



Klaus Holz. *Nationaler Antisemitismus: Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung.* Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, HIS Verlag, 2001. 615 S. EUR 35.00, gebunden, ISBN 978-3-930908-67-7.



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Klaus Holz's book is an attempt to analyze the connections between the development of discourses of nationhood in European states and anti-Semitic ideas. Holz argues that the origins of Antisemitism (at least in its modern variants) are to be found in the way that linguistic codes function to define those who belong and those who do not, through a process of linguistic image construction that might justly be compared to negative integration. While what Holz offers is not particularly novel in terms of approach or practical application, he does provide an in-depth analysis of the way in which identity formation functions at the level of language, and of how Antisemitism comes to form a sort of skeleton key for the resolution of instabilities in such processes.

The scholarly and political discussion of Antisemitism has undergone numerous twists and turns since it was permanently imprinted on the intellectual consciousness of Europe and the United States by Nazi atrocities. Antisemitism was certainly a matter of interest before the Second World War, particularly in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair in France, and the emergence of public

debate on the topic in Germany after the publication of Heinrich von Treitschke's essay "Unsere Aussichten" (1879). With the emergence of the Nazi project for the complete elimination of the Jews, the interest in this topic has taken on an increased urgency and centrality. This has been further heightened by the highly conflictual position of Israel in international politics. This latter point is worth mentioning both because of its significance for this book, as well as for its author. Since his habilitation at Leipzig in 2000 (for which this work was the Habilitationsschrift), Holz has been active in scholarly debates about Antisemitism, both as a professor as well as in his capacity as the director of the Evangelisches Studienwerk e.V. Villigst (a scholarly institution linked to the Lutheran Church). He caused a minor stir in German public culture in 2001 when he co-authored an essay with Elfriede Mueller and Enzo Traverso in which they argued strenuously against the conflation of Anti-Zionism with Antisemitism within the German left.[1]

Holz states at the outside that he has two major scholarly goals for the book. First, Holz wants

to address the connection between nationalism and Antisemitism, which to his mind has yet to be systematically investigated. Second, Holz wants to address what he views as the "uncoupling" of sociology from the study of Antisemitism. In respect to Holz's first claim, one might point out that the general topic of the relationship between nationalism and Antisemitism is not exactly undiscovered country. Both Hannah Arendt and the critical scholars of the Frankfurt School recognized the intimate connection between the nation and various forms of racism. More recently one might cite the work of George Mosse and Fritz Stern on German cultural politics, and Detlev Peukert's analysis of science and the ideology of the nation in the origins of the Final Solution. While aforementioned scholars approached the topic at a rather general level, Holz's book presents a more focused and precise treatment of this connection. He does this through a minute analysis of anti-Semitic texts in which he seeks to highlight the underlying system of symbols and meanings as a way of illuminating the cultural codes used by anti-semites to define and to recognize each other.

Holz's second agenda item points up an interesting feature of the history of the study of Antisemitism. While early students of Antisemitism often proceeded from sociological premises (even if they were not sociologists by profession), sociologists have not shown a great deal of interest in this topic of late. A notable exception to this can be found in the work of Shulamit Volkov, to which Holz refers extensively. Holz seeks to differentiate his sociology of Antisemitism from a social psychology of antisemites. For Holz this means conducting his analysis at the level of language and systems of signs rather than trying to navigate the murky regions of subjective responses to such abstract constructions. As with his first agenda item, the value of the approach is not so much in its overall novelty as in the rigor with which the project is approached and the suggestiveness of the results.

By far the most valuable part of Holz's project is his micrological analysis of a series of anti-Semitic texts. Holz selects each of his objects of study to illustrate a particular subtype of national Antisemitism. Thus, for instance, Holz identifies a "post-liberal" variety of Antisemitism which is exemplified by Treitschke's essay mentioned above. Holz's first three tableaux (essays by Treitschke, Adolf Stoecker, Eduoard Drumont, and Adolf Hitler) present extensive and convincing accounts of various deployments of anti-Semitic discourse--post-liberal, Christian-social, racist, and national socialist respectively. The last of these is particularly interesting since it touches on the debate surrounding the work of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. Holz does not pass judgment on the verity of Goldhagen's "eliminationist Antisemitism," arguing that "it is not the decisive question for the present context" (p. 359). It is, however, interesting to note that an overt desire to eliminate the Jews is entirely absent from Holz's account of Antisemitism in Germany in the 1870s and 1890s. In any event, Holz argues against the monocausal quality of Goldhagen's account.

The last of Holz's tableaux, an examination of a speech by Kurt Waldheim discussed under the rubric of post-Auschwitz Antisemitism, fits smoothly into the larger structure of his account, however, the section that precedes it is more problematic. Here Holz analyses the court transcripts from the notorious show trial of Rudolf Slansky, held in Czechoslovakia in 1954. This trial, which Holz addresses under the heading of Marxist-Leninist Anti-Zionism, was one of a series anti-Jewish purges conducted throughout the Eastern Bloc during the 1950s. In one sense all of these events present difficulties for Holz's schema because the contested relationship between the workers' state and the nation in these polities. This highlights a peculiar lacuna in Holz's book: the lack of a thorough analysis of the relationship between nationalism and the nation-state. Holz clearly views the relationship of the Czechoslovak CP to the Czechoslovak state as analogous to that

between European nationalists and their respective states, but this parallel leaves the tension underlying this claim unresolved. Although Holz is able to highlight numerous structural similarities between the processes of linguistic "We-group" formation in this case with those in his other examples, it is still by no means clear that including it in this grouping is appropriate. One matter of further interest is that this chapter throws an interesting light on the concerns about Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, and the left raised by Holz in the article that he wrote with Mueller and Traverso.

As a Habilitationsschrift, this book does bear the marks of its construction. These are evident both in Holz's exhaustive analysis of the relevant literature and the structure of the relatively self-contained pieces that form the body of the book. Holz's writing is smooth and direct, and aside from the extensive use of terminology drawn from systems theory and hermeneutics the prose should not present a particular obstacle to those who are not native speakers. Holz's thoroughness and his focus on the systems of meaning underlying anti-Semitic cultural products make this a valuable addition to debates about the origin and practice of Antisemitism in modern European societies.

Note

[1]. <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/jungleworld/2002/47/29a.htm>.

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