology. It is *political* epistemology insofar as the epistemic figure that it knows, anti-Semitism, is a political figure, a movement, ideology, or politics. Indeed, the “anti-” seems to constitute a foundational epistemopolitical figure, a phenomenon of knowledge-based political existence, a community of *polemos*.

One simple formulation of this book’s basic thesis, however, is that anti-anti-Semitism constitutes *negative* political epistemology, which opposes political knowledge per se, namely rejects any positive relation between knowledge and politics and actively *effects* their disconnection. This means

that anti-anti-Semitism is a paradoxical, self-negating political epistemology, and this book does perhaps nothing more than articulate this paradox. Its basic observation is that anti-anti-Semitism's fundamental "anti-" against anti-Semitism, its basic adversarial knowledge of anti-Semitism, namely what it asserts to know *of* and *against* anti-Semitism, is that anti-Semitism itself is *no* knowledge, and that the fundamental problem with anti-Semitism is that it claims to know. For anti-anti-Semitism, the fundamental problem with anti-Semitism is not its "anti," but its hyphen.

In anticipation of the detailed textual analyses to follow, as a preliminary demonstration, the basic operation of anti-anti-Semitic political epistemology may in fact be called de-epistemization by de-hyphenation: denying the anti-Semitic hyphen. In explaining this de-hyphenation, namely their explicit decision to avoid the admittedly "more popular term 'anti-Semitism'" for "antisemitism," Julia Schulze Wessel and Lars Rensmann, in their essay "Arendt and Adorno on Antisemitism," thus argued: "Arendt used 'antisemitism,' not 'anti-Semitism' throughout her work, for the good reason that, as she observes in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, antisemites do not oppose any 'Semitism,' as the more popular term 'anti-Semitism' suggests. As Arendt points out . . . 'antisemitism' is an ideology that constructs a Jewish enemy but has nothing to do with any opposition to 'Semitic' ethnic origins or language communities. In the original German usage, *Antisemitismus* is never hyphenated."⁶

6 Julia Schulze Wessel and Lars Rensmann, "The Paralysis of Judgment: Arendt and Adorno on Antisemitism and the Modern Condition," in *Arendt & Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, ed. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 329n.5. See also the editors' note in Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz, and Thomas Keenan, eds., *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010): "Hannah Arendt intentionally wrote *antisemitism*, *antisemitic*, and *antisemite* instead of *anti-Semitism*, *anti-Semitic*, and *anti-Semite* throughout her work. She did so for the simple reason that, as she wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, there is a difference between 'Jew-hatred' on the one hand and 'antisemitism' on the other. There is no such thing as a pro-Semitic 'Semitism' that an 'anti-Semitism' opposes, but only an ideological 'antisemitism.' Following Arendt's reasoning and her practice, the essays in this volume will speak of antisemitism, antisemitic persons and ideas, and antisemites."

Dehyphenation of anti-Semitism denies its epistemic quality, denies it knowledge. The analyses below show why, in contrast to Wessel and Rensmann, I think that Adorno may be more easily invoked in support of this position than Arendt. In this context, one also wonders about the exact kind of support for the de-hyphenation of anti-Semitism sought by the invocation of “the original German usage.” (Is it meant to suggest that the original and explicit intention of the original German anti-Semites, by calling themselves *Antisemiten* rather than *Anti-Semiten*, was to declare that their movement has nothing to do with any opposition to Semites? Is not, however, “German usage” *not* to use the hyphen? What German *Anti-* are hyphenated? What German word compositions in general are hyphenated? Would lack of hyphen in German always indicate lack of conceptual relation? Would *Antisemitismusforschung*, for instance, have nothing to do with the research of anti-Semitism?)

What is important to highlight at this point, however, is the extent of anti-anti-Semitic de-epistemization of anti-Semitism. De-hyphenated, antisemitism would know nothing of Semitism, namely would have nothing to do with the entire political epistemology that has been historically generated around the figure of the Semite (which Anidjar, as I discuss below, identified as “the West”). It is in this sense that anti-anti-Semitism obliterates Semitism. Further, however, and this is a basic claim of the present book, anti-anti-Semitic de-epistemization of anti-Semitism also concerns its relation to *Jews*. For anti-antisemitism, anti-Semitism would not only be a declaration of war against Semitism that has nothing to do with Semitism, but also, as Wessel and Rensmann write, an “ideology that *constructs* a Jewish enemy” (my emphasis), which means, in the Arendtian sense of “ideology,” that it has nothing to do with reality—knows nothing of real Jews. Indeed, as the analyses in this book will show, a fundamental motif in anti-anti-Semitism has been the assertion that anti-Semitism has in fact *no* actual knowledge of real Jews. This is the epistemological foundation for an entire *Antisemitismusforschung* that will consequently know nothing of Semites and nothing of Jews, nor therefore of anti-Semitism, but only of “antisemitism” in the exclusive sense of anti-Semitic acts and people, a science of anti-Semites. And the fundamental anti-anti-Semitic accusation and critique against anti-Semitism does not accordingly concern its “anti,” namely its *animosity* toward Jews, but rather its hyphen, its anti-“-”Semitism,” its asserted knowledge of Jews.

Pending textual analyses, it may be helpful in this introduction to provide a preliminary articulation of anti-anti-Semitic epistemology, which decries anti-Semitic views on Jews as mere construction, projection, imagination, and figuration. Indeed, even if there is a historical basis for claiming that anti-Semitism, as a political movement, in fact has never explicitly campaigned against “the Semites,” all anti-anti-Semitism describes anti-Semitism, be it antisemitism, as a certain intentionality directed toward “Jews.” Wessel and Rensmann speak of *construction* “of a Jewish enemy.” The currently most common institutional anti-anti-Semitic definition of “Antisemitism” states: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews.”⁷ In other words, the attitude of “hate,” the negative axiology of anti-Semitism, its “anti,” expresses a more fundamental, foundational—to use here Husserlian epistemology—*doxic* relation to Jews: “perception.” Before being a negative attitude toward Jews, anti-Semitism is a certain way of perceiving Jews. Husserl would agree. Nonetheless, this definition hardly intends to contradict the basic anti-anti-Semitic position, as it will be demonstrated in this book, whereby anti-Semitism is actually antisemitism, namely *no* real relation to real Jews, by insisting that it *does* consist in the cognitive act of “perceiving” Jews. “Perception of Jews” is meant in anti-anti-Semitic discourse as a purely subjective view, fantasy, imagination, or construction, which would stand in contradistinction to the objectively real Jews, to what may be called in terms of Kantian epistemology Jews *an sich*.

Of course, thinking this through with Kant and Husserl, one could say that perception, *Wahrnehmung*, is nevertheless the closest we can ever get to anything (Kant) or even the very mode in which the thing itself is “given”

7 Formulated in 2005 by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, it has been adopted by European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism (<https://ep-wgas.eu/ihra-definition>), the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/stories/working-definition-antisemitism>), and by its members states, including the US (<https://www.state.gov/defining-anti-semitism>), the UK (<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/home-affairs/communities/uk-governments-adoption-of-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/>), and Germany (<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/kulturdialog/o6-interkulturelledialog/-/216610>).

to us as such, i.e., in itself becomes our object, exists for and known by us (Husserl). A “certain perception of Jews” would accordingly mean a certain basic way of cognitively relating to Jews, of having Jews as an object of consciousness. Speaking Husserl’s hermeneutical language, anti-Semitism, as “a certain perception of Jews,” would consist in a way of understanding, namely constructing the very sense of what “Jewish” is, of the idea or essence “Jewish,” as the basis for any perception of Jews, namely for any perception of something that may be called “Jewish.” Put differently, anti-Semitism may be said to be *necessarily* based on certain—problematic and partial as it may be, but nonetheless—*knowledge* of Jews. It is precisely this knowledge, with its specific mode of knowing, that would be expressed by the designation “Semites.” Anti-Semitism would perceive—and hate—Jews *qua* Semites.

It is, however, a basic observation of this book that anti-anti-Semitism fundamentally rejects anti-Semitic knowledge of the Jewish, categorically rejects in fact *any* knowledge of the Jewish: as *mere* perception, construction, projection, imagination, fantasy, and myth. As already noted, this book will indicate how anti-anti-Semitism most fundamentally tends to criticize anti-Semitism not for thinking *against* Jews, but for thinking *of* Jews at all, namely for engaging Jews as an object of thought, as an epistemic entity. In other words, so the claim, anti-anti-Semitism has criticized anti-Semitism for introducing “the Jews” or “the Jewish” as entity of thought: as a category, idea, concept, or more commonly as a *figure* of thought, a figural Jew, a “Jew,” with scare quotes. To formulate it provocatively, the analyses below will show anti-anti-Semitism to be anti-“Jewish.”

With respect to this anti-anti-Semitic rejection of “the Jewish,” i.e., rejection of the Jewish from the realm of thought, the following chapters make two basic claims: first, that at work in this rejection, and therefore in anti-anti-Semitism, is a specific radical type of *negative* political epistemology; second, that this rejection, and the negative political epistemology that underlies it, is what anti-anti-Semitism shares with anti-Semitism. It is this epistemo-political complicity that the present anti-anti-anti-Semitic critique wishes to bring to light.

As for the first claim, on anti-anti-Semitism’s negative political epistemology, what it argues is that anti-anti-Semitic critique against the introduction of Jews into the realm of thought, the rejection of the “figural” Jew, as the supposed essence of anti-Semitism, is itself based on a certain figuration or “construction,” a certain perception of Jews. Quickly

stated, the analyses to follow will show how this figuration consists in a fundamental *dis-figuration*, namely in a perception of the Jews as a historical human collective, whose existence, as a collective, lies outside the epistemic realm, outside the realm of knowledge, philosophy, and thought, and so, strictly speaking, outside of any perception or imagination, a non-figure or dis-figure. It would be for this reason illegitimate or rather invalid *in principle*, epistemically fallacious, to criticize, antagonize, or oppose this human collective, to be *anti-Jewish*, not because Jews are essentially “good,” i.e., not because the “anti” is wrong, but because “the Jewish” stands for, manifests, or “figures” no specific content, no specific idea. Strictly speaking, there is no “Jew.” In other words, the anti-anti-Semitic “Jews” are a radically de-epistemized collective, and in this sense a radically negative epistemo-political figure. Furthermore, this book argues that in and through anti-anti-Semitic discourse the epistemo-politically negative category of “the Jew” emerges as a *paradigm* of contemporary political epistemology, a contemporary paradigm for the figure of “the people.”

As for the second claim, on the epistemo-political complicity of anti-anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism, what it argues is that the dis-figured, de-epistemized Jew, the anti-anti-Semitic real Jew *an sich*, a paradigm of contemporary negative political epistemology, is a realization, consummation, and perfection of the category of “the Semites.” It is in this sense that I subscribe to Gil Anidjar’s observation (see below) that anti-anti-Semitism as well as anti-Semitism are forms of Semitism, and therefore, in this perspective, “the Semitic perspective,” they tend to converge. Whereas Anidjar focuses on the Semite as concealing the Muslim, this book focuses on the Semite as dis-figuring the Jew, and the ways in which this dis-figuration becomes a gateway between anti-anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish anti-Semitism. As it will be shown, the (anti-anti-Semitic) critique against (anti-Semitic) attempts to inscribe the Jews as an epistemic entity within theoretical or philosophical discourse must lead to the realization that the attribution of epistemic value and meaning to Jewish being has been an exercise carried out, more often than by anti-Semites, by self-identifying Jews themselves, precisely as the performance of what they perceive to be their Jewishness. Accordingly, the critique of anti-Semitism for the very conceptualization, imagination, or construction of the Jewish—and my claim is that this is *the center of contemporary anti-anti-Semitism*—quickly veers into a critique of Jewishness itself, into anti-anti-Semitic anti-Judaism.

The main analytic category of this book, “anti-anti-Semitism,” which designates its principal object, is already in use. It was explicitly introduced to the academic discourse, with the same meaning in which it is used here, more than a decade ago, by Jonathan Judaken, in *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual*.⁸ Judaken introduced this concept (or, more precisely, the concept of “anti-antisemitism”; and the grammatical significance of this difference was already indicated) as the organizing category of his inquiry, aiming “to evaluate the conceptual and perceptual ‘biases’ that animate the *opposition* to antisemitism” (20). Judaken’s purported evaluation of anti-anti-Semitism was accordingly, from the outset, *critical*, so to speak anti-anti-anti-Semitic, not, however, in defense of anti-Semitism, but, on the contrary, just like the present contemplation, in defense of the opposition to anti-Semitism: “The risk of anti-antisemitism is that it merely reverses the dictums of antisemitism without problematizing the axiology and doxology that underpin antisemitism and can thereby end up duplicating aspects of the problem that anti-antisemites seek to resist” (20).

In other words, Judaken suggested an epistemological communality or solidarity between anti-Semitism and anti-anti-Semitism, and it is precisely this communality that the term “anti-anti-Semitism” implies in the present inquiry. “Any anti-,” to quote Heidegger, must “originate from the same essential ground as that against which it is anti-.”⁹ This quote is especially pertinent here as it is taken from one of the most controversial *anti-Semitic* passages of the *Black Notebooks*, the specific “anti-” in question there being the “anti-Christ,” who, like the Christ, would “originate from the Jewry,” which, Heidegger writes, “was, in the period of the Christian West, namely of metaphysics, the principle of destruction” (20). Would the essential sameness or communality of the anti- and that against which it is anti- also apply to anti-Semitism? Would this mean anti-Semitism has some intima-

8 Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

9 Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (Schwarze Hefte 1942–1948), ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann Verlag, 2015) (= GA, Bd. 97), 20.

cy of essence with Semitism, or, if anti-Semitism is a form of anti-Judaism, with Judaism? These are hard but, so it seems, necessary questions for any anti-anti-Semitism to ask itself, lest, as Judaken warned, it “end up duplicating aspects of the problem that [it] seek to resist.”

The theoretical critique of anti-anti-Semitism was further developed by Gil Anidjar, who, following Judaken, pointed at the broad significance of “the anti-anti-Semitic movement,” a phenomenon Anidjar described as “the war on anti-Semitism” (“WAS”), similar to “the war on drugs, the war on poverty and the war on terror.”¹⁰ It is the *political* question that Anidjar placed at the center of his inquiry: “It has become imperative today at least to attempt to explain the political significance of the anti-anti-Semitism movement.” Writing on the unity of “Anti-Semitism and its Critiques,” Anidjar, like Judaken, asked about the “continuities . . . between the history of anti-Semitism and the current struggle against it” (8). It is noteworthy that Anidjar, like Heidegger, argued for a conceptual, *necessary* communality between the anti- and its adversary, which he accordingly deployed as a methodological principle: “WAS [War on Anti-Semitism] must be treated as a social and political movement, one that is related and in fact comparable (for obvious reasons having to do with the mimetic dynamism at work in adversarial relations) to that which it has historically opposed” (5). This conceptual insight highlights all the more Anidjar’s further observation, which is particularly pertinent for the reflections in the present book, namely beyond or next to the political problem of anti-anti-Semitism, also of its epistemological problem, i.e., “the near complete absence . . . of reflective and indeed concerted gestures on the part of those of us who struggle against anti-Semitism” (5), or as he formulated it more recently: “The war against antisemitism as a movement that does not know itself.”¹¹ If “know thyself” is a founding principle of philosophy, anti-anti-Semitism would accordingly be something like an anti-philosophical politics.

In what would this negative epistemology of anti-anti-Semitism consist? What exactly would it fail to know and how is this continuation of anti-

10 Gil Anidjar, “When Killers Become Victims: Anti-Semitism and Its Critics,” *Cosmopolis: A Review of Cosmopolitics* 3 (2007), <http://agora.qc.ca/cosmopolis>.

11 Gil Anidjar, “Antisemitism and Its Critics,” in *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*, ed. James Renton and Ben Gidley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 204.

Semitism? Anidjar, author of *A History of the Enemy*,¹² analyzed the problem as properly politico-epistemological one, i.e., as the failure to properly *know* the enemy of anti-Semitism—the object of its anti-. The deficiency for Anidjar lies in the gap between the enemy of anti-Semitism according to its concept, namely “the Semites,” and the enemy of anti-Semitism according to its historical performance, i.e., “the Jews.” “Anti-Semitism” would be a political performance that disregards, forgets, or obliterates its own concept. It is this fundamental operation through which “the Semites” are obliterated by the politics pertaining to “the Jews,” which would constitute the continuity between hate of Jews in the name of anti-Semitism and defense of Jews in the name of anti-anti-Semitism. The basic epistemological deficiency that Anidjar observes in the joint discourse of anti-Semitism and anti-anti-Semitism is therefore, paradoxically, the oblivion of Semitism, namely “the lack of attention directed at the history of the category of ‘Semites,’ its sources and its enduring effects.”¹³

It has in fact been a feat of Anidjar’s work, against this oblivion, to open up and articulate the “Semitic perspective” (17), namely the basic dynamics of the historical and still contemporary discourse or knowledge that has emerged from and been organized—also and often negatively—around the notion of “Semites.” What makes Anidjar’s analysis so powerful, and essential for the present book, is that it interrogated and displayed the discourse of the “Semites,” i.e., Semitism, as foundational for basic categories of modern and contemporary knowledge. *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature*, he wrote.¹⁴ Semitism is the *logos* of race, religion, and literature, and this means of contemporary episteme itself. Anidjar has designated this episteme analytically as “Christian,”¹⁵ meaning “Western Christendom,” and identified it in various forms, such as “Roman Catholicism, Reformation, Secularism, WAS,”¹⁶ i.e., the war on anti-Semitism (to which one may no doubt also add anti-Semitism), but perhaps most comprehensively “the

12 Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

13 Anidjar, “When Killers,” 18.

14 Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

15 Cf. Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

16 Anidjar, “When Killers,” 17.

West,” meaning *Us*, e.g., the “understanding of politics in which we have all come to share” (10).

The aspect of Semitism that has been the most central to Anidjar’s analysis, and also crucial to his critique of anti-anti-Semitism, is the nature of the figure that Semitism constitutes as its object, namely “the Semites.” Anidjar’s basic observation was that the unity of the category “Semites” has been generated and performed through differentiation between two Semitic paradigms: Semitism is the (Western Christian) double invention of “Judaism and Islam—the Jew, the Arab.”¹⁷ Semitism would be the generation of the Semites in the double figure of the Jew and the Arab or Muslim. The Semites, however, have been and still are generated essentially as *enemies*, namely as objects of hate, of anti-. Semitism is anti-Semitism. It follows that the two figures of Semitism, the Jew and the Arab, would be constituted by two interrelated discourses of hate: anti-Jewish and anti-Arab or anti-Muslim, Anidjar to follow Edward Said in pointing at the intimacy between (anti-Jewish) anti-Semitism and Orientalism, or Islamophobia.¹⁸

The fundamental epistemological or politico-epistemological problem underlying both (anti-Jewish) anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, both forms of anti-Semitic hate, would therefore be precisely the concealment or oblivion of their epistemological identity, i.e., Semitism, through their conceptual, analytical, and political division, the division between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, between Arab and Jew. This division, Anidjar claims, has been generated by historical anti-Semitism, which targeted specifically “Jews,” and is further maintained and reproduced by contemporary anti-anti-Semitism, which targets specifically hate against Jews: “to uphold the division between Jew and Arab, between Jew and Muslim is to reproduce the origins of racism and of anti-Semitism at once” (19). Anidjar’s analysis was developed by Gil Hochberg, who, in “Re-Membering Semitism,” suggested a correlation between two contemporary forms of Western anti-anti-Semitism, namely the campaign against the “new,” Muslim anti-Semitism, and the critique against Zionist, Jewish anti-Arabism: “Europe’s way to cleanse itself from its two modern historical

17 Anidjar, *Semites*, 49.

18 Anidjar, “Antisemitism and its Critics,” 205. Cf. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1978]), 27–28.

crimes—anti-Semitism, on the one hand, and colonialism on the other—by transferring their weight onto its primary historical victims.”¹⁹

A similar, politically somewhat counter-intuitive, conceptual correlation between anti-anti-Semitism and anti-colonial anti-Zionism has also been made visible by the work of Ivan Segré, working in the contemporary French discourse.²⁰ Segré characterized the twenty-first-century campaign of French authors against the “new” anti-Semitism, anti-anti-Semitism that he called “philosemitism,” as *reactionary*. In *The Philosemitic Reaction*,²¹ Segré, similarly to Anidjar, identified in this war a contemporary figure of the “defense of the West” (11), a West that, in converting from pre-Auschwitz anti-Semitism to post-Auschwitz anti-anti-Semitism, would nonetheless preserve “an imperialist vision of the world, a xenophobic ideal of society, a police-like conception of knowledge” (12). Noteworthy for the present inquiry is how and where Segré located the epistemological problem of anti-anti-Semitism. Segré focused less on what anti-anti-Semitic discourse disregards and forgets, namely “the Semites,” and the categorical unity of Jews and Muslims, and more on what anti-anti-Semitism, at least in its French, “philosemitic” version, does seem to remember, defend, and assert, does, in other words, claim to know: “the Jews.”

Segré’s critique of anti-anti-Semitism thus targeted more directly not just its political workings but its epistemic structure. The epistemic problem of anti-anti-Semitism, according to Segré, is not just ignoring the Muslim; it is also a “betrayal of Jewish particularism” (11). In other words, the continuity between anti-anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism would be not only Semitism, but also anti-Judaism. The significance of this point is epistemologically crucial. What it means is that anti-anti-Semitism, and anti-Semitism, and Semitism, “the West,” may be criticized not only as a closed discourse, based on its own internal play of *différance* (Jewish/Muslim), but also as a relation to or *knowledge of Others*, here the Jew, which would be consequently more than a mere Western Semitic, anti-

19 Gil Hochberg, “Remembering Semitism” or “On the Prospect of Remembering the Semites,” *ReOrient* 1 (2016): 194.

20 For his recent critique of anti-colonial anti-Zionism, see Ivan Segré, *Les pingouins de l’universel: antijudaïsme, antisémitisme, antisionisme* (Paris: Lignes, 2017).

21 Ivan Segré, *La Réaction Philosémite, ou La Trahison des Clercs* (Paris: Lignes, 2009), trans. David Fernbach as “The Philosemitic Reaction,” in Alain Badiou, Eric Hazan, and Ivan Segré, *Reflections on anti-Semitism* (London: Verso, 2013).

Semitic, and anti-anti-Semitic invention. The Semitic fiction would be a betrayal of the Jew, who is accordingly suggested by Segré's critique, in contrast, as a figure of non-Semitic, and so non-Western political epistemology, namely that is not based on the sole discourse of "the Semites."²²

It is precisely in the effacement of the Jew as a figure of alternative epistemology that Segré sees the fundamental "betrayal" of anti-anti-Semitism. This effacement is not effected by way of disregard, like the effacement of the Muslim, but, on the contrary, by way of disguise, i.e., by presenting the Jew as a positive figure—that exists outside of thought. In *What Is Called Thinking Auschwitz?*,²³ Segré thus showed how theoretical attempts, such as Heidegger's and Arendt's, to *think*, to philosophically "critique" what is seemingly the apocalyptic figure of anti-Jewish anti-Semitism, "Auschwitz," has depended on extracting the essential event of Auschwitz from its supposedly contingent, non-essential anti-Jewish context ("anti-Semitism therefore is contingent: it doesn't inform the philosopher about what Auschwitz is in its essence" [67]), and inscribing it in a non-Jewish conceptual discourse, e.g., "modern technology." Thinking Auschwitz, an operation of philosophical anti-anti-Semitism, is thus positing the Jewish outside of thought, de-epistemizing the Jew. As a paradigm of the *critique* of anti-anti-Semitism, Segré accordingly posited the French philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (to whom I will return later), in "his insistence on thinking the singularity of Nazism such that, essentially, the Extermination was of *Jews*" (77). The critique of anti-anti-Semitism thus emerges in the form that will guide the present book, namely as the concern "to inscribe the name *Jew* in the philosophical text" (79, 85).

ANTI-ANTI-ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS

By the rules of formal logic, the present critique of anti-anti-Semitism, "anti-anti-anti-Semitism," might be said, decried, to affirm anti-Semitism. This is correct only to the extent that "anti-Semitism" is equally understood not as hate of Jews or Semites, but as the fundamental resistance to "Semitism" as the discourse that perceives the Jewish—and Muslim, and

22 Cf. Alain David, *Racisme et Antisémisme: Essai de philosophie sur l'envers des concepts* (Paris: Ellipses, 2001).

23 Ivan Segré, *Qu'appelle-t-on penser Auschwitz?* (Paris: Lignes, 2009).

any—collective existence through the category of “the Semites.” Nor is the present anti-anti-anti-Semitism therefore a critique of philosemitism or any other allosemitism.²⁴ Anti-allosemitism has most often tended to share and reaffirm, so it seems to me, the basic “Semitism” of anti-anti-Semitism, namely the basic dis-figuration of the Jew. “Dis-figuration” means here, once again, first and foremost the elimination of the figure, namely the abolishment of any idea and thus of any epistemic value, any concept and content of the signifier “Jew,” which thus becomes necessarily a matter of *indifference*, something inessential, beyond love and hate, beyond anti- and philo-. The anti-anti- is in this sense, beyond binary logics, where negation of negation means affirmation, a double negation that means *stronger* negation, anti-anti- that is more negative—not to say more *exterminatory*—than anti-.

In not just revealing and critiquing but also resisting anti-anti-Semitic disfiguration of the Jewish, anti-anti-anti-Semitism does not therefore proceed to *affirmation* of “Semitism.” I subscribe to the need identified by Anidjar to remember and by Hochberg to “re-member” the Semites, the Jew, the Muslim. My analysis further supports the project of subverting the Semitic construction in an attempt to reconfigure the Jewish and the Muslim. My claim is, however, that Semitism is not just a specific set of figures, but a specific regime of figuration, i.e., it does not only attribute and distribute sets of predicates, for instance to the Jewish, but determines its mode of appearance—or rather disappearance, what I call here “dis-figuration.” Consequently, subverting Semitism requires more or something different than reevaluating its tropes, by deeming nomads, for instance, against anti-Semitic slur, as virtuous. What needs to be subverted or overcome, and first made visible, is the epistemology that underlies the discourse of Semitism. The challenge is not only to remember the Jew and the Muslim, but to access Jewish and Muslim memories, where Jewish and Muslim do not only exist as Christian others, as “Semites.”

The critical operation of anti-anti-anti-Semitism is finally distinguished also from the act of categorically rejecting the use of the Semitism discourse altogether, by, for instance, replacing the term “anti-Semitism”

24 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, “Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern,” in *Modernity, Culture, and 'the Jew'*, ed. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 143–156.

by the term “(racial, modern, etc.) anti-Judaism.” This kind of intervention would in fact, at best, be none, and at worst be a reconfirmation of Semitism. Resistance to Semitism must *also* intervene directly on the given Semitism discourse. Taking the position of anti-anti-anti-Semitism, instead of simply not using the concepts Semitism and anti-Semitism, is to acknowledge the essential temporality, processuality, or historicity of thought, its inherent givenness and thus fundamentally hermeneutical operation. Thinking is thought reading.

I recall that the basic concern of the present act of thought is the political epistemology of which the disfigured Jew is a figure, namely a contemporary *negative* political epistemology, as disconnection between *episteme* and *polis*, between knowledge and thought, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the collective human project. Designating the critique of the disfigured Jew “anti-anti-anti-Semitism,” an expression that sounds like a parody on Hegel (until you read Hegel), performatively attempts to reinscribe the de-epistemized Jew, disrobed of all concept, back into the epistemic realm, not only remembered but reintroduced into thinking, into the conceptual event of opposition, of contradiction and negation, and negation of negation, of *machloykes*, which is the element of knowledge insofar as it is temporal, insofar as it is *thought*. Anti-anti-anti-Semitism is accordingly an introduction to Jewish thought, to thinking as it has historically been deployed in and as Jewish being, to thinking as *machloykes*.²⁵ Anti-anti-anti-Semitism is introduction to Talmud.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The basic anti-anti-anti-Semitic operation is taking a distance from and in this way revealing, rendering visible, and describing anti-anti-Semitism. Anti-anti-anti-Semitism is a phenomenology. Phenomenology is the challenge of looking at the seemingly invisible, namely at thought. Like all phenomenology, the present investigation too is faced with the basic question of how and where precisely thought *appears*. Anti-anti-Semitism appears in a variety of phenomena: a variety of contemporary approaches

25 See Elad Lapidot, “People of Knowers: On Heideggerian and Jewish Political Epistemologies,” in *Heidegger and Jewish Thought: Difficult Others*, ed. Elad Lapidot and Micha Brumlik (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 269–289.

to and performances of anti-anti-Semitism—and of Jewishness. Indeed, contemporary Jewishness is to a significant extent a performance of anti-anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, the present phenomenology focuses on the most conceptual form of anti-anti-Semitic thought, namely on explicitly formulated and articulated critical theories of anti-Semitism, as offered textually by prominent political philosophers after World War II. What this book offers is thus a series of intertwined readings, a hermeneutical exercise.

Part I of this book reads anti-anti-Semitic thought. Chapter 1 begins with a first overview of the dynamics of anti-anti-Semitic discourse as it has unfolded in an especially intensive and transparent manner in the recent controversy on Heidegger's anti-Semitism. It traces the basic outline and central moments of the way in which the category of "anti-Semitism" has generated within the debate, even as it engaged in denunciation and critique of anti-Semitism, a specific relation to or perception of Jews, which, at least in its epistemo-political aspects, manifested a conceptual complicity with the denounced anti-Semitic discourse itself.

For better and further articulating the inner logic of this discursive dynamic of anti-anti-Semitism, the investigation then examines in more detail its manifestation within broader systematic attempts undertaken in post-World War II theoretical discourse at critically thinking anti-Semitism. The order, logic, and method of the readings arise from their phenomenological purpose, namely of displaying the discursive dynamics that is at work in and through them. The order of reading thus follows the order of the conceptual articulation of anti-anti-Semitism. The different readings feature different positions within anti-anti-Semitic discourse. The interrelations between these positions, however, are not only typological, but dialectical, i.e., they feature not just various types of anti-anti-Semitism, but different and interdependent moments of one anti-anti-Semitic logos.

Dialectics is temporal, such that the logical order of the texts featured by the following readings is also chronological, i.e., historical. The focus, however, will not be on direct personal influences, on how later authors explicitly reacted to earlier authors, but on the discursive effects of conceptual chronology, by virtue of which, for instance, anti-anti-Semitism succeeds anti-Semitism. Although affirmatively operating in and on the dimension of history, the claim of the present inquiry is not *disciplinarily* historical. The texts read will not be contextualized beyond their own self-contextualization, with respect both to nontextual history (world events,

biographies, etc.) and to textual history (texts of other authors, other texts of the same author).

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the first, basic anti-anti-Semitic position, which denies anti-Semitism any epistemic value by reducing “the Jewish,” namely the Jewish idea or principle, to which the anti-Semite is anti, to the anti-Semite’s own subjective fantasy. There is no Jew *an sich*, only for the anti-Semite. The Jew would be a creation of the anti-Semite. The first, weaker version of this conception will be articulated through a reading of Adorno and Horkheimer’s *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and described as the *imaginary* anti-Semitic creation of the Jew, by an act of *projection*. Jewishness would be the epistemic content projected by the anti-Semite on the knowledge-free, concrete living Jew. The second, stronger version of this conception is the *actual* anti-Semitic creation of the Jew, which will be presented through Sartre’s *Réflexions sur la question juive*, which describes how through intersubjective interaction the anti-Semitic projection of Jewishness in fact generates actual Jewish self-consciousness.

The greatest conceptual difficulty of the first anti-anti-Semitic position lies in the exact relation between the projected, imaginary Jew and the real, concrete, flesh-and-blood Jew. There must still be something in the living Jew that makes possible the projection, which provides the screen or surface of the projection, the *Projektionsfläche*. Why the Jews?

This question moves the anti-anti-Semitic discourse to its next position, which is discussed in Chapter 3. The second anti-anti-Semitic position, in an attempt to identify the condition of possibility of the anti-Semitic projection *in the Jew*, performs a second, inverse reduction, and retraces anti-Semitism to a Jewish origin: the Jewish creation of anti-Semitism. A first version of this argument will be indicated in Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, where the genealogy of anti-Semitism leads back to a Jewish consciousness of a separate ethnic identity. A more recent instance of the same argument will be outlined in Alain Badiou’s writings on *Uses of the Word ‘Jew’* (*Portées du mot ‘juif’*), as well as in his readings of Saint Paul, where Jewishness is portrayed as the universal principle of particularity, as conceptual source both for anti-Semitism, by way of reproduction, and for Christianity, by way of negation.

Chapter 4 discusses a third anti-anti-Semitic position, which, like the second position, traces back the anti-Semitic idea of Jewishness to a Jewish episteme. The third position, however, does not posit Jewish episteme as identical to anti-Semitism, but as *opposite* to it. Notwithstanding the op-