

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How the Frankfurt School Has Shaped the Study of Modern Antisemitism

The Frankfurt School, which signifies a circle of social researchers, philosophers, and theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research that was founded in the German city of Frankfurt in 1923, has had a significant and lasting impact on the social sciences and humanities.¹ It has influenced and partly shaped various fields and subfields, from modern philosophy, social and political research, social psychology, cultural studies, to critical legal studies, international relations, and global political theory.²

However, the relevance and indeed—as I argue in this book—centrality of the challenge of antisemitism for the evolution of this school has only marginally been the subject of scholarly inquiry.³ The same marginalization applies to the reception of the Frankfurt School's theoretical output in this area. This book closes these gaps. It reconstructs and rereads the Frankfurt School's work on antisemitism to deepen and enrich our understanding of

early Critical Theory. But this study is not merely a theoretical or exegetic exercise, or primarily motivated by (intellectual) historical interest to set the record straight against an all too often superficial reception of the Frankfurt School's approach to antisemitism. By systematically exploring and rereading the early Frankfurt School's work on the conditions and dynamics of antisemitism, this book ultimately seeks to bring to the fore some important analytical tools that we have missed. My goal is to open up the discussion of the Frankfurt School's scholarly contributions and theorizing.⁴ To this end, the study pays attention to intrinsic problems and limitations of theoretical transfer to the current age. Yet the book also presents the Critical Theorists' contributions as a multilayered and complex resource for the critical analysis of both modern and contemporary resentments against Jews. The substantive outcome of this project is twofold: it changes our understanding of the Frankfurt School, and it changes our understanding of antisemitism through the Frankfurt School.

Despite some recently renewed scholarly interest in the Institute for Social Research's empirical work of the 1940s, there has been no comprehensive account of the Frankfurt School's theorizing of antisemitism. This study is the first book in English to systematically and critically reconstruct Critical Theory's multifaceted approach to, and thinking about, modern judeophobia.⁵ The Institute for Social Research's early groundbreaking studies of antisemitism in and after exile did find some scholarly resonance, to be sure. They also had some significant effects in the field. Yet established research on antisemitism and racism has so far largely failed to acknowledge the Frankfurt School and Critical Theorists' role in shaping

our understanding of the nature of social resentments, the politics of prejudice, and specifically of antisemitism (and authoritarianism) in the modern world.

Even scholars who employ certain critical theoretical claims about the constitutive features, dynamics, implications, and legacies of modern judeophobia rarely acknowledge the crucial insights that originate in, or were initially advanced by, the Frankfurt School's early scholarship on the subject at the time of the Holocaust and the beginning of the postwar period. Be that as it may, while the Frankfurt School's work on antisemitism and related problems of ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and fascist politics may have—often unconsciously—influenced key conceptions of antisemitism in social research after the Holocaust, there has been little thorough engagement with the Critical Theorists' theoretical and empirical claims. Consequently, past and present research on antisemitism has not fully explored in how far the Frankfurt School's work can be employed as a resource for theoretical and philosophical reflection.⁶ Indeed, scholarly work theorizing antisemitism in modern history and contemporary society has yet to recognize the potential of the Frankfurt School's pathbreaking contributions in this area.⁷

Facing the Politics of Unreason: Critical Theory, Social Research, and Antisemitism

This study explores the Frankfurt School's social research and theorizing on antisemitism, illuminating the Critical Theorists' work on the subject in its philosophical, political, and sociological origins in view of its potential

critical impact for our contemporary understanding of anti-Jewish resentment in modern history and today's world. In so doing, it brings to light the multilayered arguments but also the contexts and constitutive links of the Frankfurt School's work on antisemitism in conceptual and theoretical terms. The study hereby challenges five major misunderstandings about the Frankfurt School's rethinking of modern authoritarianism and antisemitism, and about first-generation Critical Theory at large, that may have affected its dominant canonical reception.

First, previous accounts have failed to fully explore the sociological and philosophical wealth of Critical Theory's undertaking, and they have largely underestimated how the Frankfurt School's reflections on antisemitism molded various theoretical sources and approaches into something entirely new in response to the Shoah. The study of the "antisemitic question" transformed Critical Theory and engendered new social theorizing in reflection of the Shoah, understood as the "reversion of enlightened civilization to barbarism" (DE xix). Hence, the book reassesses the political and philosophical origins, grounding and impact of Critical Theory's work on antisemitism for the development of the school. Commonly known for engaging with Freudian theory and Marx beyond dogmatic Marxism, the Frankfurt School's contributions also draw heavily on other influences that have often been less central to the canonical reception of Critical Theory. These range from Max Weber and Georg Lukács to Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche, and ancient philosophy, as well as a variety of modern sociological models and traditions. The way the Frankfurt School processed these intellectual resources in order to address the "antisemitic question" and molded them into interdisciplinary

theoretical reflection is itself shaped by historical political events and conditions of the time: most importantly, the caesura of the Nazi persecution and extermination of the European Jews, and the civilizational breakdown it signified.

For the Critical Theorists, the unprecedented atrocities ultimately necessitated new ways of thinking about politics and society. The moral and material collapse of modern civilization was so deep and fundamental that it demanded new categories of analysis and understanding, even experimentation with distinctly new epistemologies.⁸ This insight led the Critical Theorists to rethink the dialectics of rationality and irrationality, universality and particularism, and of modernity and antimodernity in the face of antisemitic unreason.⁹ While absorbing the aforementioned various philosophical and sociological traditions, the Frankfurt School sought to develop a new, reformulated materialist critique of the “return of the repressed” in the modern world—regressive residues, mythologies, and distortions seemingly mastered by modern enlightenment—that helped enable the rise of modern Jew hatred. In this lens, “modernity” is entangled in regressive tendencies negating and destroying the very freedom and hope for an emancipated humankind the enlightenment once promised. However, this new search for a sociologically and philosophically saturated critique of—and social research into—fascist myths and antisemitic reifications does not lead the theorists to propose isolated causal mechanisms to explain such phenomena by reducing societal complexity. This study seeks to bring afore and reconstruct the richness of the Frankfurt School’s insights into those regressive ideologies and the social psychology of modernity’s reactionary

discontents. The Critical Theorists, it is suggested here, are nurtured by a still to be fully appreciated variety of theoretical and empirical resources. The Frankfurt School hereby advances a self-reflexive critique of the societal dialectics of modern enlightenment, progress, social organization, and rationality—without ever rendering any of these concepts obsolete or to be abandoned altogether in an indeterminate critique.¹⁰ Against this backdrop emerges a multifaceted analysis of antisemitism as a social and political phenomenon that cannot be explained by “one” main cause, let alone be understood as any “inevitable” result of the dialectics of modernity.

A second misunderstanding is that Critical Theory's conception of modern authoritarianism, which is a key element for their theorizing of modern antisemitism, is broadly similar to popular understandings of authoritarianism and conformism along the lines of the Milgram experiment. Indeed, the Frankfurt School's multifaceted understanding of the problem should not be confused—though it often is—with the findings of the Milgram experiment. The latter has to a considerable extent influenced the popular perception of “authoritarian” behavior. In contrast to the Frankfurt School's focus on the deep-seated, underlying societal potential and dynamics of authoritarian aggressions directed against those who are perceived as “deviating from the norm,” the Milgram experiment's general claims about human behavior provide a kind of solace because they suggest that authoritarian domination can be well tamed or banned by institutional and legal mechanisms: if no one is put in an all-powerful position, the problem is likely to be solved. In Critical Theory's perspective, authoritarianism cannot be conceived as “only” an institutional problem, that is: a

problem of political institutions engendering domination or limiting public freedom. While institutions are important, the Frankfurt School argues that there is no easy fix for the deeper, underlying problems of authoritarianism and antisemitism in modern society. The starting point is a critical understanding of society's dynamics and the complex interdependencies between individual and socio-psychological dispositions, on the one hand, and constitutive structural and political conditions, on the other hand. The Frankfurt School's complex take on authoritarianism in society and as a problem of social psychology is markedly different from, and adds crucial social and psychodynamic dimensions to, common understandings of the phenomenon. In Critical Theory's approach, authoritarianism cannot be reduced to blind obedience or modern functioning as a cog in the machine. Nor should it be reduced to dimensions of submission vis-à-vis authority or powerful leaders. In fact in the Frankfurt School's lens, as will be shown, latent authoritarian aggressions, which point to the readiness to attack "others" if socially unleashed, and projective stereotypical thinking that objectifies the social world and devalues perceived "out-groups," are defining features of authoritarianism. In such redefined, Freud-inspired conceptions of modern authoritarianism Critical Theory in part grounds its understanding of antisemitism's rise in the modern world.

Third, I argue that the Frankfurt School's theoretically and philosophically inspired work on antisemitism is linked to, and grounded in, serious, thoughtful, and often innovative (even though experimental and partly eclectic) empirical studies of this societal problem. This claim has been contested by several scholars who have called into question the interplay of empirical findings and theory.¹¹

But it is shown here that the Institute's empirical research grounded some of the Frankfurt School's key theoretical claims on authoritarianism and antisemitism, just as much of the empirical work was theory-driven—for instance, Adorno's contributions to *The Authoritarian Personality* were influenced by the "Elements of Antisemitism" in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. It is well established that some of their studies were partly motivated by the need for external funding in troubled times. Several Critical Theorists involved in empirical social research on antisemitism initially did not really want to put all their energy into pursuing this work. That notwithstanding, the Institute's empirical studies on antisemitism in the 1940s and 1950s were also crucial for the evolution of the way the Critical Theorists think about antisemitism, and for the development and transformation of the Frankfurt School at large. In the face of the Nazi terror against Jews, and as the persecution of the European Jews went on and accelerated, the analysis of antisemitism became increasingly central to Critical Theory's project. In many cases, the theoretical work of the Critical Theorists and the empirical studies on antisemitism interacted with one another, often mutually reinforcing claims in theory-driven research.¹² Indeed this link, represented in the study of antisemitism and authoritarianism, it is argued here, has led to critical junctures in the formation of "post-Marxist" Critical Theory that have profoundly reshaped this school of thought and its intellectual legacy. The Critical Theorists were convinced that sociological analyses of antisemitism—as well as the critique of social domination—fall short if they do not engage with its psychological origins and dynamics. In this view, the empirical work demonstrated antisemitism's deeply distorted, projective, "essentially

psychological, irrational nature."¹³ However, the study of antisemitism likewise could not and should not be reduced to solely psychological dimensions or individualistic psychology. For the Frankfurt School theorists such analysis also needs to be anchored in critical reflections of societal conditions, which (re)produce social and political domination and exclusion, and thus—even if to varying degrees—feed resentments in particular contexts and political communities, as well as within an emerging global society.

Fourth, I argue against the misunderstanding that Critical Theory's work on antisemitism in particular, and the Frankfurt School at large, is apolitical social philosophy and theorizing. This study seeks to show that while the Institute's members were primarily social theorists and philosophers, political issues and politico-cultural conditions were very much taken seriously. Political questions were profoundly absorbed into empirical, theoretical, and philosophical reflections. The Frankfurt School attributed a significant role to political mobilizations and politics of unreason in modern mass society, on the one hand, and democratic institutions and critical publics, on the other hand. Politics, in this understanding, often makes the difference with regard to the actual societal relevance of antisemitic, fascist, and racist phenomena. In fact, rather than blurring political distinctions, the Frankfurt School often alerts us to their significance—without, to be sure, cutting historical connections or simply isolating different regime types. The Frankfurt School scholars all too well understood critical differences between totalitarian antisemitism and the politics of extermination, on the one hand, and authoritarian dispositions or racist and antisemitic tendencies in democratic societies, on

the other.¹⁴ Moreover, their work pays attention to and advances the particular conditions, dynamics, and mobilizations of antisemitic hate speech and politics. This complicates the narrative about the Frankfurt School's alleged and often diagnosed "political void," that is: their presumed lack of interest in and understanding of political matters and institutions.¹⁵

Fifth, in contrast to deconstructivist and postmodern readings of the Frankfurt School, I argue throughout this book that Critical Theory's take on antisemitism (and racism, for that matter) is deeply universalistic in its outlook and, even if critically, indebted to the enlightenment project and cosmopolitan intentions.¹⁶ Rather than dismissing critical universal ideals, rights, and norms because they seem compromised by their historical origins and ideological use, they need to be resuscitated in view of particularistic regressions. Hence, the specific critique of antisemitism is linked to a universalistic critique of political and social domination in all its forms; whereby, however, antisemitism—rather than class antagonism, for instance—was rightly understood as the central "injustice" (Adorno) of the time of the Nazi genocide, and it has increasingly become a global challenge again in our time. The Critical Theorists advance a post-Kantian universalistic, cosmopolitan ethos that takes humanity as its reference point without subsuming individuals and particular, tortured bodies unambiguously under an abstract category and morality. They do so while criticizing the profoundly unjust conditions shaping the organization of contemporary societies, and all forms of irrational social domination, local and global, as well as unjustifiable but ongoing exclusions and persecutions of human beings. This critical cosmopolitan ethos does

not stop the Frankfurt School—and us—from making important distinctions when analyzing different social phenomena and their political and philosophical relevance, such as differences between racism and antisemitism, or between exploitation and genocidal persecution.

Because of these five misunderstandings, we have yet to fully appreciate and assess the theoretical impact of the Institute's studies and theorizing of antisemitism. This is especially true for its political and philosophical significance. Indeed, the Frankfurt School's work, this book argues, has important implications for self-reflective political theory and philosophy after Auschwitz that are worth engaging with.¹⁷ This study contributes to this discussion. While Critical Theory places the Holocaust—as it unfolded and thereafter—squarely at the center of theoretical reflection, such thinking remains at the margins until this day. The academic discipline of political theory “has found it possible to produce thousands upon thousands of pages about justice and morality as if Auschwitz had never existed and the complex events preceding and following it had never occurred.”¹⁸ And this neglected legacy of Auschwitz cannot be detached from the antisemitism question. In March 1941 Horkheimer wrote paradigmatically to British political philosopher Harold Laski: “Just as it is true that one can only understand antisemitism by examining society, it seems to me that it is becoming equally true that society itself can only be understood through antisemitism.”¹⁹ The second claim by Horkheimer (that society itself can only be understood through the study of antisemitism) may seem somewhat exaggerated today—just as it was fitting to see antisemitism as the central injustice through which one needs to understand global society at a time of the most

monstrous, unprecedented genocidal crimes against Jews. However, Jew-hatred remains an all too present challenge and constitutive element of modern global society, and important to the latter's understanding. Illuminating both society and the dynamics of anti-Jewish politics, a close analysis of the Frankfurt School's work on antisemitism offers a multitude of partly intriguing even if at times controversial arguments, findings, and insights.²⁰ Such analysis also carries significant philosophical implications for reflecting on "race" and, more generally, the conditions of critical thought today. Engaging with the Frankfurt School's work on antisemitism is thus not just a matter of historical interest in one of the twentieth century's most influential traditions in the humanities and social sciences. It is also a philosophical, sociological, and political inquiry in understanding pressing social phenomena of world society, which today witnesses the resurgence of social mythologies, antisemitism, racism, and renewed "politics of unreason."

Critical Theory in Context: The Origins of the Frankfurt School's Work on Antisemitism

To fully grasp the Institute's work, and how it has both shaped the study of modern Jew hatred and reshaped Critical Theorists' reflection about philosophy, politics and society, it is essential to understand how this research initially evolved in the 1930s and 1940s. The mainstays of the newly founded Institute for Social Research were hardly pioneers in the study of antisemitism on their own initiative; in fact, they were initially not interested but failed to see the relevance of antisemitism as a

problem and subject of inquiry. It was history that turned them into scholars of judeophobia. In particular, the history of Nazism, totalitarian fascism, and the genocide against the European Jews induced this change, which pushed the Frankfurt scholars into researching a problem that they did not consider as central to begin with. Their interest and ultimately the centrality they attributed to antisemitism as a modern social phenomenon developed over time and, at first in American exile, initiated a profound transformation of Critical Theory. The historical material circumstances and constellations required this evolution, which is why it is important to view the Frankfurt School's contributions, and some of the contradictions they produced, in historical context.

The path to Critical Theory's extensive studies on the problem and challenge of modern antisemitism is itself a complex one. It is anything but straightforward, and riddled with tensions. There are significantly conflicting interpretations both among the different members of the Institute (even among those of the inner circle) and between different periods that complicate this story. Even after the Critical Theorists had begun to recognize the relevance of antisemitism as a social problem in the 1930s, it was initially not a central issue to them and its explanation lacked empirical knowledge and theoretical sophistication. Some genealogical notes on the historical context of the Frankfurt School's turn to the subject are therefore due.²¹

The early Critical Theorists had begun to analyze the problem of authoritarianism in the late 1920s. Under the guidance of clinical psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, heading the Institute's department of social psychology, and Hilde Weiss, the Institute for Social Research conducted

the so-called Berlin survey among blue-collar and white-collar workers in 1929/30—that is, in the late Weimar Republic, at the advent of the Nazis' rise to power.²² Based on the analysis of more than 700 questionnaires (an often still overlooked groundbreaking document of modern social research), the Institute diagnosed a broad susceptibility to authoritarian ideas and ultimately fascist mass movements among the German working classes. Moreover, the Institute's inner circle—including Max Horkheimer, who had obtained the directorship of the Institute in 1930—intensely discussed the nature and scope of the Nazi movement and perceptively decided years before the Nazis actually took power that it was time to prepare exile and escape from Germany.²³ Still, these critical insights and decisions, inspired by the early work on authoritarianism, did not lead the Critical Theorists to really grasp the profoundly unsettling antisemitic and racist dimensions of the Nazi threat. At the time, Institute members neither saw antisemitism as the most pressing challenge, nor perceived it as deeply anchored in German society and its working class, or even as a genuine driving force of Nazism. Only while in American exile and as the Nazi genocide against the Jews of Europe evolved in full force did the Critical Theorists engage more profoundly with the subject, and began to empirically and theoretically reflect on its meaning.

There are more complications. Despite the early innovative work on social psychology and public opinion, the Institute's initial work on fascism was entangled in Marxist orthodoxy. To be sure, the Critical Theorists clear-sightedly recognized the potential for fascism in Germany before 1933, already producing groundbreaking work on the subject of authoritarianism while preparing

early for escape from the authoritarian Nazi rule that was foreshadowed on the historical horizon. They saw the writing on the wall. Yet up to the start of the Nazi war of annihilation, among leading members of the Institute a rather strictly economic interpretation of fascism held sway, alongside an almost naive, resilient faith in the emancipatory power of the German working class. Indeed, Horkheimer's 1939 essay "The Jews and Europe," the source of his much-cited dictum that anyone who does not want to speak about capitalism should keep silent about fascism, reduces antisemitism almost entirely to an instrument of class struggle and an aspect of capitalist crisis.²⁴ Moreover, as Philip Spencer observes, when Max Horkheimer "belatedly devoted some attention to the question (1939), he identified Jews as representatives of commercial capital, now doomed to disappear as capitalism entered a new phase."²⁵ Horkheimer's understanding of antisemitism at the time was that the attack on the Jews was only a means to an end, and that the German working class was the true target rather than among its agents. Following an orthodox Marxist line, the essay holds that antisemitism is a matter of unenlightened, false consciousness, a manifestation of the superstructure that serves merely to mask class antagonisms and at the same time to divert the attention of anticapitalist forces. In this view, the capitalist class, without being antisemitic itself, strategically exploits the Jew hatred that arises reflexively in the petty bourgeoisie due to its particular class position, in order to organize a mass following. The ideology of antisemitism, then, appears either as a nakedly cynical capitalist strategy or as a purely reflexive reaction to economic crises.²⁶ The specificity of antisemitic persecution is thereby elided, along with its

actual victims; since, in this view, antisemitism is not, first and foremost, an assault on the Jews, but rather on the German working class. If at the time Horkheimer was firmly convinced that the German working class looked on in disgust at the pogroms, and for this reason did not act as a political subject of antisemitism, he also tenaciously believed that "open aversion to the regime's anti-Semitism" is going to make itself heard "among the German masses."²⁷ While Horkheimer had already profoundly changed his view of antisemitism and the working class by 1941, even as late as 1944 Institute member Franz Neumann still avowed his conviction against all evidence and plausibility that "the German people, as paradoxical as it might seem, remain the least antisemitic of all."²⁸ However, Horkheimer's earlier standpoint leads to a historic misjudgment of Nazism's development and the inability to perceive antisemitism as an ideological driving force motivating the unfolding historical caesura of the Shoah that was in the making:

The hatred of Jews belongs to the ascendant phase of fascism. At most, antisemitism in Germany is a safety valve for the younger members of the SA. It serves to intimidate the populace by showing that the system will stop at nothing. The pogroms are aimed politically more at the spectators than the Jews. Will anyone react? . . . The great antisemitic propaganda is addressed to foreign countries.²⁹

Even though antisemitism had been addressed as a problem in some of Horkheimer's early work and in prior essays by Marcuse and Löwenthal written shortly after the Nazis had taken power, much of the early work of the

Institute fails to understand antisemitism as an autonomous phenomenon with its own dynamics.³⁰ Instead, as indicated, at least Horkheimer even reproduces some stereotypes about Jews, whereby Jews are unreflectively identified with capitalism.³¹ The history of orthodox and economistic Marxist approaches to the “Jewish question” resonates here. For the most part, they ignore antisemitism as a particular, powerful, and deep-seated ideology and take it as an epiphenomenon of secondary relevance: a merely ephemeral propaganda tool among many others that is used by the ruling class and supposed to be peculiarly extrinsic to the working class and its consciousness. Moreover, orthodox Marxist approaches often reproduce the identification of Jews with capitalism that can be traced back to Marx’s *On the Jewish Question*.

Be that as it may, the initially dominant notion that fear and manipulation driven by economic interest, rather than antisemitism and authoritarian bonding, integrated the dependent masses into the Nazi state was subsequently replaced by a multifaceted engagement with the problems of Nazism, modern totalitarianism, and antisemitism. In fact, the previous misperceptions were ultimately sharply critiqued by the core members and most affiliates of the Institute.³² Critical Theorists finally, even if they at first did so only reluctantly, came to grasp without any illusions the scope, magnitude, and significance of antisemitism that had taken hold in broad sectors of the German labor movement and society at large. At the critical juncture at the beginning of World War II and with accelerated anti-Jewish persecution, the Critical Theorists recognized that the decentered dissemination and rise of antisemitism from below and above was precisely what needed to be explained:

an antisemitism becoming manifest in propaganda and state-sponsored, organized as well as spontaneous forms of violence against Jews in Nazi Germany and beyond. Antisemitism, it had become clear to these scholars, was not simply a propaganda tool belonging to the ascendant phase of fascism; to the contrary, it turned out to be Nazism's apocalyptic, genocidal telos.

Thus, by the early 1940s, reports of the systematic destruction of European Jewry—the historical experience of the Nazi genocide—induced profound changes within critical social theory and in the thinking of its main exponents. Breaking new ground toward critical theorizing on modern and contemporary antisemitism would be part and parcel of this paradigmatic shift. The turn simultaneously implied a substantive transformation of Critical Theory of society in general. It also meant nothing less than the sincere search for a new social philosophy after the breakdown of civilization embodied by Auschwitz. The paradigmatic shift thereby signified the development of a new material theory of political modernity, subjectivity, and rationality reflecting the rise of Nazism and antisemitism in the modern world, which had enabled the catastrophe. This new direction of philosophy and social research was grounded in a renewed, more thorough interest in manifestations of social ideology, reified forms of consciousness, and antisemitism in particular; empirical and theoretical work on socio-psychological and political authoritarianism in light of Freudian theory; and a profound rethinking of the civilization process and the dialectics of modern society.

Most members or associates of the Institute for Social Research escaped this genocidal persecution by finding

refuge in America, though some barely made it across the Atlantic; Walter Benjamin, for that matter, did not.³³ Yet while America provided a safe haven for many refugees, including the scholars affiliated with the Institute for Social Research and its inner circle, Nazi Germany's racial antisemitism was coupled with the transnational rise of fascist movements. In addition, the spread of modern antisemitism also affected America domestically. The concurrent emergence of pro-Nazi groups, antisemitic demagogues, and the expansion of domestic racist mass organizations like the Ku Klux Klan—flourishing as a national organization with up to 4 million members since the mid-1920s—raised serious questions about fascist, racist, and antisemitic threats within the United States.³⁴ The Frankfurt School's work in exile, including its social research funded by the American Jewish Committee and the American Labor Committee, thus responded to two desiderata: first, the need to understand the origins of Nazism and the genocide against the Jews of Europe—and why Nazism's particularly fanatic, totalitarian, and murderous antisemitism could take hold in Germany; and second, the need to grasp the nature and scope of fascism's potential, including the lure of modern antisemitism, even *within* American democracy and ultimately worldwide.

Finally, after the Institute had resettled in Frankfurt after the Holocaust, antisemitism became once again a subject of concern and of scholarly analysis.³⁵ Only Horkheimer and Adorno left the United States and returned to Germany to continue the development of Critical Theory in the land of the perpetrators. Especially Adorno pursued this return with astonishing

optimism about the philosophical and educational prospects in post-Holocaust Germany and about the cohort of students he was going to teach—even though all of them had grown up in the Nazi system with its state-sponsored antisemitic paranoia.³⁶ Such optimism and enthusiasm would soon fade in the face of persistent resentments confronting Adorno at the university, and in view of a general social refusal to break with the Nazi past or challenge its legacies among German citizens.

The first major social research project after Horkheimer's and Adorno's return to Germany, the so-called Group Experiment, focused on the social processing of national and individual guilt in relation to the Nazi genocide and its legacy but also addressed antisemitism. The study indicated that deep-seated and widespread resentments against Jews continued. Antisemitic incidents in academia and the general public, propaganda offenses as well as violent acts against Jews, Jewish cemeteries, and institutions—this was the context in post-Holocaust Germany that fostered the Frankfurt School's continued work and theorizing about antisemitism in the 1950s and 1960s. While subject to several studies and essays, to be sure, antisemitism was less central to the reestablished Institute's project than to the previous work in exile.³⁷ But understanding antisemitism's social force, and the legacies of the antisemitic genocide for modern civilization and society, remained a key objective among the Frankfurt School theorists after the war—just as the Critical Theorists deemed it impossible to reflect on social theory after 1945 without thinking about the Holocaust and the possibility of previously unimaginable extreme evil that had materialized in the Nazi concentration camps.