

become a target in turn. In short, Goldhagen's critique of this book and the subsequent controversy surrounding his own work merit a retrospective "afterword" in subsequent editions of *Ordinary Men*.

On several issues Goldhagen and I do not disagree: first, the participation of numerous "ordinary" Germans in the mass murder of Jews, and second, the high degree of voluntarism they exhibited. The bulk of the killers were not specially selected but drawn at random from a cross-section of German society, and they did not kill because they were coerced by the threat of dire punishment for refusing. However, neither of these conclusions is a new discovery in the field of Holocaust studies. It was one of the fundamental conclusions of Raul Hilberg's magisterial and pathbreaking study *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which first appeared in 1961, that the perpetrators "were not different in their moral makeup from the rest of the population. The German perpetrator was not a special kind of German." The perpetrators represented "a remarkable cross-section of the German population," and the machinery of destruction "was structurally no different from organized German society as a whole."³ And it was the German scholar Herbert Jäger⁴ and the German prosecutors of the 1960s who firmly established that no one could document a single case in which Germans who refused to carry out the killing of unarmed civilians suffered dire consequences. Goldhagen does credit Jäger and the German prosecutors in this regard, but he is utterly dismissive of Hilberg.

Aside from the differences in the tone that we employ in writing about the Holocaust and in the attitude that we display toward other scholars who have worked in this field of study, Goldhagen and I disagree significantly in two major areas of historical interpretation. The first is our different assessments of the role of anti-Semitism in German history, including the National Socialist era. The second is our different assessments of the motivation(s) of the "ordinary" German men who became Holocaust killers. These are the two topics that I would like to discuss at some length.

In his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Daniel Goldhagen asserts that anti-Semitism "more or less governed the ideational life

of civil society" in pre-Nazi Germany,⁵ and when the Germans "elected" [sic] Hitler to power, the "centrality of antisemitism in the Party's worldview, program, and rhetoric . . . mirrored the sentiments of German culture."⁶ Because Hitler and the Germans were "of one mind" about the Jews, he had merely to "unshackle" or "unleash" their "pre-existing, pent-up" anti-Semitism to perpetrate the Holocaust.⁷

To buttress his view that the Nazi regime should be seen merely as allowing or encouraging Germans to do what they wanted to do all along and not basically shaping German attitudes and behavior after 1933, Goldhagen formulates a thesis that he proclaims is "new" to the study of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism "does not appear, disappear, then reappear in a given society. Always present, antisemitism becomes more or less manifest." Not anti-Semitism itself, but merely its "expression," either "increases or decreases" according to changing conditions.⁸

Then in Goldhagen's account this picture of underlying permanency and superficial fluctuation changes abruptly after 1945. The pervasive and permanent eliminationist German anti-Semitism that was the sole and sufficient motivation of the Holocaust killers suddenly disappeared. Given reeducation, a change in public conversation, a law banning anti-Semitic expression, and the lack of institutional reinforcement, a German culture dominated by anti-Semitism for centuries was suddenly transformed.⁹ Now, we are told, the Germans are just like us.

That anti-Semitism was a very significant aspect of Germany's political culture before 1945 and that Germany's political culture is both profoundly different and dramatically less anti-Semitic today are two propositions that I can easily support. But if Germany's political culture in general and anti-Semitism in particular could be transformed after 1945 by changes in education, public conversation, law, and institutional reinforcements, as Goldhagen suggests, then it seems to me equally plausible that they could have been equally transformed in the three or four decades preceding 1945 and especially during the twelve years of Nazi rule.

In his introductory chapter Goldhagen provides a useful model

for a three-dimensional analysis of anti-Semitism, even if he does not employ his own model in the subsequent chapters. Anti-Semitism, he argues, varies according to the alleged source or cause (for example, race, religion, culture, or environment) of the Jews' alleged negative character. It varies in degree of preoccupation or priority, or how important is anti-Semitism to the anti-Semite. And it varies in degree of threat, or how endangered the anti-Semite feels.¹⁰ That anti-Semitism can vary in its diagnosis of the alleged Jewish threat and along continuums of priority and intensity would suggest not only that anti-Semitism changes over time as any or all of these dimensions change, but that it can exist in infinite variety. Even for a single country like Germany, I think we should speak and think in the plural—of anti-Semitisms rather than anti-Semitism.

The actual concept Goldhagen employs, however, produces the opposite effect; it erases all differentiation and subsumes all manifestations of anti-Semitism in Germany under a single rubric. All Germans who perceived Jews as different and viewed this difference as something negative that should disappear—whether through conversion, assimilation, emigration, or extermination—are classed as “eliminationist” anti-Semites, even if by Goldhagen's prior model they differ as to cause, priority, and intensity. Such differences that do exist are analytically insignificant in any case, for, according to Goldhagen, variations on eliminationist solutions “tend to metastasize” into extermination.¹¹ By using such an approach, Goldhagen moves seamlessly from a variety of anti-Semitic manifestations in Germany to a single German “eliminationist antisemitism” that, taking on the properties of organic malignancy, naturally metastasized into extermination. Thus all Germany was “of one mind” with Hitler on the justice and necessity of the Final Solution.

If one adopts the analytical model that Goldhagen proposes rather than the concept he actually uses, what then can one say about the changing variety of anti-Semitisms in German political culture and their role in the Holocaust? And where to begin?

Let us begin with nineteenth-century German history, or more

precisely with various interpretations of Germany's alleged “special path” or *Sonderweg*. According to the traditional social/structural approach, Germany's failed liberal revolution of 1848 derailed simultaneous political and economic modernization. Thereafter, the precapitalist German elites maintained their privileges in an autocratic political system, while the unnerved middle classes were bought off with the prosperity of rapid economic modernization, gratified by a national unification they had been unable to achieve through their own revolutionary efforts, and ultimately manipulated by an escalating “social imperialism.”¹² According to the cultural/ideological approach, the distorted and incomplete embrace of the Enlightenment by some German intellectuals, followed by their despair over an increasingly endangered and dissolving traditional world, led to a continuing rejection of liberal-democratic values and traditions on the one hand, and a selective reconciliation with aspects of modernity (such as modern technology and ends-means rationality) on the other, producing what Jeffrey Herf termed a peculiarly German “reactionary modernism.”¹³ A third approach, exemplified by John Weiss and Daniel Goldhagen, asserts a German *Sonderweg* in terms of the singular breadth and virulence of anti-Semitism in Germany, though the former paints with a less broad brush than the latter and is careful to identify the late nineteenth-century loci of this German anti-Semitism in populist political movements and among the political and academic elites.¹⁴

It seems to me that Shulamit Volkov's interpretation of late nineteenth-century German anti-Semitism as a “cultural code” constitutes an admirable synthesis of major elements of these different, though not totally mutually exclusive, notions of a German *Sonderweg*.¹⁵ German conservatives, dominating an illiberal political system but feeling their leading role increasingly imperiled by the changes unleashed by modernization, associated anti-Semitism with everything they felt threatened by—liberalism, democracy, socialism, internationalism, capitalism, and cultural experimentation. To be a self-proclaimed anti-Semite was also to be authoritarian, nationalist, imperialist, protectionist, corporative, and cultur-