

# Towards Normality?

Edited by  
RAINER LIEDTKE and  
DAVID RECHTER

*Schriftenreihe  
wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen  
des Leo Baeck Instituts*

68

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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# Towards Normality?

Acculturation and Modern German Jewry

edited by

Rainer Liedtke and David Rechter

Mohr Siebeck



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## Obituary

### PROFESSOR WERNER EUGEN MOSSE, 1918-2001

The death of Werner Mosse on 30 April 2001 has further thinned the ranks of those Central Europeans who came to Britain as adolescents or as young men and women in the 1930s and then gained distinction as professional historians. Born on 5 February 1918 in Charlottenburg, then a separate suburb of Berlin, Mosse came from that cultured German-Jewish bourgeoisie that rose to prosperity in the course of the nineteenth century and whose scions became eminent in the arts, the natural sciences and the humanities. His grandfather was Rudolf Mosse, the leading newspaper proprietor of Imperial Germany, whose publications included the influential Liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*. His father settled on an estate in the village of Standenhagen outside Berlin, where Mosse attended the village school, before moving to the *gymnasium* at nearby Trebbin. The rise of the Nazi Party made life increasingly difficult for the Mosse family in this rural area; following the arrest and death of his father in 1933, Mosse left for Britain with his mother and siblings. He was fortunate in being able to continue his education at St. Paul's School and went to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1936 as an Open Scholar to read for the Historical Tripos, gaining Firsts in both parts.

The war interrupted his further studies. Internment as an "enemy alien" and deportation to Canada followed, but he came back to the United Kingdom in 1941 to join the British Army, initially in the Pioneer Corps, rising to the rank of Captain. With the end of the war he returned to Corpus, this time as a Research Fellow. Having learnt Russian – one of the five languages he commanded – he wrote his Ph.D. under the supervision of Sir Herbert Butterfield on the Treaty of Paris of 1856. He was now established as a diplomatic historian of the nineteenth century and as a specialist on Russia. The principal outcome of his researches, *The Rise and Fall of the Crimean System* (1963), is a model of its kind and retains its authoritative status. His expertise led first to a lectureship at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London in 1948 and in 1952 to a senior lectureship at Glasgow. Although his interests turned in-

creasingly to Germany in the 1960s, he retained his commitment to Russian history. He revised his *Alexander II and the Modernisation of Russia* (1958), originally in the Teach Yourself History series, in 1992, and at his death left a full-length manuscript, 'The Dormant Volcano: Russia on the Eve of the Revolutionary Crisis, 1898-1901'.

In 1964 he was appointed to the chair of European History at the new University of East Anglia, with a broader and more innovative teaching remit than at Glasgow. His colleagues included such rising stars as Volker Berghahn and Richard Evans and it was at this time that his research priorities changed. Thanks to an increasingly close association with the London Leo Baeck Institute, whose chairman he became in 1978, he now concentrated on German-Jewish history. He deserves much of the credit for rescuing that subject from the backwater it had occupied until then and for steering it into the historiographical mainstream. He pursued this aim with energy and imagination. He insisted that the enterprise must be multidisciplinary, incorporating social and economic history and the history of ideas. Even more crucially he insisted that the history of the Jews of Germany should be written as an integral part of the history of modern Germany and modern Europe. This approach is evident in his two-volume monograph on the stratum with which he had the closest family links, *Jews in the German Economy: The German-Jewish Economic Elite* (1987) and *The German-Jewish Economic Elite 1820-1935: A Socio-Cultural Profile* (1989), but above all in the symposium volumes of which he was principal editor: *Entscheidungsjahr 1932: Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik* (1965), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923* (1971) and *Juden im wilhelminischen Deutschland 1880-1914* (1976). These books both set a new agenda and established standards that have not been rivalled. They remain indispensable to this day. In addition to these volumes he was also the inspiration behind numerous conferences, at first in Britain and then in Germany and Italy, with an increasing comparative emphasis, which resulted in further publications. *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-Speaking Jews in Great Britain* (1991) and *Two Nations: British and German Jews in Comparative Perspective* (1999) bear testimony to his innovative influence. A conference on the varieties of assimilation, which led to the present volume, was held in Cambridge in September 2001, and was a posthumous tribute to his initiatives.

It was fortunate for Mosse's project that a generation of mainly younger German historians were independently discovering the Jewish dimension of their country's past and he soon forged close links with them. The

outcome of these contacts was the creation of a German working centre of the Leo Baeck Institute, the *Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Leo Baeck Instituts in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, for many years under the direction of Professor Reinhard Rürup, which now plays a major role in research and publication on German Jewish topics. This well-established and fruitful symbiosis of German and British-based scholarship in this field owes much to Mosse's determination.

Mosse was in many ways a paradoxical man, in both character and outlook. He remained unmarried and was probably a rather solitary figure, yet the many projects that he initiated required a high degree of teamwork. His research ideas bubbled over with originality, but his teaching methods remained stubbornly traditional. He was evidently marked by his early social isolation in rural Brandenburg, the brutal fate of his father and his mixed experiences during the war. He struck many as the archetypal Central European intellectual, complete with accent, yet evidently found more serenity in his retirement in the Cotswolds than in some of his academic appointments. He could be impatient and was capable of blowing more than one fuse, but those who knew him well could tease out a normally well-hidden charm and a capacity for black humour. Among his varied achievements his impact on the volume and direction of modern German Jewish history will be his lasting monument.

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RAINER LIEDTKE – DAVID RECHTER

## Introduction: German Jewry and the Search for Normality

The history of the Jewish diaspora has often been cast in terms of exclusion and otherness. Defined by difference from their “host” society, Jews have commonly been regarded as a people apart. Until the mid-eighteenth century, Jews in western and central Europe indeed lived in largely self-contained and autonomous communities, a distinct group in a hierarchical society of estates. At best tolerated, at worst persecuted, the framework and fabric of their daily lives socially and physically separated them from their surroundings. All this began to change with the advent of the Enlightenment and the prospect of emancipation towards the end of the eighteenth century. The social, cultural, political and economic processes set in motion at this point were as enduring and profound in their impact on Jewish society as they were more broadly. The very definition of Jews and their status in modern European society became problematic, as the Jewish Question – an issue for Jews and others – assumed a complexity and intensity that persisted for a century and a half. In historiographical terms, these processes have been compressed into a manageable duo, emancipation and assimilation, terms that cover a multitude of sins. These rather elastic concepts have served historians well and this is nowhere better illustrated than in the voluminous historiography of German-speaking Jewry.

For the past half-century the Leo Baeck Institute, with branches in Jerusalem, London and New York, has been the most important single site of this scholarly enterprise, promoting and disseminating research in an uninterrupted sequence of conferences and publications. The present volume is the latest in a distinguished series, published under the auspices of the Institute’s London branch, that addresses the issues of emancipation and assimilation (the latter term has in recent years given way to the rather more accommodating and flexible term “acculturation”). It presents the work of an international group of scholars, members for the most part

of a newer cohort, who approach these venerable topics from a variety of innovative perspectives.

The thread running through the diverse contributions, as indicated by the volume's title, is that of normality, clearly a close relation of emancipation and acculturation. Throughout the period from the Enlightenment to the 1930s, it can be argued that German-speaking Jews endeavoured to be like those around them, to become – in a (loaded) word – normal. The term is not generally employed by historians of European Jewry, and its use here does not imply anything so grand as an adjustment of the current theoretical framework of Jewish transformation and modernisation. The search for the normal, it is hoped, might provide an interesting perspective from which to examine the diverse modes of German Jewish acculturation and integration, or lack thereof. Underpinning this perspective is the recognition that the protracted struggle for Jewish civic and legal equality in the German lands indelibly marked both Jewish society and its relationships to German society. If by 1871 Jews had achieved formal emancipation, it is nonetheless true that they remained a recognisable group, whether by choice or circumstance. The notion that German Jewry formed an identifiable minority sub-culture by the middle of the nineteenth century – distinctive by dint of its demography and middle-class socio-economic status – has become firmly embedded in the thinking of most historians working in this field, and this can be said, too, of German-speaking Jewry in the Habsburg Empire. The existence of a sub-culture, by implication, raises questions about normative status and normality, about the relationships of the minority group to the larger society, and it is these questions that the contributions to this volume seek to investigate. The very form of the volume's title indicates that normality was a moving target and could in no way be taken for granted. To give credit where it is due, it should be said that the idea was the brainchild of the late Werner Mosse, who suggested that the questions of what constituted normality for German-speaking Jewry, whose normality it might be, how it was to be achieved, its contested nature and definitions, could serve as the basis for a conference, which was duly organised by the Leo Baeck Institute and held at Clare College, Cambridge in September 2001.

What, then, makes normality a worthwhile point of departure? First, by definition it requires comparison and context, mandating a view of Jewish history – the history of a minority – as part and parcel of general history. In doing so, it precludes the oft-lamented introspective focus of some Jewish historiography which tends to neglect developments outside Jewish society. Second, it transpires from a discussion of the Jewish search

for normality (or the search for Jewish normality) that at no point was it possible to determine a precise target. Rather, constant accommodation and adaptation was required to conform to the changing mores of society. To state the obvious, normality was a chimera, an intricate web of shifting conditions and conventions that comprised what contemporaries regarded at any given time as acceptable, desirable or normal. There was, we might say, no “there” there. Third, inquiring about Jewish normality brings to light its manifold versions and reveals the enormous diversity of German Jewish life. It underscores that Jews not only attempted to live up to the models and standards of the surrounding society, but also created their own versions of these, appropriately adapted to their needs and desires. Moreover, what clearly emerges is that we cannot speak easily of a single German Jewry, or German-speaking Jewry, but rather should conceive of an overlapping multitude of German-speaking Jewries: not one community, but many. Taken together, the contributions to this volume vividly demonstrate the many and varied paths that German-speaking Jews chose in their pursuit of normality. As a collection of case studies, they furnish a wealth of information about individuals, issues and communities, from which we learn a great deal about the general conditions of post-Enlightenment German Jewish life and about the interactions between the Jewish minority and the society it helped build.

In his introductory historiographical reflections, MICHAEL A. MEYER takes up the themes of assimilation and normality, arguing in an almost revisionist mode that the former offers greater analytical scope than the currently more favoured term acculturation. Normality, he cautions, is an inherently problematic notion when thinking about history, given that the norms of any society are in flux. German-speaking Jewry was overassimilated, almost hypernormal, and thus remained abnormal. Its strenuous efforts to achieve normality – in physical make-up, dress and appearance, demography, occupation, social life, education, culture and religion – marked it out as different. For Meyer, the irony is that the very process of striving to be the same created significant difference. The paradox and irony that Meyer finds inherent in the German Jewish situation finds expression in a number of other contributions.

It is often asserted, as CHRISTHARD HOFFMANN points out, that an integral part of the redefinition of Jewish identity in modern Europe was the selective reinterpretation of the Jewish past, yet few studies discuss in detail the relationship of acculturation to what he terms Jewish historical culture. Hoffmann lays out the instrumentalisation of history in the ac-

culturation process by examining the development of Jewish historical consciousness and the creation of a “modern Jewish history culture” that helped to reconcile Jewishness and modernity, enabling Jews to reconceptualise their collective sense of self as appropriately modern. Historical writing and historical perception were key elements in this, and by comparing public memorialising of the Mendelssohn jubilees in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Hoffman illustrates the ways in which German Jewish historians interpreted the modern period and how these interpretations reflected Jewish efforts to acculturate and normalise. Jews were “cultural immigrants” and, like other marginalised groups, needed to construct their history as part of their creation of a collective identity in a modern society (yet another instance of the invention of tradition). This particular identity was bourgeois and modern, and at the heart of this conception of history was what Hoffmann calls the paradigm of emancipation and acculturation. Neither Jewish nationalists nor the Orthodox shared this decidedly liberal view of history and modernity; the ensuing differentiation and fragmentation of Jewish collective memory was itself a not uncommon phenomenon and might therefore be construed for our purposes as an entirely “normal” development.

For JOHANNES HEIL, too, history and historiography are instructive about the transformations experienced by German Jews in the modern period. Like Christhard Hoffmann, Heil focuses on the instrumentalisation of history, manifested in this case by interpretations of “Jew-hatred and persecution”, which he describes as the “most weighty topic in Jewish history”. Examining its treatment by major historians such as Leopold Zunz, Isaac Marcus Jost and Heinrich Graetz (among others), Heil demonstrates that the perception and interpretation of history were important in the self-image of German Jews as they moved towards normality. What Hoffmann calls a history culture offered, says Heil, “a resumé of the past [and] guidelines for modelling the future”. In this context, both Hoffmann and Heil make note of the “presentism” always evident in the writing of history, the manner in which “Jewish historians struggled with the perception of their own history in relation to general history and contemporary socio-political issues”. The revolutions of 1848 and the rise of antisemitism were critical in effecting a paradigm shift in Jewish historiographical narratives, with persecution becoming increasingly central. In this way, the history of the Jewish minority marched out of step with the dominant national historiographical narrative, employing different markers and milestones. A degree of difference was thereby embedded in the narrative and structure of Jewish history writing. On the one hand,

Jewish historical scholarship aimed to portray and preserve an authentic Judaism and Jewish tradition; on the other, it was concerned with noting the Jewish contribution to European civilisation. As Heil comments, “the subject matter was Jewish, the purpose was emancipatory”. The topic of persecution, unavoidable and ever-present, proved to be a serious impediment to the forging of a normal Jewish past and present.

Historians and historiography also figure prominently in CHRISTIAN WIESE’s discussion of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism). Wiese applies post-colonial theory to the Jewish “intellectual revolt” against the prevailing Protestant historiographical construction of Judaism’s past and present. In contrast to the common critique (most succinctly expressed by Gershom Scholem) that paints the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* project as one of apologetic submission, he argues that its scholars were moved by a conscious counter-assimilatory impulse in conceiving of Christianity as part of Jewish history. This was an “anti-colonial” thrust, demanding the recognition of Judaism as an equal, if not superior, cultural force – in terms of religious originality and ethical weight – to the Western Christian tradition. At work here was a determined effort to undermine and contest the “anti-pluralist hegemony of Protestant culture in Prussian-dominated Wilhelmine Germany”. This effort can be viewed, Wiese comments, as a “forceful attempt” to achieve normality, which was understood as the full acceptance and acknowledgement of Judaism as an authentic and viable force in modern German society. Furthermore, Wiese sees the Protestant approach to Judaism and Jewish integration in Germany in the context of Edward Said’s colonial discourse analysis, in that a subjugated Jewish minority was cast as the “other” by a hegemonic Protestantism. German Jewry, in this reading, found itself in a colonial situation, its tradition and identity consistently marginalised. The intellectuals of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* actively resisted this by proclaiming the enduring value of Jewish historiography, literature and philosophy. Wiese hammers another nail in the coffin of the once much vaunted German-Jewish symbiosis by stressing that these Jewish scholars refused to be “normal” in the sense demanded by the bulk of the non-Jewish intelligentsia, i.e., that Jews integrate by relinquishing their distinctive identity. Their resistance, however, while clearly a significant phenomenon, was nevertheless a “cry in the void”, a voice in the wilderness that evoked only an inadequate response from their German counterparts.

If the past proved difficult to tame, the present offered no easy answers either. Creating a normal Jewish present was a primary concern for Re-



form Judaism, as DEBORAH HERTZ shows in her discussion of the formative period of the Reform movement in Berlin in the early nineteenth century. Probing the relationship between Reform and conversion, Hertz poses a counterfactual question: had Reform services not been closed down in Berlin, would fewer Jews have chosen to convert? Reform offered a new and modern way to be Jewish, redefining the nature and praxis of Jewish religion and perforce of Jewish identity. Working with new statistical evidence, Hertz argues that Reform was a strategy for Jewish survival that successfully prevented a significant number of conversions, acting as a safety valve for discontent. Far from being a prelude to conversion, it was an alternative. While the attractions of Protestantism – Germany’s dominant religion – were considerable to the Reformers, they firmly believed that their renewal movement was “the correct path to the Jewish future”.

The Reform movement and its stress on the modern also figures in SIMONE LÄSSIG’s examination of the relationship between the social and economic ascent of German Jewry and the “invention” of a modern Jewry. Using Max Weber’s sociology of religion and Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas about cultural capital to trace the socio-economic influence of the cultural codes of religion, Lässig traces the interaction between Jewish modernity, religious reform and cultural embourgeoisement. To what extent, she asks, was the embourgeoisement of German Jewry shaped and informed by the transformation of German Judaism? The aestheticisation of ritual, the redefinition of gender roles, the separation of religious and secular spheres, and the use of German sermons all serve as examples of the process of transformation. Lässig sees the gradual emergence of a consensus among the various streams of German Jewry regarding the importance of embourgeoisement, notwithstanding continuing theological differences. Jewishness, Judaism and *Bürgerlichkeit* were knitted together into a seamless web, as embourgeoisement and modernity came to be perceived as synonymous with normality.

Two contributions highlight both the importance of gender as an analytical category and the startling variety of what constituted normality in German Jewish society. Normality, it unsurprisingly transpires, is a gendered concept. Many Jewish men in Imperial Germany, writes GREGORY CAPLAN, strove to be men of honour. In pursuit of this goal, they went to great lengths to fashion an identity that conformed to the prevailing ideal of militaristic masculinity. To this end, Jewish activists and organisations proclaimed loudly and insistently that Jews must fulfil their patriotic duty by fighting and, if necessary, dying for their country. Moreover, they at-

tempted to persuade Jewish men to take up military service, not least to help combat the popular image of the physically infirm and degenerate Jewish man. Despite the substantial influence that military values and symbols exerted upon German Jewish men, Caplan's work in fact suggests that middle-class Jewish men in Wilhelmine Germany were rather less militaristic than their non-Jewish counterparts. Perhaps, he proposes, the Jewish adoption of German culture in this period was rather less wholesale than is commonly assumed. By contrast, the First World War and the Weimar years saw a marked increase in what Caplan calls the "currency of militarism among German Jews". The importance of the Great War as a crucible of identity for German Jewry is a recurring theme in the volume.

Notions of honour and masculinity played an important role also in Jewish student duelling fraternities. For many university students, joining a duelling fraternity was an entirely normal, and indeed vital, component of their student days. Universities, as LISA SWARTOUT points out, helped facilitate the rapid socio-economic rise of Germany Jewry in the *Kaiserreich*. As a key site for the forging of a German national culture, they provided Jews with an opportunity to imagine themselves partners in this enterprise. But universities were also incubators of antisemitism, which provoked a committed and active Jewish response. The end result was an uneasy and flammable amalgam of German nationalism, patriotism, antisemitism and Jewish activism, a climate of both opportunity and exclusion. Concentrating on the years from the end of the nineteenth century until the First World War, Swartout explores the world of duelling fraternities, in which Jewish students attempted to embrace particular versions of both German and Jewish identities. Excluded from general fraternities, Jews formed their own parallel network, paradoxically cementing the very separation they were trying to overcome. In these Jewish fraternities, courage, honour and masculinity were paramount values, with the Jewish content mostly a matter of heritage and culture rather than religion, which was marginalised almost to vanishing point. To be normal in this context meant to be a fervent German patriot. In attempting to combine this with an equally fervent Jewish patriotism, the Jewish students found themselves caught between segregation and integration, between difference and normality.

Fervent patriotism was part and parcel of the Jewish response to the First World War, which is often viewed as a major watershed in Jewish - non-Jewish relations in the German-speaking lands, a litmus test for the success of a century of Jewish acculturation. In his contribution, ULRICH



SIEG questions received wisdom concerning German Jews' wholehearted welcome of the war as an opportunity conclusively to prove their patriotism by spilling blood for their country, a final proof, as it were, of full integration into German society. He argues that German Jews were neither more nor less inclined than non-Jews to die for their fatherland and that Jews, like other Germans, held ambivalent views about the war. Sieg believes that German Jews were in this regard quite normal, in contrast to the many historians who have portrayed them as super-patriots, and therefore "out of sync" with the general consensus, a portrayal he sees as tendentious and teleological. Using material drawn from diaries and letters of the Jewish intellectual élite, he sets out to show "the multidimensional and fragile character of Jewish war experiences" and paints a different picture of German Jewish responses to the war, describing a well-integrated community acting in a predictable fashion.

The First World War, and in particular the marked ethnicisation and nationalisation of Jewish society, is similarly at the centre of ELISABETH ALBANIS's biographical study of the author Moritz Goldstein, a case study in dissimilation and assimilation that further attests to the fluid parameters of what constituted German Jewish normality. A literary intellectual caught between two self-defined poles of identity – German and Jewish – Goldstein, like Sieg's intellectuals, was profoundly affected by the war. He is best known for his controversial essay of 1912, "German Jewish Parnassus", in which he called on Jews to abandon their overly prominent role in German literary culture. If prior to the war Goldstein aspired only to the status of a German writer, the antisemitism of the war years put paid to this ambition and he turned for a time to a form of diaspora nationalism, a not uncommon response during those years. But he was suspicious of the cult of *Ostjudentum*, which he believed devalued western Jewry's (his) experience and reality, and he fought the idea that to be a normal, authentic Jew meant to be an eastern European Jew. Normality, we find once more, is contextual. Goldstein wanted passionately to be recognised and accepted both as a German writer and as a Jew. Either or both, he felt, ought to be normal.

The customary comparative reference point for Jewish normality in the German context is the dominant social force of Protestantism. Comparison with Catholics, another minority group in Germany society (albeit of a rather different sort), is therefore all the more welcome and is in fact necessary to assess the success or failure of Jewish acculturation. KEITH PICKUS's comparison of Jewish and Catholic educational strategies in nineteenth-century Hesse-Darmstadt, focusing on primary schools, finds

that Jews and Catholics attempted to normalise and acculturate in divergent ways. Both Catholics and Jews “were acutely aware of the intimate connection between education and the perpetuation of their respective religious traditions”. Catholic schools inculcated their pupils with a national religious identity that offered an alternative to the prevailing Prussian Protestant nationalism. Jews, keen on entering civil society, generally attended non-Jewish (Protestant or Catholic) schools and were educated in an environment in which it was difficult to preserve a distinct national religious consciousness. Here were two religious minorities faced with a Prussian Protestant state after 1871, although the Jews were a relatively small minority, while the Catholics were more numerous and, as Christians, were of course closer to the Protestant norm than the Jews. Jews adapted eagerly to pressure to conform and normalise, to “suggested” change in their educational practices, while Catholics proved to be more resistant. The *Kulturkampf* notwithstanding, Catholics were nonetheless ultimately incorporated into the German nation in a way that remained elusive for Jews. Two minorities, then, but one proved considerably less different – or more normal – than the other, with religion an almost insuperable obstacle to the attainment of normality in a national community that was defined in Christian Germanic terms.

Religion proved to be an obstacle in other ways too, as we see in ROBIN JUDD’s account of the Jewish rearguard action against moves to abolish ritual slaughter (*schechita*) in turn of the century Germany. While not all those who campaigned against ritual slaughter were motivated by antisemitism, the debates generated an image of Jews and their religious practices as deviant and intolerable in a civilised society. In defence, Jewish groups paradoxically stressed at one and the same time Jewish universality and particularism, arguing that their religion was in tune with the demands of modernity and civilisation. This was perhaps the acceptable – religious – face of difference, where to be (slightly) different could be considered, so the Jews hoped, entirely normal.

SYLVIA CRESTI delves into the theoretical complexities of comparative national identity and collective memory in her discussion of the divergent paths of “nationalisation” taken by the Jews of Habsburg Austria and Imperial Germany in the 1870s and 1880s. She analyses the shifting meanings of the terms nation, culture and *Volk* to illustrate that the process of defining citizenship and identity led these Jewries to conceive of Judaism and Jewishness – and their relationship to state and society – in markedly different ways, despite the fact that their starting point was similar. Such a comparison serves to remind us that identity and normality were con-

textual rather than absolute – a truism admittedly, but nonetheless worth bearing in mind. The case of Austro-German Jews, as Cresti calls them, bears this out, since their combination of Habsburg loyalty, cultural Germanness and Jewish ethnicity was entirely dependent on the opportunities and constraints afforded and imposed by the Austrian multinational state.

Offering a view from the Austrian provinces, HELGA EMBACHER employs a range of memoirs to describe the efforts made by the Jews of Salzburg to assimilate into the local bourgeoisie. As German nationalism bulked increasingly large in the self-definition of Salzburg's middle class, and as antisemitism grew in intensity, Jews found that their access to the city's bourgeois life was restricted. In response, Jews turned inwards, towards networks of family and friends. Salzburg provides an interesting contrast to most of the other cases in this volume in that Jews there were a tiny minority, at no time sufficiently numerous to form the critical mass of a separate society or culture. In this respect, it also offers a contrast and corrective to the better-known Jewish experience in Vienna or other large urban centres of the Habsburg Empire. Outlining the social, economic and religious contours of Salzburg Jewry, Embacher argues that ascent into the bourgeoisie was synonymous for Salzburg Jews with acculturation, modernity and normalisation, and that their aspirations to attain bourgeois status were largely frustrated, despite a degree of superficial social integration and economic success.

A degree of undeniable social and economic success characterised another branch of German and German-speaking Jewry, the transatlantic German Jewish diaspora, which formed a not insignificant part of the large-scale nineteenth-century German migration to the United States. At the risk of repetition, what emerges clearly from TOBIAS BRINKMANN's discussion of the German Jewish experience in the United States is that normality is dependent on context. German Jews in the United States enjoyed a status of relative normality, a status that was itself exceptional when compared with that of Jews in most other states at the end of the nineteenth century. In the U.S.A., a society of hyphenated identities, Jews were first and foremost one of many immigrant populations in a country where normality was defined by skin colour and, to a lesser extent, class. Following the mass immigration of eastern European Jews from the 1880s, a tide of anti-Jewish discrimination – part of a broader anti-immigration nativist movement – attempted to stain Jewish “whiteness” and thereby deprive Jews of the prime characteristic of American normality. Nevertheless, the extent of Jewish normality in the United States was, as

Brinkmann points out, exceptional in the context of the great majority of the world's Jews.

Finally, a radically different concept of Jewish normality emerged with the advent of Zionism in the late nineteenth century. MITCHELL B. HART explores the Zionist challenge to the sacred cow of *Bildung*, the reigning discourse of emancipation and acculturation that demanded self-improvement, education and integration from the Jews in order to attain normality. Zionist social scientists defined this kind of normality (assimilation) as a sickness and a harbinger of collective dissolution, although it should be noted that they repudiated not so much the content of *Bildung* as its context. To be normal, like other nations, Jews needed to reverse the process of assimilation by recognising and developing their separate national consciousness. As their contribution to this cause, Zionist social scientists charted the vast transformations of Jewish society in the modern era, asserting, in stark contrast to the liberal view of improvement and progress, that these transformations were cause and consequence of an unremitting process of national and racial degeneration and decline. Such terminology, Hart points out, was the common currency of contemporary medical and scientific literature, and notions of normal and abnormal were indispensable to the social scientific project as categories both of analysis and judgment. Yet another paradox is evident here. These social scientists, as Hart writes, were “products – intellectually and ideologically – of Europe, and were profoundly indebted to European scholarship and universities for the conceptual tools with which they went about negating Jewish integration into Europe”.

As amply demonstrated by the breadth of the subject matter of the contributions to this volume, the desire for normality, no matter how it was defined, was a consistent undercurrent that helped shape the transformations of modern German-speaking Jewry. A minority group in the throes of rapid transition, German-speaking Jews made valiant attempts to orient themselves, both individually and collectively, to the unceasing demands of state and society. The studies presented here provide both insight into and detail about the processes of acculturation and modernisation that this entailed, and make clear their far-reaching consequences for Jewish status and identity. And what was true for German-speaking Jewry was also true, *mutatis mutandis*, for Jews elsewhere in Europe. The stakes involved in the search for normality were high indeed. As we have seen, at issue was nothing less than the Jewish past and present, and therefore the Jewish future.

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MICHAEL A. MEYER

## German Jewry's Path to Normality and Assimilation: Complexities, Ironies, Paradoxes\*

Three key concepts feature throughout this volume: normality (followed by a question mark), assimilation and acculturation. Of the three, the last, acculturation, is surely the least problematic. Both conceptually and empirically, its application to German Jewry seems appropriate. To be sure, by dictionary definition acculturation means a process of mutual cultural interaction “resulting in new and blended patterns” and especially a process whereby a “primitive culture” is modified “through direct and prolonged contact with an advanced society”.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish culture obtaining before intensive contact with German culture was certainly not primitive nor was the result blended, at least not of equal parts. However, in the simple sense of German Jewry's progressive entry into the realm of German culture during the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acculturation rather straightforwardly describes the process.

The remaining two concepts are far more general, complex, problematic – and interesting – as applied to the history of modern German Jewry. In what follows I propose to offer some reflections on the use of these concepts in general for our subject and then focus especially on assimilation with regard to its different dimensions: physical, demographic and occupational, social, cultural and religious. The complexities, ironies and paradoxes that emerge may serve as caveats for all who use these categories.

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\* My thanks to Michael Brenner and Steven M. Lowenstein, who commented on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, MA 1966, p. 13.



Unlike assimilation, normality is not a term that occurs with any frequency, if at all, in the primary sources for German Jewish history. Its original definition lies in the realm of nature, not history. When applied to history, it is inherently problematic on account of its twofold meaning: as achieving conformity with a statistical average, on the one hand; as reaching a desirable standard, or norm, on the other. The two may be combined when reaching a normative distribution becomes the coveted goal of normalisation.

How well does the normalisation paradigm apply to German Jewry? It is not difficult to find both non-Jewish and Jewish voices in the literature urging that Jews should conform to the patterns of non-Jewish society regarded as both a natural and a desirable norm. The application is more to the collective than to the individual: the Jewish population as a whole should represent substantially the same distribution as the non-Jewish, especially with regard to occupations, but also with regard to physical appearance, wealth, political attitudes and cultural preferences.

It should be noted that norms do not remain static. To achieve what is normal today may mean to be regarded as abnormal tomorrow – and vice versa. The economic pattern in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century was far different from its beginning. In discerning the direction of this development, Jews chose not to normalise but to maintain a currently abnormal occupational pattern that would, in the course of time, become far more normal. Some of them did, as we shall see, indeed give lip service to achieving a more normal occupational distribution, especially as perceived abnormality in this regard was a cause for withholding emancipation, but their actions, in part hampered by obstacles not of their own making, were at best half-hearted. Ironically, it was the Zionists who were most devoted to normality. But for them it meant the creation of a “normal” state and society of their own, not the proportional distribution of a minority within a larger non-Jewish entity.

If normality for the individual German Jew meant being like everyone else, then some rejected that goal outright. One need think only of Rahel Varnhagen, who prized her marginality (we might say abnormality) as essential to achieving literary and social insights. She wished to assimilate in most respects, but not to cast off the abnormality of the outsider. In collective terms, German Jews sought to expand their presence in Germany by entering desirable economic and cultural domains that had been closed to them, but they did not send their children into occupations that possessed no future. Thus in certain areas they became pioneers, setting a pattern that only later became the norm for German society as a whole.

Two examples are urbanisation and the education of girls.<sup>2</sup> In general, Jews were interested in normalisation upwards, but not downwards. Although one can plausibly argue that at the end of the nineteenth century German Jews were in numerous respects more assimilated than at its beginning, they still did not approximate the general German norm. In various respects disproportionately represented in German society, they remained “abnormal”.

The concept of assimilation is a broader term than acculturation, encompassing more than culture. As applied to modern Jewry, it bears not only the weight of its polemical use in the loud clashes between Zionists and anti-Zionists but also its highly differentiated evaluation among twentieth-century scholars. The most recent negative interpretation comes from the social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, who understands assimilation as a trap sprung on the Jews by non-Jewish Germans in order to leave them bereft of their self-respect and without a base of support either in their society of origin or in the one they had hoped to join.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Jewish historian Gerson Cohen was of the opinion that assimilation, as an active process of adopting and adapting cultural and religious elements from the surrounding society, was a necessary mechanism for the preservation of Jewish identity in both the medieval and the modern worlds.<sup>4</sup> A third scholar, the Israeli historian of Italian Jewry, Robert Bonfil, rejects entirely the dichotomy implied by the concept of assimilation. In his view, Renaissance Jewry’s selective adoption of forms and content from the outside did not create “assimilation pure and simple”. In their own way the Jews were “just as much men of the Renaissance as their Christian contemporaries”.<sup>5</sup> Bonfil’s interpretation opens the way to positing a single entity that embraced Jews and non-Jews alike and that contained assimilation within it as a two-way street. In fact, this model of mutuality is not entirely inappropriate for German Jewry since non-Jewish Germans did increasingly assimilate at least some traits and habits that were initially more commonly found among Jews. But even if the

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<sup>2</sup> Shulamit Volkov, ‘Die Verbürgerlichung der Juden in Deutschland als Paradigma’, in *idem, Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Zehn Essays*, Munich 1990, pp. 111–130, esp. p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Ithaca, NY 1991, pp. 128–148.

<sup>4</sup> Gerson D. Cohen, ‘The Blessing of Assimilation in Jewish History’ (1966), reprinted in *idem, Jewish History and Jewish Destiny*, New York and Jerusalem 1997, pp. 145–156.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, transl. by Anthony Oldcorn, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1991, p. 168.



flow was not all in one direction, the dominant tide ran from the non-Jews to the Jews.<sup>6</sup>

As Jacob Toury has noted, the term “assimilation” was not commonly used among German Jews before the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Other terms were more common. That does not mean, however, that the ideology of assimilation was also late. Unlike in England, where economic and social assimilation came about with little advocacy, in Germany – and in France – it was earlier argued for under various names and to varying degrees. Toury himself created a seven-point gradation of assimilation, with *Annäherung* (convergence) at the one extreme and *Aufgehen* (merging) or *Auflösung* (dissolution) at the other.<sup>8</sup> He also noted that the term assimilation was first used as an active verb in the political sphere, as in the admonition: “It is the state’s task to assimilate the Jews”. As such, it was closely linked to emancipation and corresponded to the wishes of nearly all German Jews.<sup>9</sup> The context for the concept’s explicit use in later polemical discourse was no longer the struggle for political equality, which had by then been achieved, but rather its desirability in a society within which the depth and incorrigibility of antisemitism had become a matter of dispute. As David Sorkin has correctly observed, its late appearance in common usage makes it a post-emancipatory term.<sup>10</sup>

Yet even if common use of the term assimilation is late in appearance, the process it represents – the diminution of distance between German Jews and non-Jews on various planes and to varying degrees – certainly plays a central role in the entirety of nineteenth century German Jewish history. That role, however, is poorly represented by the model of a

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, assimilation is more often used to express flow that is almost exclusively in one direction only, as in contexts where a new and presumably more primitive population enters the sphere of a dominant, more advanced one and is transformed by the encounter. This applies, in particular, to waves of immigration, whether those to the United States from Eastern Europe or to the State of Israel from Arab lands.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Toury, ‘Emanzipation und Assimilation’, in Julius H. Schoeps (ed.), *Neues Lexikon des Judentums* (Gütersloh/Munich 1992), p. 134. The same is roughly true for French Jewry. See Phyllis Cohen Albert, ‘Israelite and Jew: How Did Nineteenth-Century French Jews Understand Assimilation?’ in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 98–101.

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Toury, ‘Emancipation and Assimilation: Concepts and Conditions’ [Hebrew], *Yalkut Moreshet*, vol. 2:2 (May 1964), p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Jacob Toury, *Soziale und politische Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland 1847–1871*, Düsseldorf 1977, pp. 138–139.

<sup>10</sup> David Sorkin, ‘Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History’, in *LBI Year Book XXXV*, (1990), pp. 17–33.

simple race from one fixed point to another. It should first be noted that the runners did not all leave their starting blocks at the same time. The first German Jews to live, to a high degree, in a shared culture with non-Jews were the vagabonds and criminals of the seventeenth century, who not only sometimes participated in combined gangs but also developed a common language, Rotwelsch, composed of both local non-Jewish and Yiddish linguistic elements.<sup>11</sup> At about the same time, the lives of Court Jews began to intersect more deeply with the lives of non-Jews in ruling circles and in the late eighteenth century a thin layer of German Jewish intellectuals, the maskilim, became increasingly adept in German culture. The German Jewish middle classes entered the process later, those in rural areas later yet. And when the East European Jews migrated to Germany, they constituted a whole new cohort with its own patterns and tempo of assimilation.

As the starting points differed so did the finish lines. What was the goal of assimilation? Not only did it differ by degree, as Toury outlined, but also by its object. Jacob Katz noted as long ago as 1935 that German Jews did not assimilate into German society as a whole but into a certain layer of it: the middle class.<sup>12</sup> They wanted to be *Bürger* as much as they wanted to be Germans. To the extent that it was the German nation as a whole to which one was assimilating, there was the problem that the concept of Germany did not hold still. Ernst Schulin has remarked that 1806, 1848 and 1871 all yielded new constructions of the German nation.<sup>13</sup> One might add that the nineteenth century also produced successive tendencies in religion, philosophy and culture. Sorkin has noted that whereas *Tugend* (virtue) was the assimilatory ideal for Mendelssohn and his circle, that same role a generation later – and for a long time thereafter – was filled by *Bildung*.<sup>14</sup> Mendelssohn became a Wolffian, later German Jewish thin-

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<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Glanz, *Geschichte des niederen jüdischen Volkes in Deutschland. Eine Studie über historisches Gaunertum, Bettelwesen und Vagantentum*, New York 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Katz, 'German Culture and the Jews', in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover, NH and London 1985, p. 85, where he cites from his doctoral dissertation.

<sup>13</sup> Ernst Schulin, 'Doppel-Nationalität? Die Integration der Juden in die deutsche Kulturation und die neue Konstruktion der jüdischen Geschichte', in Peter Alter *et al.* (eds.), *Die Konstruktion der Nation gegen die Juden*, Munich 1999, p. 259.

<sup>14</sup> David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840*, New York 1987, pp. 16–17. However, *Sittlichkeit*, like *Tugend* essentially moral in substance, continued to be an ideal – and a demand of those who insisted Jews acquire it prior to their eman-

kers became Kantians or, less frequently, Hegelians. In short, the assimilating German Jew was aiming at moving targets. Not only were they moving, but it was not clear whether they should be perceived in spatial or temporal terms. Although the process is commonly described spatially, as integration into the life of a political and cultural community, nineteenth century Jews, especially early in the assimilation process, also spoke of breaking down the barriers between their current existence and the reigning *Zeitgeist*. Institutionally and personally, they wanted to be, as they sometimes put it, *zeitgemäss* not *zurückgeblieben* (up-to-date not left-behind).<sup>15</sup> Yet as they became more historically conscious, they also realised that the *Zeitgeist* was not static. They could then see themselves in a different context: as needing to catch up with the other runners in a common race called modernisation whose finish line was, as yet, in no one's sight. And they were by no means averse to passing the non-Jewish runners, even if that left them outside the pack – except in front rather than behind it.

We should finally note that the drive towards assimilation produced new anomalies in place of old ones, sometimes by intent and sometimes not. Katz spoke of the creation of a subgroup; others, including David Sorkin, have spoken of a subculture and detailed how the common quest for emancipation became a new source of unity. Shulamit Volkov has suggested the antonym of assimilation – dissimilation – to designate what she regards as the counter-element in a dialectical process.<sup>16</sup> She has also been awake to the irony and paradox in such a process in which the striving to be alike creates new forms of difference. Objectively, these differences are reflected in the statistical “abnormalities” referred to earlier. Subjectively, they were embodied in new Jewish identities, emptied of some older elements but also filled with some new ones gained in the process of assimilation. Still, this significant counter-trend, emphasised by recent scholarship, does not vitiate Jacob Toury's claim that for most

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cupation. See George Mosse, ‘Jewish Emancipation Between *Bildung* and Respectability’, in Reinhartz and Schatzberg, *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, pp. 1–16.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Dr. Pinchas in Cassel, ‘Ueber den Ursprung, das Wesen, den letzten Zustand und die Bedingungen einer zu vervollkommenen Verfassung des Instituts der Rabbiner . . .’, in *Der Jude*, vol. 1 (1832), p. 84; L. L. Hellwitz [Leopold Zunz], *Die Organisation der Israeliten in Deutschland*, Magdeburg 1819, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Shulamit Volkov, ‘Die Dynamik der Dissimilation: Deutsche Juden und die ostjüdischen Einwanderer’, in *idem*, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus*, pp. 166–180, esp. 167. See also Amos Funkenstein, ‘The Dialectics of Assimilation’, in *Jewish Social Studies*, n.s. vol.1:2 (Winter 1995) pp. 1–14.

German Jews the dominant tendency was towards assimilation and not the reverse.<sup>17</sup>

Let us now look at some examples of how the assimilatory process operated in various spheres, beginning with the most external, the physical. As early as 1793, in his proposals to the Prussian government for the removal of Jewish disabilities, David Friedländer argued that if the Jews were granted equality they would cease to be anomalous. They would, in his words, become “physically stronger and more stupid”.<sup>18</sup> Jewish physical abnormality had been a concern even earlier. In 1777 the physician Elcan Isaac Wolf, residing in Mannheim, had complained of Jewish young men who devoted themselves to “exaggerated teaching and learning” and asked rhetorically: “Is this not the reason why we see so few well-formed youths and men within our race?” He compared them to hothouse fruits, which ripen before their time. Jewish young men should be allowed to go into crafts and agriculture, which would make them physically stronger. For their part, Jewish women should emulate their peasant counterparts by engaging in physical labor during pregnancy instead of sitting idly at home. Wolf was not urging assimilation for its own sake. His goal was a more healthy Jewish population. But he did compare the Jewish with the non-Jewish population and concluded that, for their own good, Jews should in some respects emulate non-Jewish norms.<sup>19</sup>

Conformity in dress and appearance was an early and persistent theme of assimilation. Jewish attire became fashionably middle-class; despite initial rabbinical opposition, shaven faces replaced religiously obligatory beards; names became more Germanic. But physical characteristics, judged as typically Jewish, presented greater difficulty, especially once anti-semites began to make racial arguments. In the wake of Heinrich von Treitschke’s attack upon the Jews in 1879, the philosopher Hermann Cohen gave expression to sentiments perhaps shared to a degree by many German Jews of the time. He wrote: “I assert with confidence: we all wish we had a plainly German, Germanic appearance, of which we presently bear only the climatic side effects”.<sup>20</sup> Cohen, who favored mixed

<sup>17</sup> Toury, *Soziale und politische Geschichte*, p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824*, Detroit 1967, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Elcan Isaac Wolf, *Von den Krankheiten der Juden. Seinen Brüdern in Deutschland gewidmet*, Mannheim 1777, pp. 16, 32, 35, 64, 91–92. On Wolf see John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History*, New Haven and London 2001, pp. 67–77.

<sup>20</sup> Hermann Cohen, ‘Ein Bekenntniß in der Judenfrage’ [1880], reprinted in Walter Boehlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, Frankfurt am Main 1965, p. 138.

marriages, urged Treitschke to be patient. Sooner or later this last difference between German Jew and non-Jew would also disappear. Physical assimilation was also Walther Rathenau's goal in 1897 when he advocated the adoption of racial characteristics (*Anartung*) favored by non-Jews and the abandonment of those despised by them.<sup>21</sup> But there was a counter-trend, as well, perhaps best exemplified by the popular 1920 volume *Das ostjüdische Antlitz* (The East European Countenance), which featured sympathetic drawings of East European Jews by Hermann Struck and a text by Arnold Zweig.

Complete demographic assimilation among German Jews would have meant a population distribution like that of the non-Jews. In the first half of the twentieth century that was not even legally possible. Most German states admitted few, if any, Jewish immigrants from the outside and even within states Jews did not enjoy freedom of movement. Then, once they were increasingly allowed to settle where they wished, Jews did not create a more even distribution. Instead they moved to the cities, creating internal ratios of city dwellers to country dwellers at great variance from those of the general population. In strictly demographic terms Jewish settlement without restrictions at the end of the nineteenth century was no less anomalous, though in a different way, than it had been during the earlier period of restrictions.

The same holds true for occupational distribution. Occupational choice, too, had been legally restricted at the beginning of the century and, except for certain positions of prestige in education, government and the army, was opened up during the process of emancipation. Here, too, freedom did not produce statistical conformity. Enlightened Jews had early argued that some of their brethren should enter physical occupations. So did some non-Jews in the hope that "they will cease to be a nation composed of nothing but traders".<sup>22</sup> But that prospect was, in Shulamit Volkov's telling words, "a hopelessly anachronistic utopia".<sup>23</sup> It could be sold neither to non-Jewish master craftsmen, who harboured deep prejudices about Jews and their abilities, nor to the Jews themselves, for whom an apprenticeship would make it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain Jewish religious practices. Few availed themselves of the limited

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<sup>21</sup> Walther Rathenau, 'Höre Israel' (1897), in *idem*, *Impressionen*, Leipzig 1902, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Hofrath [August Ferdinand] Lueder, *Veredlung der Menschen besonders der Juden durch die Regierung*, Braunschweig 1808, p. 265.

<sup>23</sup> Shulamit Volkov, 'Zur Einführung', in *idem*, ed., *Deutsche Juden und die Moderne*, Munich 1994, p. xvii.



opportunities that were offered. Indeed, they migrated to the cities, which offered new opportunities, for which their commercial experience proved valuable, and also offered the coveted prospect of rising into the middle class. Yet even as they assimilated into the *Bürgertum*, assuming typically middle-class occupations, their demographic profile did not match that of their own class. Overrepresented in some occupations, they were underrepresented in others. As Toury has shown, even as they concentrated their energies on economic advance in the commercial areas that were the most free of opposition, they created sectors that were regarded as “specifically Jewish” and even raised fears that Jews were creating monopolies.<sup>24</sup> In 1895, for Germany as a whole, 56% of Jewish livelihoods were gained from commerce, as opposed to 10% for German non-Jews.<sup>25</sup> The existence of a clearly differentiable Jewish economic sphere served to separate Jews from non-Jews in their own eyes and in the eyes of non-Jews, and it no doubt served to slow the process of assimilation.<sup>26</sup>

More significant as a force operating against assimilation in the cities was the persistence of social segregation. Although legal barriers against mixed marriage disappeared after 1848, the rates remained low during the *Kaiserreich*. Jews participated in formal associations with non-Jews, but informal socialising was done separately among Jews and Christians. Jews frequented the same spas as non-Jews, but favoured those where they felt wanted and associated there mostly with their own. Christians rarely visited a Jewish home. Part of the explanation for this social ghettoisation is, of course, antisemitism. But the Jewish home also became the place where Jewish customs and memories could be comfortably nurtured, away from the transparency and anxiety of the public sphere. At home one did not need to “prove” anything and could, as it were, let one’s hair down, tell Jewish jokes, eat *kugel* and *schalet*. Recognising the formation of a new, more intimate Jewish sphere, Ludwig Philippson, whose *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* had long fought a public campaign for Jewish emancipation, saw the need for a new family-oriented periodical, which he called *Jüdisches Volksblatt*. The paper called upon its readers to take pleasure in their Jewishness, spoke disparagingly of the “gebildeten” Juden, here placed in quotation marks to indicate irony, and called for a

<sup>24</sup> Toury, *Soziale und politische Geschichte*, p. 207.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Shulamit Volkov, ‘Jüdische Assimilation und Eigenart im Kaiserreich’, in *idem*, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus*, p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> For a parallel development, see Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity*, Albany, NY 1983, pp. 47–70.

new casual approach to Jewishness.<sup>27</sup> “Religion and family”, noted another such newspaper, “are most closely intertwined”.<sup>28</sup> These popular Jewish newspapers of the period after 1848 drew upon a newfound Jewish nostalgia, which evoked Jewish memories unsifted by emancipatory concerns. Paralleling similar non-Jewish periodicals like the *Gartenlaube* in form, they brought Jewish content into the Jewish family sphere. Popular ghetto stories were another form of family literature that was free of apologetics, some of them even scattering Hebrew or Yiddish expressions into their German texts. To be sure, Jewish homes might also have Christmas trees and punctilious observance of the dietary laws had become increasingly rare, but in an unstructured, more attitudinal and expressive than reflective manner they carried forward a sense of being among their own.

It was in the area of education and culture that assimilation proceeded in the most straightforward fashion. In the course of the nineteenth century education in general schools for all but a very few German Jews replaced education within a Jewish school.<sup>29</sup> The level of Jewish knowledge dropped precipitously as secular disciplines drove Jewish studies to the minimum of an ill-regarded religion class with perhaps some supplementary preparation for *Bar Mitzvah* or confirmation. What was carried over into the new situation was the traditional Jewish attachment to learning. And that, in turn, created a fresh anomaly. At one time anomalous because excluded by law or absent by choice from general education, by the second half of the nineteenth century Jews were already disproportionately represented in the schools of the larger cities. They had assimilated by participating in non-Jewish institutions with non-Jewish curricula and non-Jewish majorities among the students. But in valuing education even more highly than their middle-class counterparts, they nonetheless stood out.

The relation to culture paralleled that to education. Deemed culturally foreign, the German Jews acculturated with a vengeance. They learned the German language as quickly as they could, suppressed their knowledge of Yiddish and studied the great works of German literature. In the

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<sup>27</sup> *Jüdisches Volksblatt. Zur Belehrung und Unterhaltung auf jüdischem Gebiete*, vol. 1 (1854), p. 205.

<sup>28</sup> *Der Freitagabend. Wochenschrift für das israelitische Familienleben zur Unterhaltung, Belehrung und Erhebung*, Prospectus (1859), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> There was, however, a limited reversal of this process in the twentieth century. See Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, New Haven and London 1996, pp. 59–65.

cities they attended concerts and theatre in astonishing numbers, far beyond their percentage in the population. Accused of being strangers, they set out to demonstrate publicly that they were not. The library in a Jewish home would likely contain more German classics than its non-Jewish bourgeois counterpart; it was more important for Jewish daughters to become adept at playing the piano than it was for other members of the *Bürgertum*. Thus the assimilated German Jews, paradoxically, drew attention to themselves on account of behavior that was intrinsically assimilatory. If they had truly wanted to be like everyone else, they had certainly failed. Instead they became more educated, more cultured than the norm. And that aroused resentment.

So did Jewish participation in literature and the arts, in fact even more so. For it was one thing for a Jew to consume German culture, quite another to help shape it. Thus Jewish writers and composers, Heine and Meyerbeer for example, were confronted by critics, like Wagner, who accused them of being incapable of assimilating true Germanism and therefore producing literature and music that was not rooted in German cultural soil. The notion of a melting pot, articulated for America by Crèvecoeur and Emerson, did not gain acceptance in Germany.<sup>30</sup> Intellectual immigrants to an autochthonous German culture were not supposed to contribute to its character. In spite of themselves, the Jews remained outsiders.

Religion stands out from the other dimensions of assimilation since it was in this area alone that German society granted the Jews the right to be different. To be sure, there were conversionary efforts and the withholding of honours and positions of authority even from Jews who had sloughed off virtually every mark of Jewishness including religious faith and practice, but if one were to remain a Jew it was as the member of a Jewish religious community that such identity was deemed legitimate. That community no longer possessed its earlier authority, let alone the power of coercion. But the voluntary community that replaced the medieval one, with its old and new religious, charitable and social associations, could serve the same end of furthering Jewish cohesiveness. Of course, assimilation went on, to varying degrees, in the religious community as well. Bourgeois mores as well as Protestant practices served as models. Decorum, the edifying sermon, vernacular hymns, confirmation ceremonies and the organ were all elements of the process of making Jews and

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<sup>30</sup> On assimilation in the United States see Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*, New York 1964.



Judaism at home in Germany. They were instituted not merely because gentiles would therefore be less likely to regard their religion as strange but also because German Jews were internalising the values underlying them.

The religious borrowings, however, were intended to sustain Judaism as an identifiable entity. Thus a sharp division arose between assimilated forms and separatist content. In the course of the nineteenth century, sermons delivered in synagogues drew increasingly on rabbinic literature, confirmation ceremonies contained more specifically Jewish content and synagogue music drew upon ancient Jewish chants. When Jews began to construct new synagogue structures in the Moorish architectural genre, form joined content as a mark of separation.<sup>31</sup>

Although one should be wary of exaggerating the influence of religious ideology within modern German Jewry, it is nonetheless noteworthy that its religious leadership developed a significant counter-assimilatory doctrine long before Zionism mounted its campaign against assimilation. Across the religious spectrum from Samson Raphael Hirsch to Abraham Geiger, rabbis preached that the Jews were obligated to remain Jews in order to represent the idea of a pure ethical monotheism within Christian society. This was the so-called “mission of Israel”. Although it led to condemnation, even by Christian liberals (in the words of one of them as “a downright ridiculous and arrogant exaggerated self-estimation of Judaism”<sup>32</sup>), it was not set aside. To achieve this mission it was necessary to maintain particularistic practices, to refrain from apostasy and to give one’s children a Jewish education. Thus in the sphere of religion one removed those elements that seemed in conflict with Germanism and even adopted and adapted some Christian practices, but vis-à-vis Christianity itself it was urged that one maintain a clear distance, for here – where Jews believed they could be different without being un-German – the theological and moral differences were believed to be profound. Later, in 1922, Leo Baeck would discern an abyss between two religious genres: the romantic faith of Christianity and the classical faith of Judaism.<sup>33</sup> In response to their critics, who deemed Judaism antiquated, Jewish reli-

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<sup>31</sup> Michael A. Meyer, ‘Christian Influence on Early German Reform Judaism’, in Charles Berlin (ed.), *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev*, New York 1971, pp. 289–303.

<sup>32</sup> Carl Scholl, *Hundert Jahre nach Lessing’s “Nathan”. Den Judenhassern zur Beschämung – ersten Juden zur Selbstprüfung*, Bamberg 1893, p. 159.

<sup>33</sup> Leo Baeck, ‘Romantische Religion’, in *Festschrift zum 50jährigen Bestehen der Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Berlin 1922, pp. 1–48.

gious leaders read Judaism in a highly selective manner that enabled them to insist it was not behind the times but ahead of them.

How then, in conclusion, shall we understand the assimilation of German Jewry in the nineteenth century? First, as a process that operated at a different pace and reached different degrees of completeness in various domains. In education and culture one can perhaps speak of “overassimilation”, in the sense that the goal was reached to a degree not shared by the general population. This should, in turn, remind us that assimilation was not necessarily to gentile society but to certain of its ideals that it had not itself fully achieved: giving children a higher education or fully supporting cultural institutions, for example. Assimilation to the German political culture of liberalism looked like movement forward in the first half of the nineteenth century; remaining attached to it at the end had become anachronistic. We should consider that by the end of the nineteenth century the German entity itself had been reshaped, at least to a limited extent, by the participation within it of Jews who brought skills they gained from their particular historical experience, whether from their Jewish heritage or their marginal position in German society. Empirically the categories of German and Jewish were not so clearly differentiable at the end of the nineteenth century as they had been at its beginning. We also need to keep in mind the degree to which flux governed the process: the objects of assimilation changed, as did its agents, the Jews. Then there is the irony that assimilated forms could be used for anti-assimilatory ends. When Heinrich Graetz wrote his eleven-volume *History of the Jews*, he used the techniques of academic scholarship, developed within *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the scholarly study of Judaism), to produce a work that reinvigorated Jewish memory. Finally, insofar as assimilation was intended to placate antisemites, the Zionists were right that it had failed. New stereotypes of assimilated Jews appeared, picturing them as *kriecherisch* (obsequious) or *aufdringlich* (importunate).<sup>34</sup> Even converted Jews remained ostracised. As an objective, multifaceted process assimilation proceeded very far; as a way of calling less attention to Jews it failed. In seeking to become more like everyone else, the German Jews nonetheless had remained different.

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<sup>34</sup> *Die Assimilationssucht. Ein Wort an die sogenannten Deutschen, Slaven, Magyaren u. mosaischen Confession von einem Studenten jüdischer Nationalität*, Vienna 1884, p. 11.



CHRISTHARD HOFFMANN

Constructing Jewish Modernity:  
Mendelssohn Jubilee Celebrations  
within German Jewry, 1829-1929\*

Among the distinguishing features of the modern age is the experience of permanent change and the acceleration of time. Looking back at the previous twenty years, the German writer Ernst Moritz Arndt wrote in 1807: "Time is in flight. That which then went at a steady pace now goes at a gallop."<sup>1</sup> The acceleration of historical development was in all likelihood experienced even more intensely by the Jews in Germany who, within a few years, were catapulted out of the closed world of the ghetto into the vicissitudes of modern life. Faced with a revolution of their general living conditions, how could they manage to maintain a Jewish identity, how could they reconcile Jewishness and modernity? One of the central problems of modern Jewish history, this question has already found many interesting answers and I will tackle it here by examining the development of Jewish historical consciousness in the emancipation period.<sup>2</sup> It has often been claimed that an integral part of the redefinition of Jewish identity in the modern world was the selection and reinterpretation of the Jewish past. Nevertheless, few studies examine the relation of acculturation and Jewish historical culture in detail. Here, I will concentrate on the question of how the modern period was presented and interpreted in Jewish con-

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\* I am most grateful to my colleague William H. Hubbard (Bergen, Norway) for his helpful comments regarding style and content.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge-London 1985, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> See, especially, Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824*, Detroit 1967; Shulamit Volkov, 'Die Erfindung einer Tradition: Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland', in *Historische Zeitschrift* 253 (1991), pp. 603 – 628; *idem*, (ed.), *Deutsche Juden und die Moderne*, München 1994; Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity*, New Haven 1999.

ceptions of history of the nineteenth century and will endeavour to draw some conclusions for the overall topic of this volume: the specific patterns of Jewish acculturation in Germany.

### *Acculturation and History*

Beginning with the broader question of the significance that history and memory hold for groups in acculturative situations, we must note that no comprehensive theory exists. Thus, a few basic points will suffice. As is well known, acculturation occurs whenever groups or individuals of different cultural background come into sustained contact, for example as a result of immigration or the dismantling of borders.<sup>3</sup> In this initial situation, history represents the particular and specific character of each group and is thereby something that — potentially or actually — separates cultures (in our own day, the situation in reunified Germany is a striking example of this). The respective pasts are a given. In contrast, for example, to clothing, names or even language, the past is unchangeable and cannot simply be cast aside. In acculturative situations, it is thus not history itself that changes, but the perception, interpretation and presentation of one's own past. This past, or history, is adjusted to the changed conditions and consequently commemorated and interpreted in a way that accords with the new situation. As a result, a broad spectrum of possible solutions emerges, dependent on general conditions of acculturation and specific group traditions. The extremes of the spectrum can easily be defined: on the one hand, total rejection of one's own past by adopting the foreign past in its place; on the other, adhering rigidly to one's own past while resisting interaction with the foreign culture. Between these extremes lies an abundance of possible combinations that establish a relationship between one's own and the foreign pasts and thereby construct a new history.

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<sup>3</sup> For the concept of acculturation, see Melville J. Herskovits, *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact*, New York 1938; Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life. The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*, New York 1964; Friedrich Heckmann, *Ethnische Minderheiten, Volk und Nation. Soziologie inter-ethnischer Beziehungen*, Stuttgart 1992; J. Milton Yinger, *Ethnicity. Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?*, New York 1994, pp. 68ff.; Russell A. Kazal, 'Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall and Reappraisal of a Concept' in *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), pp. 437ff.; Christhard Hoffmann, 'Zum Begriff der Akkulturation', in Claus-Dieter Krohn *et al.* (eds.), *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, Darmstadt 1998, pp. 117–126.

A typical method of these histories, mediating between the two pasts, is the use of “homemaking myths”. In a recent, fascinating study, Orm Øverland has described their dual function in the literature and historiography of European immigrants to the USA: directed to the inside (immigrant) group, homemaking myths present the strangeness of the acculturative situation as something familiar, as something that is in harmony with the essence of their own history, according to the catchphrase “We are not foreigners in this country”.<sup>4</sup> They thus contribute to the healing of the rupture in the immigrant’s biography and foster acculturation. Directed to the outside world, homemaking myths substantiate the claim for special status of a particular immigrant group in the country of settlement, competing with similar claims of other groups. In the memory culture of Norwegian immigrants who came to the USA in the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, the discovery of the American continent by the Viking Leif Eriksen around the year 1000 played a particularly prominent role. The historical fact that the country had been discovered and settled by North Europeans served as a homemaking myth and became crucially important for the Americanisation of Scandinavian immigrants. The claim of the Norwegian Americans – “we were here first” – collided with the founding myths of other immigrants groups who, for example, celebrated Columbus as the discoverer of America.<sup>5</sup> In his study, Øverland distinguishes between three primary categories of homemaking myths: (1) myths of foundation (“we were here first or at least as early as you were”), (2) myths of blood sacrifice (“we fought and gave our lives for our chosen homeland”), and (3) myths of ideological gifts or an ideological relationship (“the ideas we brought with us are American ideas”).<sup>6</sup> Of course, Øverland’s categories apply only to the sources he has analysed: literature of non-British European immigrant groups in the United States of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I will argue, however, that these patterns of interpretation and of constructing history are applicable to other marginalised groups in acculturative situations, among them the Jews of the nineteenth century.

The Jews in Germany who left the ghetto at the end of the eighteenth century were not immigrants in the literal meaning of the term. There is, however, every reason to label them “cultural immigrants”, as the abruptness and intensity of the new cultural contact was reminiscent of an im-

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<sup>4</sup> Orm Øverland, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870-1930*, Urbana, Chicago 2000, pp. 8ff.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9ff.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.



migration situation.<sup>7</sup> The profile of Jewish acculturation in Germany was shaped by the fact that Jews acculturated not to Christian majority society in general but to a specific subgroup: the middle class or, more specifically, the educated middle class or *Bildungsbürgertum*. Jewish acculturation, including social integration and cultural identification, came about as bourgeoisification.<sup>8</sup> A second point is important here: at the time the Jews integrated into it, the German middle class was by no means a closed social group but represented an open, inclusive and dynamic element within society. Imbued with self-confidence, it fought the cultural power of clergy and nobility. Jews acculturated to a social group that was the motor of social dynamism and cultural modernisation, a group transforming itself on the road towards emancipation, self-determination and secularisation. It was this dynamic and relatively open and inclusive character of the German middle class in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the utopian potential of its emancipation project, that proved decisive for the development of a modern Jewish identity: acculturation of the Jews in Germany was synonymous with bourgeoisification, and this included modernisation and secularisation. Initially, at least, all three processes were both parallel and coupled together.

The confluence of acculturation, bourgeoisification and modernisation can also be seen in the transformation of the Jewish conception of history – from the sacralised culture of memory of premodern times to a modern historiography based on “scientific” methods.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously, new (secular) forms of commemoration and historical discourse developed,

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<sup>7</sup> See Gordon R. Mork, ‘German Nationalism and Jewish Assimilation: The Bismarck Period’ in *LBI Year Book XXII* (1973), pp. 81–90; Rainer Erb and Werner Bergmann (eds.), *Die Nachtseite der Judenemanzipation: Der Widerstand gegen die Integration der Juden in Deutschland 1780-1860*, Berlin 1989, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> See Andreas Gotzmann, Rainer Liedtke and Till van Rahden (eds.), *Juden, Bürger, Deutsche: Zur Geschichte von Vielfalt und Differenz 1800-1933*, Tübingen 2001 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 63).

<sup>9</sup> For the “modernisation” of Jewish historical consciousness see Richard Schaeffler, ‘Die Wissenschaft des Judentums in ihrer Beziehung zur allgemeinen Geistesgeschichte im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts’, in Julius Carlebach (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums: Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa*, Darmstadt 1992, pp. 113–131; Michael A. Meyer, ‘The Emergence of [Modern] Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs’, in Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), *Essays in Jewish Historiography*, Middletown 1988, pp. 160–175; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, New York 1989; Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, Hanover–London 1994; Ernst Schulín, *Arbeit an der Geschichte: Etappen der Historisierung auf dem Weg zur Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 1997, pp. 114–163.



thus forming a modern Jewish history culture. According to Wolfgang Hardtwig, the term “history culture” (*Geschichtskultur*) means “the totality of forms in which knowledge about history is present in a given society”.<sup>10</sup> It includes not only academic historiography but also other forms of public presentations of the past, such as commemorations, monuments, museums, educational and popular literature, and public debates. The term only applies “where a society, or rather its intellectual representatives, have proceeded from a primarily transmitting (*tradierend*) to a primarily reflecting relationship towards history. ... Only under the sign of breaking with tradition does history culture, a principal reflective relationship to the past, emerge.”<sup>11</sup> It was primarily the model of German historicism that changed the relation of Jews – or at least of a leading class of Jewish intellectuals – to their own tradition: in the emerging Science of Judaism this relation was worked through and historicised along the lines of source-criticism, while tradition’s normative claim was relativised. At the same time, conceptions of time and history became more dynamic: past, present and future were experienced and interpreted as constituent parts of a comprehensive process of development. The task of the newly emerging historiography was to represent the past in such a way that the unity of history and its “meaning” became clear, thereby enabling meaningful action in the present.<sup>12</sup> Teleological concepts, such as “enlightenment”, “progress” and “emancipation” were particularly prominent in this respect.<sup>13</sup> The historicist world-view made it possible to understand oneself as located within a process of change and thereby open to a broad variety of different forms of identity based on “history”.<sup>14</sup>

Modernisation and bourgeoisification of Jewish conceptions of history, however, did not indicate that Jewish history was accepted on equal terms by the non-Jewish German educated middle class. First, it must be said that openness and pluralism were not among the strong points of the emerging Protestant-dominated national German culture of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Second, specific reservations towards Judaism, which resulted

<sup>10</sup> Wolfgang Hardtwig, *Geschichtskultur und Wissenschaft*, München 1990, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Geschichte, Historie’ (V. Die Herausbildung des modernen Geschichtsbegriffs), in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 2, Stuttgart 1994, pp. 647–691.

<sup>13</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, “‘Neuzeit’: Zur Semantik moderner Bewegungsbegriffe”, in *idem* (ed.), *Studien zum Beginn der modernen Welt*, Stuttgart 1977, pp. 264–299.

<sup>14</sup> See Hardtwig, *Geschichtskultur*, p. 33ff.

<sup>15</sup> See Peter Pulzer, ‘Warum scheiterte die Emanzipation der Juden?’, in Peter Alter *et al.* (eds.), *Die Konstruktion der Nation gegen die Juden*, Munich 1999, pp. 273–284.

from the long tradition of Christian usurpation of Jewish history, survived in secularised form and influenced the emerging idealistic philosophies of history.<sup>16</sup> According to this interpretation, Judaism had fulfilled its historical mission and lost its cultural importance following the rise of Christianity. Its present and future were seen correspondingly as “unreasonable” and essentially unjustified: by cleaving to the Old Testament, Jews had become isolated from history and its ever-continuing development.<sup>17</sup> Judaism represented a relic from ancient times that could not directly be joined with modernity; it first needed to “catch up” with the development of Christianity. The philosophical undermining of Jewish existence in modern times understandably represented a special challenge for the Jewish community and in particular for Jewish historians who consequently aimed to justify the Jews’ right of residence in the country of modernity.

### *Connecting Past and Present*

In the task of connecting and reconciling the Jewish past with modernity, Jewish historians and intellectuals employed two methods: (1) They identified the modern age as “Jewish”, i.e. as the fulfilment of ancient Jewish principles and promises; (2) They presented the Jewish past as “modern”, i.e. as in conformity with the values of the educated middle class, thus constructing a “bourgeois” version of Jewish history. Both ways of conceptualising history require further illustration.

In 1865, faced with the victory of the northern states in the American Civil War, Ludwig Philippson wrote an editorial in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums (AZJ)* with the headline “The two greatest events of our century”, arguing that the abolition of serfdom in Russia and the end of slavery in the USA were the two most important events of the nine-

<sup>16</sup> On Hegel see Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber*, Tübingen 1967 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 17), pp. 24–42; Nathan Rotenstreich, ‘Hegel’s Image of Judaism’, in *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (1953), pp. 33–52; Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews*, University Park, PA 1998, pp. 35–45.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, Braunschweig 1843; on Bauer see Nathan Rotenstreich, ‘For and against Emancipation: The Bruno Bauer Controversy’, in *LBI Year Book IV* (1959), pp. 3–36; Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933*, Cambridge, MA. 1982, pp. 167ff.; Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany: From Kant to Wagner*, Princeton 1990, pp. 263–278.

teenth century. They should be seen not only as a “victory of personal freedom and human dignity” but also as the “victory of the Mosaic over the gentile principle”.

Yes, it is the Mosaic principle, that has come to final victory in both events. Drawn from a country where the whole people had become serfs, Mosaism did not tolerate serfdom on its own soil. ... Mosaism is the only religion which has proclaimed and executed this principle as a religious one. More than three millennia have passed since then, but it grew stronger and stronger over time and it guarantees by its successes that it will one day rule over all the world.<sup>18</sup>

What Philippson expresses here – certainly not without good reason – is a popular topos in liberal Jewish conceptions of history in the nineteenth century. The characteristic mark of the modern age is the principle of emancipation and this in turn is based on the genuine biblical principle of liberation from bondage. Consequently, modernity as a distinct historical period only began with the legislation for Jewish emancipation, as Eugen Fuchs reminded his audience in 1912:

For us it is sufficient to state ... that before March 11, 1812 [the Prussian edict of emancipation] the Middle Ages had not ended and the modern age not begun in Prussia. Modernity has not yet arrived as long as human rights have not been acknowledged for all people and as long as the idea has not prevailed that everybody who is created in the image of God has the same right to be appreciated as a human being.<sup>19</sup>

The paradigm of emancipation thus allowed for an interpretation of the modern age as the fulfillment of specific Jewish principles and promises, an interpretation made possible by the structural affinity between the modern and the traditional Jewish conceptualisations of history. Generally, the concept of modernity, as expressed for example in the European Enlightenment, was defined in contradistinction to the previous historical period. It could only be “new” or “modern” in relation to something that was “old” and “backwards”, i.e. the “Middle Ages”, which were consequently denounced as “dark ages”. The self-conception of modernity was structured antithetically: temporally by contrasting “then and now”, in substance by opposing “darkness and light”, “superstition and reason”,

<sup>18</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums (AZJ)*, 29 (1865), pp. 283–285.

<sup>19</sup> Eugen Fuchs, ‘Zur Jahrhundertwende des Emanzipationsedikts. Vortrag gehalten am 12. Februar 1912’, in *idem, Um Deutschtum und Judentum. Gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze 1894-1919*, Frankfurt am Main 1919, pp. 102–120, quotation pp. 102ff.

“bondage and liberation”, “barbarism and civilisation”.<sup>20</sup> In this basic structure, the self-concept of modernity corresponded to – and actually was a secular variant of – the interpretational patterns of Jewish religious memory, which is characterised by antitheses such as “slavery and liberation”, “exile and home-coming”, “misfortune and (messianic) salvation”. It was not least the compatibility of these interpretational patterns that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, enabled Jewish authors to see modern developments as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies and to describe Jewish emancipation with biblical metaphors: as an exodus from Egypt or even as the beginning of the messianic age.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, modern times, including the radical and rapid changes in Jewish living conditions, no longer appeared as alienating and threatening but as consistent with Jewish traditions and history, or even as the realisation of particular Jewish principles. These constructions of history can be identified, I believe, as “homemaking myths” in the sense described earlier: as a myth of foundation (“We were here first”) they attributed the ideas of modernity, in particular emancipation, to “Mosaic” principles; as a myth of ideological relationship (“the ideas we brought with us are modern ideas”) they defended the Jewish contribution to modernity as significant and of at least equal importance to that of other groups, such as Protestants.

Reinterpreting and rewriting Jewish history was a second way to reconcile Jewish tradition with modernity. If in the first example the modern age was presented as influenced by authentically Jewish ideas, here the Jewish past was construed as “modern” and in conformity with the values of the educated middle class. Two factors were decisive: First, the apologetic impetus to present one’s own past in its true light was directed against the ignorance and prejudice of the non-Jewish environment. Since the opponents of Jewish emancipation often used arguments based in history, the presentation of a version of Jewish history that could be accepted by the non-Jewish middle class became crucially important. The second factor was the attempt to redefine Jewish identity vis-à-vis the radical and rapid changes of Jewish life in the first half of the nineteenth century. History played a twofold role in this: representing the ghetto

<sup>20</sup> See Karl Löwith, ‘Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie’, in *idem, Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 2, Stuttgart 1983.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the poem by [Moritz Samuel] Freystadt, ‘Der Messias’, in *Sulamith*, 8 (1838), pp. 224–226.

past, it constituted the counterpoint to the new self-image.<sup>22</sup> Bourgeois Jewish identity in Germany virtually developed in contradistinction to and rejection of this past – a process that could be described as “antagonistic acculturation”.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, there were also some positive descriptions of the ghetto past within German Jewish history culture, for example in the ghetto stories of Aaron Bernstein or the paintings of Moritz Oppenheim.<sup>24</sup> But these were nostalgic evocations of a world that inevitably had been lost, comparable, for example, to the contemporary bourgeois fascination with premodern rural life.<sup>25</sup> They did not change the concept itself. Romanticising the ghetto past was thus just another way of overcoming it, of rendering it meaningless for modern Jewish identity.

On the other hand, history was presented in such a way that it offered positive models of identification. The Jewish tradition, or at least the “true” Jewish tradition, was now perceived to be harmonious with the ideas and values of modernity of the non-Jewish educated middle class. One can point, for example, to Mendelssohn’s reinterpretation of Judaism as a “religion of reason”,<sup>26</sup> to Abraham Geiger’s presentation of the Pharisees as a liberal-democratic party of progress,<sup>27</sup> or to those histories which emphasised the cultural exchange between Jews and their environment as an essential element of Jewish history.<sup>28</sup> *Bildung* and respect-

<sup>22</sup> See Steven A. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*, Madison, WI 1982, pp. 3ff.

<sup>23</sup> See George Devereux and Edwin M. Loeb, ‘Antagonistic Acculturation’ in *American Sociological Review*, 8 (1943), pp. 133–147.

<sup>24</sup> See Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, p. 106 (on Moritz Oppenheim); Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, ‘Das Bild des Ostjuden in der deutschen Literatur’ in Herbert A. Strauss and Christhard Hoffmann (eds.), *Juden und Judentum in der Literatur*, Munich 1985, pp. 211–236, here 224ff. (on Aaron Bernstein); Gabriele von Glasenapp, *Aus der Judengasse. Zur Entstehung und Ausprägung deutschsprachiger Ghettoliteratur im 19. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1996.

<sup>25</sup> See Klaus Bergmann, *Agrarromantik und Großstadtfeindschaft*, Meisenheim am Glan 1970; Uwe Baur, *Dorfgeschichte: Zur Entstehung und gesellschaftlichen Funktion einer literarischen Gattung im Vormärz*. Munich 1978; Wolfgang Jacobeit (ed.), *Idylle oder Aufbruch? Das Dorf im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert: ein europäischer Vergleich*, Berlin 1990.

<sup>26</sup> See Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824*, Detroit 1967, pp. 35ff.

<sup>27</sup> See Liebeschütz, pp. 121ff.; on Geiger see Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, Chicago and London 1998.

<sup>28</sup> This was Eugen Täubler’s historiographical concept at the *Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*. See Eugen Täubler, *Aufsätze zur Problematik jüdischer Geschichtsschreibung 1908-1950*, Tübingen 1977 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 36), pp. 16–20; see also Christhard Hoffmann,



ability formed the yardsticks of this reappraisal of the past.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, historians emphasised the high levels of education and “rationality” among Jews in the Middle Ages, contrasting it with the “superstition” of Christian majority society.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, they condemned, often polemically, the irrational movements of the Jewish past, above all, *Hasidism* and *Kabbalah*. These movements were seen as manifestations of decline caused by Christian oppression and were thereby excluded from “true” Jewish history.<sup>31</sup> Other phenomena of the Jewish past that seemed to lack respectability, such as Jewish lower classes and beggars, robber bands and charismatic rabbis, were dealt with in similar fashion. In contrast, Jewish authors and orators stressed the exemplary middle-class virtues of the Jewish past. Criticising the bourgeoisification of Jewish history on principle, Gershom Scholem later ridiculed these efforts with his description of “Our patriarch Jacob – the model of a town councillor”.<sup>32</sup>

The essence of the Jewish bourgeois conception of history was found in the paradigm of emancipation and acculturation. Consequently, emphasis was placed on those periods of Jewish history in which an active exchange between Jewish and non-Jewish culture had taken place, i.e. the Hellenistic period and the Jewish blossoming in Moorish Spain. Research on Jewish-Hellenistic literature became the domain of Jewish classicists such as Jacob Bernays, Jacob Freudenthal and Isaac Heinemann. The fact that Alexandrian Jews such as Philo had already attempted to combine Jewish tradition and secular Greek *Bildung* made them suitable models for the present and, at the same time, made them presentable for the Graecophile German educated middle class.<sup>33</sup> The fascination and identi-

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‘Zerstörte Geschichte: Zum Werk der jüdischen Historikerin Selma Stern’, *Exilforschung*, 11 (1993), pp. 203–215, here pp. 204ff.

<sup>29</sup> See George L. Mosse, ‘Jewish Emancipation: Between *Bildung* and Respectability’, in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, Hanover, NH 1985, pp. 1–16.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Heinrich Graetz, *Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 4, München 1985, pp. 144 ff (on Maimonides).

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* pp. 206ff.

<sup>32</sup> Gershom Scholem, ‘Überlegungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums’ [1944], in *idem*, *Judaica 6. Die Wissenschaft vom Judentum*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp. 7–52, here p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> See Hans I. Bach, *Jacob Bernays: Ein Beitrag zur Emanzipationsgeschichte der Juden und zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes im 19. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1974 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 30); Jean Bollack, *Jacob Bernays, Un homme entre deux mondes*, Villeneuve d’Asq 1998; Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden 1988, pp. 219ff.; Yaacov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical*

fication of German Jews with Sephardi culture (rather than with their own Ashkenazi past) followed the same pattern.<sup>34</sup> The historical self-understanding of the Jewish middle class can be read most clearly in the ways in which modern history, i.e. the history of their own emancipation and acculturation, was anchored in cultural memory. To illustrate this, we can examine the ways in which Moses Mendelssohn was celebrated by German Jewry.

### *Moses Mendelssohn as Embodiment and Symbol of Jewish Modernity*

Moses Mendelssohn's preeminence in German Jewish history culture was derived from the fact that he could be understood simultaneously as origin, essence and symbol of Jewish modernity.<sup>35</sup> As Heinrich Graetz expressed it: "Mendelssohn's life story is so interesting because it is a model of the Jews' history in modern times: how they worked their way up from humble beginnings and contempt to prominence and self-confidence."<sup>36</sup> The celebrations of Mendelssohn's birthday in 1829, 1879 and 1929, and the commemoration of his death in 1886 are particularly instructive for the ways in which the modern age was presented and interpreted within German Jewry:<sup>37</sup> The consideration of a relatively long timespan enables the identification of continuities and discontinuities in

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*Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew*, Oxford 1997, pp. 123ff.

<sup>34</sup> Ismar Schorsch, 'The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy', in *idem*, *From Text to Context*, pp. 71–92.

<sup>35</sup> See Alexander Altmann, 'Moses Mendelssohn as the Archetypal German Jew', in Reinharz and Schatzberg (eds.), pp. 17–31. On Mendelssohn's place in German Jewish memory, see Jacob Katz, 'Moses Mendelssohns schwankendes Bild bei der jüdischen Nachwelt', in Eva J. Engel and Norbert Hinske (eds.), *Moses Mendelssohn und die Kreise seiner Wirksamkeit*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 349–362; Jacques Ehrenfreund, *Mémoire juive et nationalité allemand: Les juifs berlinois à la Belle Époque*, Paris 2000, pp. 110–114, 207–221; *idem*, 'Moses Mendelssohn', in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. III, Munich 2001, pp. 258–273; Stefan Laube, 'Konfessionelle Brüche in der nationalen Heldengalerie: Protestantische, katholische und jüdische Erinnerungsgemeinschaften im deutschen Kaiserreich', in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (eds.), *Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 2001, pp. 293–332.

<sup>36</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol 11: *Vom Beginn der Mendelssohn'schen Zeit (1750) bis in die neueste Zeit (1848)*, Leipzig 1870, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> It seems that there were relatively few celebrations on the fiftieth anniversary of Mendelssohn's death in 1836. The commemorations in 1936 took place under Nazi rule and are not treated here.



these German Jewish commemorations.<sup>38</sup> My overview here cannot give a complete picture, but will concentrate on the main trends, emphasising the multiple views, changing interpretations and different uses of the Mendelssohn “cult”.

### *1829 – Anchoring Mendelssohn in German Cultural Memory*

On September 10, 1829, Mendelssohn's hundredth birthday according to the Hebrew calendar (12 Elul), jubilee celebrations took place in, among other places, Berlin, Dessau, Frankfurt on the Main, Hamburg, Dresden and Breslau.<sup>39</sup> What today seems to be a common practice of commemoration was at the time an important innovation of Jewish memorial culture. As far as we know, Moses Mendelssohn was the first Jew whose hundredth birthday was publicly celebrated.<sup>40</sup> In traditional Jewish memory, it is customary to commemorate a relative or important personage, such as a rabbinic teacher, on the *Yahrzeit* that is celebrated on the anniversary of his or her death.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, this traditional form of commemoration also took place with respect to Mendelssohn. David Friedlander, for example, gave a speech on the fifth anniversary in 1791,<sup>42</sup> while an annual celebration was held in Leipzig from 1859.<sup>43</sup> Further, the centenary of Mendelssohn's death, in 1886, was broadly noted by the German Jewish public. For the centenary of a birthday, however, there were no Jewish models or traditions. Instead, they followed the example of the jubilee celebrations for “national heroes” such as Martin Luther, or for poets and artists, which were of great importance for establishing a

<sup>38</sup> This aspect is missing in Ehrenfreund's treatment of the topic.

<sup>39</sup> See Meyer Kayserling, *Moses Mendelssohn: Sein Leben und seine Werke*, Leipzig 1862, pp. 474–477.

<sup>40</sup> Ismar Elbogen, ‘Zum Geleit’, in *Gedenkbuch für Moses Mendelssohn*, ed. by the Verband der Vereine für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur in Deutschland, Berlin 1929, pp. 7–10, here p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> See ‘Jahrzeit’, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 8, Berlin 1931, pp. 779–781. I am grateful to Dr. Aubrey Pomerance (Berlin) for helpful information on this topic.

<sup>42</sup> David Friedländer, ‘Vorlesung bey der erneuerten Todesfeyer Mendelssohns [1791]’, in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 23: *Dokumente II: Die frühen Mendelssohn-Biographien*, ed. by Michael Albrecht, Stuttgart–Bad Canstatt 1998, pp. 296–305.

<sup>43</sup> Kayserling, p. 476; Ludwig Philippson, ‘Zur Gedächtnißfeier Moses Mendelssohn's’, in *AZJ*, 27 (1863), pp. 61ff.

bourgeois national culture in Germany.<sup>44</sup> The Mendelssohn festivities of 1829 were structured according to the rituals of the German civil religion of *Bildung*. They were not held in the synagogue but in “neutral” celebration halls, and the circle of invited participants was not limited to the Jewish community but consisted of all Mendelssohn’s “admirers and friends”. Almost everywhere, the program of events included musical performances, ceremonial speeches commemorating the life and personality of Mendelssohn, a gala dinner and the recital of festive poems and songs. The Berlin Mendelssohn celebration took place in the hall of the “Society of Friends”, which was decorated with a bust of Mendelssohn.<sup>45</sup> During the dinner, five toasts were proposed: to the health of the Prussian king, to the memory of Moses Mendelssohn, to the well-being of the municipal authorities and of the city of Berlin, to the Berlin Jewish community and, finally, to all friends of Mendelssohn. Each toast was followed by the singing of a festive song. The verses to the memory of Mendelssohn were sung to the tune of Beethoven’s “Freude, schöner Götterfunken”:

In this hallowed hour earnestly  
 Sounds the deeply felt tone  
 Since the chalice in this circle  
 Is due to the noble Mendelssohn  
 Think as if he were still alive here  
 Amongst the circle of loyal friends  
 As if his spirit surrounds us  
 Brothers, to the truth’s prize

As already noted, the liturgy of the Mendelssohn celebrations in 1829 generally followed the ceremonial patterns of the German civil religion of *Bildung* rather than Jewish models.<sup>46</sup> Only the creation of charity endow-

<sup>44</sup> See Dieter Düding *et al.* (eds.), *Öffentliche Festkultur: Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Reinbek 1988; Rainer Noltgenius, *Dichterfeiern in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte am Beispiel der Schiller- und Freiligrath-Feiern*, Munich 1984.

<sup>45</sup> See Leopold Zunz, ‘Moses Mendelssohns hundertjähriger Geburtstag’ [1829], in *idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, Berlin 1876, pp. 112–115. My account of the 1829 celebrations is based on this report. The original of the quoted poem: ‘Ernst in dieser Weihstunde / Klingt der tief empfund’ne Ton, / Denn der Becher in der Runde / Gilt dem edlen Mendelssohn. / Denkt, als ob er hier noch lebte / In der treuen Freunde Kreis, / Ob sein Geist uns jetzt umschwebte, / Brüder, zu der Wahrheit Preis.’

<sup>46</sup> This applies especially to the celebrations in Berlin and Dessau. In other places, more traditional memorial speeches could be found. See, for example, Bernhard Beer, *Rede bei der vom Kranken-Unterstützungs-Institut zu Dresden veranlaßten Gedächtnißfeier Moses Mendelssohn’s an dessen hundertjährigem Geburtstage*, Dresden 1829.

ment trusts on the day of the jubilee was a specifically Jewish tradition. Mendelssohn was commemorated in 1829 in a fashion appropriate for a celebration of Lessing, Goethe or Schiller. And this was exactly what the organisers had in mind. Celebrating Mendelssohn in 1829 was intended to anchor the Jewish philosopher in the cultural memory of the German nation.<sup>47</sup> Concluding his commemorative speech, Leopold Zunz quoted from the poem about Mendelssohn written by the Protestant professor Karl Philip Conz in 1787:

And you, Germania, who bore him  
 Be proud that you were the sage's mother  
 You will honour him eternally, because you  
 Honour yourself in your sons<sup>48</sup>

Since German nation-building in the first part of the nineteenth century mostly took place as part of the process of forming the "cultural nation", the incorporation of Mendelssohn into the canon of classical German *Dichter und Denker* was of crucial importance for the social and national integration of the Jews in Germany.<sup>49</sup> It was therefore only logical that the focus was on Mendelssohn's German works, while his Hebrew writings were almost totally ignored.<sup>50</sup> As is true of the contemporary commemorations of other German cultural heroes, especially of the *Schillerfeiern* in 1859, the Mendelssohn celebrations were not so much about objectively assessing the person celebrated as about expressing the ideas and self-concepts of those celebrating. Commemorating Mendelssohn was

<sup>47</sup> This intention remained central to the German Jewish commemoration of Mendelssohn in later years. See Ehrenfreund, pp. 110ff.

<sup>48</sup> Carl Philipp Conz, 'Moses Mendelssohn, der Weise und der Mensch. Ein lyrisch-didaktisches Gedicht in vier Gesängen' [1787], in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 23, pp. 47–52, quotation p. 52; Leopold Zunz, 'Rede, gehalten bei der Feier von Moses Mendelssohns hundertjährigem Geburtstage, den 12. Elul oder 10. September 1829 zu Berlin', in *idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, pp. 102–112, quotation p. 112. The original of the quoted poem: 'Und du, die ihn geboren, Germania! / Sei stolz, dass du die Mutter des Weisen warst; / Du wirst ihn ewig ehren, denn du / Ehrest dich selber in deinen Söhnen.'

<sup>49</sup> See Bernhard Giesen and Kay Junge, 'Vom Patriotismus zum Nationalismus: Zur Evolution der "Deutschen Kulturnation"', in Bernhard Giesen (ed.), *Nationale und kulturelle Identität: Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, pp. 255–303; Georg Bollenbeck, *Bildung und Kultur: Glanz und Elend eines deutschen Deutungsmusters*, Frankfurt am Main. 1994.

<sup>50</sup> This applies also to most of the biographical research on Mendelssohn. See David Sorkin, 'The Mendelssohn Myth and its Method', in *New German Critique*, 77 (1999), pp. 7–28.

a way to foster Jewish cultural integration into the educated middle class and to create internal unity by inventing a modern Jewish tradition.

Among the images of Mendelssohn used in panegyric speeches and jubilee publications, three stood out in particular: (1) Mendelssohn as the new Moses (the parallel was drawn to the biblical Moses as well as to Moses Maimonides): the leader and advocate of his people who brought them out of slavery, by which was meant not only the outward prison of legal discrimination but the inner bondage of ignorance and lack of *Bildung*. “Like the leader and teacher of the old Israel, it was Moses Mendelssohn who tried to liberate the now-living Israel from the most pressing chains of delusion and superstition.”<sup>51</sup> (2) Mendelssohn as a German Socrates: even during his lifetime, Mendelssohn had been labelled the “new” or “German Socrates” because of his similarities to the Greek philosopher in both philosophical style and external appearance.<sup>52</sup> With the vogue of neo-classicism and philo-Hellenism now at its peak,<sup>53</sup> this description was widespread.<sup>54</sup> (3) Mendelssohn as Jewish Reformer: as far as I can ascertain, no official speaker in 1829 went as far as Daniel Jenisch, or later Heinrich Heine, who called Mendelssohn the “Luther of the Jews”.<sup>55</sup> But almost all jubilee speakers pointed out that Mendelssohn had revived Judaism by opening it up to European *Bildung* and by “ban-

<sup>51</sup> Gotthold Salomon, *Denkmal der Erinnerung an Moses Mendelssohn zu dessen erster Säcularfeier im September 1829*, Hamburg 1829, p. 36. See also Beer, *Rede*, p. 6ff.

<sup>52</sup> See Beate Berwin, *Moses Mendelssohn im Urteil seiner Zeitgenossen*, Berlin 1919, p. 22, 28, 79.

<sup>53</sup> On philo-hellenism in Europe and its support for national independence of modern Greece, see Régine Quack-Eustathiades, *Der deutsche Philhellenismus während des griechischen Freiheitskampfes 1821-1827*, Munich 1984; Evangelos Konstantinou (ed.), *Die Rezeption der Antike und der europäische Philhellenismus*, Frankfurt am Main 1998; Friedgar Löbker, *Antike Topoi in der deutschen Philhellenenliteratur: Untersuchungen zur Antikerezeption in der Zeit des griechischen Unabhängigkeitskrieges (1821-1829)*, Munich 2000.

<sup>54</sup> See Johann Andreas Leberecht Richter, *Moses Mendelssohn als Mensch, Gelehrter und Beförderer ächter Humanität: Eine Rede gehalten bei der hundertjährigen Geburtsfeier desselben am 10 ten Septbr. 1829 im Saale der Franzschule zu Deßau*, Deßau 1829, pp. 13ff.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Jenisch, ‘Skizze von dem Leben und Charakter Mendelssohns’, in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 23, pp. 264–293 – the reference to the “Luther of the Jews” is on p. 266; Heinrich Heine, ‘Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland’ [1834], in *idem*, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, vol. 8/1, Düsseldorf 1979, pp. 71ff. See Siegbert S. Prawer, ‘Moses Mendelssohn zwischen Heine und Marx: Ein Kapitel deutsch-jüdischer Wirkungsgeschichte’, in Engel and Hinske (eds.), pp. 411–430, here p. 416.

ishing the barbarism of the East”.<sup>56</sup> This emphasis on Mendelssohn’s Jewish reformation not only expressed the reformist self-identity of those celebrating but also demonstrated to the outside world that post-Mendelssohn Judaism was not lagging behind Protestantism in terms of its “modernity”, as had been claimed during the debates about emancipation.

*1879 – Defending Emancipation: Lessing, Mendelssohn  
and 'Nathan' against Antisemitism*

Fifty years later, the Mendelssohn celebrations were of a quite different character: Mendelssohn was commemorated in close connection with Lessing and almost receded into the background. It is therefore appropriate to call the 1879 jubilee “Lessing-Mendelssohn” celebrations. The Union of German Israelite Communities published a “Lessing-Mendelssohn memorial book” honouring the hundred-and-fiftieth birthday of the two friends and the centenary of the canonical text of Jewish emancipation in Germany: Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*.<sup>57</sup> It was, however, not only the coincidence of round numbers that in 1879 suggested a joint memorial celebration of the two representatives of the Enlightenment movement. After all, one could have already combined their centenary celebrations. In 1829, however, Lessing’s jubilee was almost totally forgotten by the German public.<sup>58</sup> Only during the revolution of 1848 and later in the debate about the proposed Berlin Lessing monument in 1860, did Lessing re-emerge into the centre of cultural interest.<sup>59</sup> Within German Jewish culture, Lessing’s friendship with Mendelssohn was celebrated and emphasised in the Nathan legend, i.e. the claim that Mendelssohn was the model of the main protagonist in Lessing’s play. Lessing and Mendelssohn became icons of a German-Jewish symbiosis, symbolising the still-unfulfilled promises of emancipation in the 1850s and

<sup>56</sup> Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 110; see also Richter, pp. 24ff..

<sup>57</sup> *Lessing-Mendelssohn-Gedenkbuch zur hundertfünfzigjährigen Geburtstagsfeier von Gotthold Ephraim Lessing und Moses Mendelssohn sowie zur Säcularfeier von Lessing’s Nathan*, ed. by Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund, Leipzig 1879.

<sup>58</sup> There was, however, a local celebration in Lessing’s native town Kamenz. See *Die Erste Lessing-Feier in Leipzig*, ed. by the Schillerverein, Leipzig 1860, pp. IIIff.

<sup>59</sup> See Horst Steinmetz (ed.), *Lessing – ein unpoetischer Dichter: Dokumente aus drei Jahrhunderten zur Wirkungsgeschichte Lessings in Deutschland*, Frankfurt am Main and Bonn 1969, pp. 346ff.



1860s.<sup>60</sup> As the Leipzig rabbi Abraham Meyer Goldschmidt wrote in 1860: “The personal friendship between Lessing and Mendelssohn that overcame all religious and national barriers proved later to be the symbol for the relationship the Jews of Germany were to enter with the total population.”<sup>61</sup> For parts of the non-Jewish public on the other hand, Lessing became a national hero, a champion for the politics of a powerful German state and a national awakening.<sup>62</sup> In his influential article on Lessing of 1863, Heinrich von Treitschke paralleled Lessing’s intellectual achievements with the military successes of Frederick II.<sup>63</sup> In the same way that Frederick made Prussia a great power, Lessing laid the foundation for Germany’s cultural ascent. There can be no doubt that the Jewish interpretation of Lessing articulated in 1879 was directed against this Treitschkean use of Lessing, emphasising instead Lessing as a champion of tolerance, humanism and cosmopolitanism.<sup>64</sup> Faced with the first rumblings of the brewing antisemitic storm, the legacy of Lessing and Mendelssohn was evoked in order to defend the achievements of emancipation. The *Lessing-Mendelssohn-Gedenkbuch* was seen as a “banner” that would rally together the “followers and disciples” of the spirit of humanity.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the debate about the erection of a Lessing monument in Berlin grew more urgent. The *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* issued the following appeal in 1880:

Given the destructive agitation of Stoecker and others, where would a new Lessing ... be more imperative than in the ‘metropolis of intelligence’ [Berlin]? And if such a new Lessing does not appear, at least prove by erecting Lessing’s statue that his thought and his enlightened views are not dead among you but full of life.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See the fascinating study by Willi Goetschel, ‘Lessing, Mendelssohn, Nathan: German-Jewish Myth-Building as an act of Emancipation’, in *Lessing Year Book* 32 (2001), pp. 341–360.

<sup>61</sup> Abraham Meyer Goldschmidt, ‘Rede zur Lessingfeier in Leipzig’ [1860], in Steinmetz (ed.), *Lessing*, pp. 346–348, quotation p. 347.

<sup>62</sup> See Monika Fick, *Lessing-Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, Stuttgart and Weimar 2000, pp. 25ff.

<sup>63</sup> Heinrich von Treitschke, ‘Lessing’, in *idem*, *Historische und politische Aufsätze*, vol. 1, 4th edn., Leipzig 1871, pp. 55–72.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Emil Lehmann, ‘Lessing in seiner Bedeutung für die Juden’ and ‘Zum 22. Januar’ [1879], in *idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin 1899, pp. 235–258. During the Berlin *Antisemitismusstreit*, the legacy of Lessing was evoked against Treitschke. See Walter Boehlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, Frankfurt am Main 1965, p. 204ff.

<sup>65</sup> See Ludwig Philippson, ‘Das *Lessing-Mendelssohn-Gedenkbuch*: Eine Festgabe zu Neujahr 5640’, in *AZJ*, 43 (1879), pp. 593–595, quotation p. 593.

<sup>66</sup> *AZJ*, 44 (1880), p. 386.

The struggle over Lessing grew more intense between the memorial years of 1879 (the hundred-and-fiftieth birthday) and 1881 (the centenary of his death), causing a flood of pamphlets and public polemics.<sup>67</sup> Within the emerging antisemitic movement, the question of how a “national” German writer could have been a friend of the Jews caused considerable consternation. Two contrary lines of reasoning emerged: whereas Eugen Dühring discredited Lessing by attributing his fame as a German writer solely to Jewish publicity and the Jewish “cult of Lessing”,<sup>68</sup> Wilhelm Marr tried to use Lessing as a champion of antisemitism.<sup>69</sup> In the long run, Dühring’s view prevailed in antisemitic circles.<sup>70</sup> What we see here is that the Jewish concept of modernity, characterised by the ideas of enlightenment, emancipation and liberalism, and symbolically personified in the two “dioscuri” Lessing and Mendelssohn, was increasingly forced on to the defensive. The turn towards illiberalism in parts of the German educated middle class meant that Jewish history culture was again distinctive. The debate about Lessing was at the same time a struggle for cultural hegemony in the newly founded *Kaiserreich*. In this situation, the religious differences within German Jewry were of only secondary importance. Of course, Orthodox Jews could not subscribe to the relativistic message of *Nathan the Wise*.<sup>71</sup> This did not prevent them, however, from paying tribute to Lessing’s drama as an “invaluable service to Jewry” and as the real beginning of Jewish emancipation.<sup>72</sup>

### *1886 – The Ambivalences of Modernity: Emerging Internal Disagreement*

Only seven years later, the centenary of Mendelssohn’s death was celebrated in a quite different way. Following an initiative by the Leipzig Mendelssohn association, commemorations took place in numerous lo-

<sup>67</sup> See Moshe Zimmermann, ‘*Lessing contra Sem: Literatur im Dienste des Antisemitismus*’, in Stéphane Moses and Albrecht Schöne (eds.), *Juden in der deutschen Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main 1986, pp. 179–193; Steinmetz, *Lessing*, 389–399; Klaus Bohnen (ed.), *Lessing – Nachruf auf einen Aufklärer: Sein Bild in der Presse der Jahre 1781, 1881 und 1981*, Munich 1982, pp. 51–88.

<sup>68</sup> Eugen Dühring, *Die Ueberschätzung Lessing’s und dessen Anwaltschaft für die Juden*, Karlsruhe and Leipzig 1881.

<sup>69</sup> Wilhelm Marr, *Lessing contra Sem*, Berlin 1885.

<sup>70</sup> See Adolf Bartels, *Lessing und die Juden: Eine Untersuchung*, Dresden 1918.

<sup>71</sup> See the leading article ‘Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise*’, in *Der Israelit*, 19 (1878), pp. 699ff., 727ff., 752ff., 769ff., 800ff., 831ff., 855ff., 883ff.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 699, 884.



calities, not only in the centres of Jewish life such as Berlin, Frankfurt and Breslau, but also in small communities such as Oppeln, Nienburg (Weser) and Neuwied.<sup>73</sup> In contrast to 1829, celebrations were held almost exclusively in synagogues and followed a more traditional Jewish liturgy, with sermon, prayer, recitation of psalms and chorus.<sup>74</sup> With the exception of Dessau, where the jubilee was initiated by the local government and where the Duke of Saxony-Anhalt, representatives of the government and Christian notables attended the ceremony in the synagogue, participants in the 1886 celebrations were more or less limited to the Jewish community.<sup>75</sup> This was most obvious in Berlin, where the correspondent of the *AZJ* observed: “Despite the fact [that Mendelssohn had spent all his adult life in Berlin and had made significant contributions to the development of scholarship in the city] the commemorative celebration of Mendelssohn here was restricted to Jewish circles. Nobody from the other [i.e. non-Jewish] world took part in it.”<sup>76</sup>

There was more than one reason why the 1886 commemorations concentrated on Mendelssohn the Jew and his significance for the emergence of modern Judaism. The tradition of *Yahrzeit* might have predetermined a particular “Jewish” perspective. More importantly, the situation of European Jews had changed dramatically since 1879: the bloody Russian pogroms of 1881-82, the ongoing anti-Jewish agitation in Germany and not least the state-ordered expulsions of almost 10,000 East European Jews from Prussia in 1885 had made disturbingly clear that antisemitism was not just an infirm relic of the past but a powerful movement of the present. In this situation, the optimistic belief in modern development as ever-increasing progress lost its persuasive power and more critical assessments of the modern, i.e. the *Mendelssohnian*, period of Jewish history evolved. First came the Orthodox, criticising the opening of Judaism to the “spirit of the time” and Mendelssohn’s subordination of religious truth to the dictates of reason.<sup>77</sup> Later, criticism emerged from the perspective of Jewish nationalism. Because Mendelssohn had become the standard-bearer for the acculturated German Jewish middle class, he now became the target of a polemic directed against assimilation in general, initially often presented by Jewish intellectuals from Eastern Europe.

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<sup>73</sup> See *AZJ*, 50 (1886), p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, the leading article ‘Die Religion Israels und der Zeitgeist’, in *Der Israelit*, 4 (1863), pp. 601–605, 616–618, 627–630, especially p. 602.

Most radical in this respect was the Russian Peretz Smolenskin, a Vienna-based Hebrew-language writer.<sup>78</sup> Already in the 1870s he had accused Mendelssohn “not only of the ills which befell Jewry of his [Mendelssohn’s] own day but also of the century that followed his death.”<sup>79</sup> To the early Jewish nationalists, Mendelssohn and his “phony” Berlin Enlightenment were associated with alienation from Jewish ethnicity, denationalisation, a mania for assimilation, apostasy and treason, and were thus responsible for leading the Jews astray in the modern age.<sup>80</sup>

Polemical voices such as these were virtually non-existent in the German-Jewish celebrations of Mendelssohn in 1886. There was, however, an urge for clarification and reassessment that permeated many jubilee speeches and articles, due to the embarrassing fact that most of Mendelssohn’s children had left Judaism, so that “none of his grandchildren belonged to the religion of their fathers”.<sup>81</sup> How could this be reconciled with a celebration of Mendelssohn as the father of Jewish modernity? For the editorialist of the orthodox paper *Der Israelit* the answer was quite simple: he drew a sharp line between the Mendelssohn “who stood entirely on the foundation of talmudic, i.e. genuine traditional Judaism”, and the Mendelssohn “school” that had “chosen a way of which Mendelssohn would never have approved”.<sup>82</sup> A similar line of argumentation – praising Mendelssohn while condemning his “school” – can be found in the camp of the early Zionists. It was Nathan Birnbaum who took up Smolenskin’s criticism and accused the “assimilationists” of abusing the memory of Mendelssohn for their “noble” purposes. Clinging to the principle of assimilation “when the attempt has turned out a failure, the natural irreconcilability of racial antagonisms has become apparent ... [and] the victory of the national principle over illusory cosmopolitanism has strictly circumscribed the conception of the nation” was no longer an error but a crime. If Mendelssohn had lived today, Birnbaum concluded, he would be found “among those who fight for the rebirth of Israel and the consolation

<sup>78</sup> See Isaac E. Barzilay, ‘Smolenskin’s Polemic Against Mendelssohn in Historical Perspective’, in *American Academy for Jewish Research, Proceedings*, 53 (1986), pp. 11–42.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> See Julius H. Schoeps, ‘Assimilant oder Präzionist? Zur Moses Mendelssohn-Rezeption im Zionismus’, in Walter Grab (ed.), *Deutsche Aufklärung und Judenemanzipation*, Tel Aviv 1980, pp. 295–313, here 301.

<sup>81</sup> Ludwig Philippson, ‘Die Stellung Moses Mendelssohn’s im und zum Judenthume’, in *AZJ*, 50 (1886), pp. 161–164, 177–179, 193–195, 209–211, 225–228, 242–245, quotation, p. 161.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Moses Mendelssohn’ *Der Israelit*, 27 (1886), pp. 1–4, quotations pp. 3ff.

of Zion”.<sup>83</sup> Such self-serving dialectic did not work for the liberal camp. Here, the questioning of Mendelssohn’s role in the development of modern Judaism touched the core of liberal self-understanding and brought about a reflective internal debate. Adolf Wiener, the radical reform rabbi of Oppeln, explained the fact that Mendelssohn’s offspring left Judaism by pointing to the “Janus-faced duality” of modern philosopher and Orthodox Jew. That Mendelssohn observed the “most antiquated ceremonies [and] meaningless customs” in order not to give offence to “rigid rabbinism” must surely have undermined his credibility in the eyes of his Jewish friends and disciples, not to mention his children: “Did they not have to believe that he, despite his rich philosophical *Bildung*, was either still prejudiced and biased in religious matters or, in the face of the zealots, not courageous enough to appear outwardly as he thought and was inwardly?”<sup>84</sup> Wiener’s implicit accusation of cowardice and even duplicity against Mendelssohn was rejected by Ludwig Philippson, who nevertheless maintained that “Mendelssohn’s status within Judaism was... in actual fact inappropriate”.<sup>85</sup> A close reading of Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* led Philippson to the conclusion that Mendelssohn’s approach was inconsistent in the two parts of the book: defending unconditional freedom of conscience and equal rights for all citizens, Mendelssohn belonged to the modern age and traced the path of future development; reinterpreting traditional Judaism as a religion of reason, however, meant “sealing” the past once and for all. No wonder, then, that this “sophisticated but totally untenable system” became outdated and meaningless with the rise of historicism and critical scholarship.<sup>86</sup> Philippson’s reassessment of Mendelssohn, which he published only two months after the jubilee celebrations in order to avoid interference, is noteworthy for its “historicist” perspective: by placing Mendelssohn on the dividing line between pre-modern and modern times he created a more differentiated and objective picture, thus overcoming the rigid dogmas of an ideologised debate.

<sup>83</sup> Nachum Nathan Agassi [Nathan Birnbaum], ‘Zur gelegenen Zeit’, *Selbst-Emancipation!*, II:2 (January 15, 1886), quoted in: Schoeps, Mendelssohn-Rezeption im Zionismus, pp. 300ff.

<sup>84</sup> *AZJ*, 50 (1886), p. 162.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 241ff.

*1929 – A Chorus with Dissonances: Praising and  
Demythologising Mendelssohn*

In 1929, the commemorations of Mendelssohn's two-hundredth birthday were twofold and paradoxical. The celebrations seemed to demonstrate the successful integration and cultural significance of Jews in the Weimar Republic. Prominent members of state and city governments, as well as other political and clerical dignitaries, participated as speakers and guests. At the central Mendelssohn celebration in Berlin, *Reichsinnenminister* Carl Severing and Lord Mayor Gustav Böß delivered addresses before Rabbi Leo Baeck gave the main ceremonial speech. In the Dessau celebrations, too, the state government was prominently represented.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, there was hardly a Jewish community in Germany that did not organise a Mendelssohn jubilee celebration in 1929.<sup>88</sup> What in 1829 had begun on a small scale as an innovation by a cultural elite was one hundred years later naturally and broadly accepted as a genuine tradition of German Jewish memorial culture. The celebrations were accompanied by numerous cultural activities and media events: a Mendelssohn exhibition in Dessau,<sup>89</sup> the publication of the first volumes of a critical edition of Mendelssohn's collected works, academic and popular lectures, radio programs on Mendelssohn's birthday,<sup>90</sup> a great number of jubilee publications and extensive coverage in the Jewish and general press.<sup>91</sup>

The image of Mendelssohn, however, that was conveyed was neither purely positive nor uniform, as had been the case in 1829 or 1879. Re-

<sup>87</sup> See 'Feiern um Mendelssohn', in *C.V.-Zeitung*, 8 (1929), p. 497.

<sup>88</sup> See also the coverage in the various *Gemeindeblättersuch* as *Breslauer Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, 6: 8 (August 1929); *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung*, No. 17 (1 September 1929); *Frankfurter Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* 8 (September 1929); *Gemeindeblatt der israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig* 5, No. 37 (13 September 1929); *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt Bremen*, 1, No. 11 (1 September 1929); *Mitteilungen der jüdischen Reformgemeinde zu Berlin*, No. 5 (1 September 1929); *Jahrbuch für die jüdischen Gemeinden Schleswigs-Holsteins und der Hansestädte und der Landesgemeinde Oldenburg*, No. 1 (1929/30) pp. 125ff.; *Gemeinde-Zeitung für die israelitischen Gemeinden Württembergs*, 6, No. 11 (1 September 1929); *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde Dresden*, 5, No. 9 (September 1929); *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt*, 9, No. 2 (1 October 1929).

<sup>89</sup> *Führer durch die Moses Mendelssohn Gedächtnis-Ausstellung*, Dessau 1929.

<sup>90</sup> See *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, 5 September 1929.

<sup>91</sup> See, above all, *C.V.-Zeitung* 8 (1929), pp. 454 – 472; *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, 31, No. 36 (5 September 1929); *Jüdische Rundschau*, 34 (1929), pp. 459ff.; *Der Israelit*, 70 (5 September 1929); *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung*, 9, No. 36 (4 September 1929); *Der Morgen*, 5 (1929), pp. 214–248; *Jeschurun*, 16 (1929), pp. 321–340, *Der nationaldeutsche Jude*, No. 9 (1929), pp. 2–5.

flecting internal rifts and debates about the self-concept of Judaism in modern times it was segmented along ideological lines:<sup>92</sup> whereas liberals praised Mendelssohn as “the first German Jew” and “the intellectual father of the *Centralverein*”,<sup>93</sup> the Orthodox associated him with notions such as “rift” and “will-o’-the-wisp”,<sup>94</sup> and Zionists criticised him as “the first *Assimilant*”. As Meyer Ebner of Bukovina wrote:

We sons of the twentieth century know that the ideas of assimilation lead straight to de-Judaisation, alienation, indifference towards all things Jewish, and finally to dissolution. Since we know that, the memory of the noble-minded man whose two-hundredth birthday is celebrated today has been clouded in our eyes.<sup>95</sup>

Other Zionist voices were less strident. Israel Auerbach, who wrote the leading article in the *Jüdische Rundschau* on the occasion of the Mendelssohn jubilee, attempted a more balanced perspective by viewing the course of history dialectically: although the developments inaugurated by Mendelssohn were unfortunate in the long-term, they were nonetheless “historically necessary”. It was entirely due to Mendelssohn that the calamity of Jewish self-renunciation was prevented. In Auerbach’s view, Mendelssohn became the “pioneer of Jewish emancipation in the spirit of self-emancipation” by persuading the Jews “that one could accept the spirit and life of the modern age without giving up the spirit and life of Judaism.”<sup>96</sup>

Even beyond Orthodox and Zionist circles, the depiction of Mendelssohn in the 1929 celebrations was often critical and full of subtle distinctions. The great chasm between Mendelssohn’s time and the present was emphasised, a chasm which made a full identification with Mendelssohn’s ideas impossible. Many jubilee speakers and commentators claimed that Mendelssohn must be understood in the context of his own time, thereby relativising his significance. In his contribution “Mendelssohn and Us”, for example, the philosopher Jehuda Bergmann asserted that “In many respects, Mendelssohn is no longer a contemporary

<sup>92</sup> The ideological segmentation of Jewish memorial culture in 1929 is emphasised in Andrea Hopp, ‘Das Jahr 1929: Erinnerung und Selbstverständnis im deutschen Judentum’, in *Trumah*, 7 (1998), pp. 113–134.

<sup>93</sup> *C.V.-Zeitung*, 8 (1929), pp. 453, 458.

<sup>94</sup> *Der Israelit*, 70 (5 September 1929).

<sup>95</sup> *Ostjüdische Zeitung*, No. 1260 (11 September 1929), pp. 1ff.

<sup>96</sup> Israel Auerbach, ‘Zur Mendelssohn-Gedenkfeier’, in *Jüdische Rundschau*, 34 (1929), p. 459.



whom one likes to ask for his opinion. Many of his ideas are only of historical value for our time.”<sup>97</sup>

By looking at the Mendelssohn celebrations of 1929 we can recognise a paradox: measured by the number, range and importance of cultural activities, the 1929 celebrations marked the heyday of the Mendelssohn cult. If we consider the internal consistency and persuasive power of the Mendelssohn myth, however, the picture is more ambiguous. In parts of the German Jewish public we can observe the end of the Mendelssohn myth that was formed during the emancipation period. Demythologising Mendelssohn — and, for that matter, Lessing<sup>98</sup> — and relativising his significance for contemporary Jewish life, indicates (to use the Nietzschean terms) the transition from a “monumental” towards a “critical” concept of history.

### Conclusion

The acculturation and the modernisation of German Jewry were accompanied by the formation of a specific concept of history that gave meaning and legitimation to the radical transformations of Jewish life, thereby accelerating the process of change even further. Faced with the ignorance and, sometimes, hostility of a non-Jewish environment that denied Judaism cultural significance in the modern age, it became crucial to emphasise the Jewish contribution to modern culture. This was achieved, *inter alia*, by creating “homemaking myths”, by presenting the Jewish past as “modern” and compatible with educated middle-class values and not least by establishing a foundation myth of German Jewish modernity in the form of the Mendelssohn celebrations.

The image of the modern age that was anchored in cultural memory in this manner was determined by utopian ideas, dating from the beginnings of the bourgeois emancipation process: enlightenment, tolerance, *Bildung*, emancipation. These ideals could be presented as being in accord with Jewish tradition, or even as the fulfilment of ancient messianic promises, and were therefore particularly attractive. Two consequences must be considered: first, the codification of this specific image of modernity within Jewish history culture, and its use for defining modern Jewish

<sup>97</sup> Jehuda Bergmann, ‘Moses Mendelssohn und wir’, in *Gedenkbuch für Moses Mendelssohn*, pp. 158–171, quotation p. 171.

<sup>98</sup> Ernst Simon, ‘Lessing und die jüdische Geschichte’, in *Jüdische Rundschau*, 34 (1929), p. 37.

identity, soon rendered it static and anachronistic. Jews still adhered to the ideas and values of the Enlightenment and the early emancipation period when these had already lost their pride of place for the non-Jewish middle class. The Jewish concept of time and history grew to be “out of step” with that of the non-Jewish environment.<sup>99</sup> Second, the redefinition of Judaism as a kind of middle-class religion of *Bildung* formed too limited a basis for integrating Jewish history in its entirety, rather than only a “respectable” selection of it, into a modern Jewish self-conception. The Zionist concept of “a return to history” later took this as a point of departure and accentuated the “unconventional” and “foreign” traits of Jewish history, as most significantly demonstrated in the work of Gershom Scholem.<sup>100</sup> Characteristically, the historical models of Jewish modernity came from the distant past: the biblical period, Hellenistic Alexandria or Sephardi Spain. There was no gradually developing, “organic” link with the modern age. It was precisely this dilemma that accounts for Mendelssohn’s paramount importance within Jewish history culture of the emancipation period and even beyond. As at one and the same time an observant Jew and a modern philosopher, Mendelssohn represented the “missing link” of the development from the ghetto into the modern world and thereby served as a model for Jewish acculturation. To be sure, this concept of Jewish modernity was increasingly challenged — particularly by Orthodox and Zionist interpretations of history. For many German Jews, however (perhaps a majority), it remained a meaningful part of their identity.

The Mendelssohn jubilee celebrations are also a particularly informative example for the development of Jewish history culture during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They reveal the growing differentiation and segmentation of Jewish collective memory in the process of modernisation. This development is often interpreted as a history of decline and loss. In her article on German Jewish commemorations in 1929, Andrea Hopp concludes: “Jewish collective memory in the Weimar Republic had lost its integrating power. ... A memory that tied all members of the community together with an invisible tape, like the collective memory of the middle ages, no longer existed”.<sup>101</sup> This observation applies, of course, to the development of modern memory in general and it

<sup>99</sup> See Max Wiener, ‘Das Tempo unserer neueren Geschichte’, in *Jüdische Rundschau*, 38 (1933), p. 547.

<sup>100</sup> See David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 2nd edn., Cambridge, MA and London 1982.

<sup>101</sup> Hopp, p. 131.



is hard to imagine how Jewish memory could have remained untouched by the forces of modernisation. Hopp's view of Jewish memory in the Weimar years as the "heyday of the decomposition process" (*Höhepunkt des Zersetzungsprozesses*)<sup>102</sup> is similarly one-dimensional, for it does not take into account the new functions and opportunities of a differentiated history culture. Again, the Mendelssohn celebrations serve as a case in point: no matter how disputed the image of Mendelssohn became over time, it remains a fact that all German Jewish groups and ideological movements continued to refer to Mendelssohn as the beginning and symbol of Jewish modernity. The figure of Mendelssohn thus served as a fixed point in Jewish memory in relation to which Jewish interpretations of modernity were formulated and Jewish identities were developed. The Mendelssohn celebrations offered a communicative space, comparable to a public market place, that allowed for controversy, negotiation and competition and thus for a plurality of Jewish identities based on "history". Participating in the public debate on Mendelssohn, or the Jewish past in general, may in the end have been another form of Jewish community building — a community no longer based on ideological unity but on historical discourse. By developing a critical, self-reflective and contested relationship to the past, Jewish history culture provided a suitable instrument for redefining Jewish identity in the process of change and thus formed an adequate response to the challenges of modernity. This movement towards plurality, ideological competition and disunity was certainly regretted by many, especially those who based their political agenda on "national unity" and "community". Seen in a broader and comparative perspective, however, the growing differentiation and segmentation of Jewish collective memory was by no means atypical. Rather, it reflected a common trend in modern societies and thus represented a step on the path "towards normality".

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132.

JOHANNES HEIL

“... durch Fluten und Scheiterhaufen”:  
Persecution as a Topic in Jewish  
Historiography on the Way to Modernity

Ich bin nun einmal ein Mensch, der nicht in  
und für den Augenblick lebt, der immer die  
Gegenwart mit der Vergangenheit und  
Zukunft zusammenfasst.

Abraham Geiger, 1849<sup>1</sup>

In 1899, Rudolf Mosse (1843-1920) commissioned the artist Anton von Werner (1843-1915) to decorate the dining room of his house in Berlin. From the resulting monumental wall painting “Festmahl im Hause Mosse”, which shows Rudolf Mosse among family and friends, only photos and a small draft painting remain.<sup>2</sup> In giving the commission to von Werner, Mosse made a subtle and programmatic choice. “Festival Dinner” is one of his last paintings; the works for which he is known were finished earlier: imperial portraits, the well known “Proclamation of the German Reich at Versailles” (1885) and other painted and plastic manifestations of German imperial ideology. Neither Jewish nor an inno-

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<sup>1</sup> “I am like that. A man who does not live in and for the moment, but who always embraces the present with the past and the future”. Letter to Rabbi B. Wechsler in Oldenburg, in Ludwig Geiger (ed.), *Abraham Geiger's Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 5, Berlin 1878, No. 67, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> See Dominik Bartmann, *Anton von Werner. Zur Kunstpolitik im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, Berlin 1985, pp. 29–30, pl. 14 (Photo of the painting “Festmahl im Hause Mosse”). See also Dietmar Schenk, *Anton von Werner, Akademieleiter. Dokumente zur Tätigkeit des ersten Direktors der Königlichen akademischen Hochschule für die bildenden Künste zu Berlin 1875–1915*, Berlin 1993, pp. 87–89. On the Mosse family see Elisabeth Kraus, *Die Familie Mosse. Deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1999, esp. pp. 444–445, 476–477. For some remarks on the “Festival Dinner”, see George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir*, Madison, WI 2000, p. 9.

vative artist (although some modern work was included in Mosse's art collection), von Werner was a partisan of the Prussian *Kulturkampf* armed with a paintbrush, combining the style and motifs of the past with contemporary issues and offering restorative and eclectic historicism at its best. Nevertheless, the liberal Mosse had good reason to choose this conservative artist. In 1880, during a dispute about antisemitism known as the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, he had dismissed a student from the Academy of Art for a public assault on a Jewish student. But this was probably not the only reason for Mosse's choice. More generally, the court painter's decoration of a Jewish home was a clear expression of "normality" and a symbol of successful acculturation.

### *The Future, History and the Present*

The "Festival Dinner" is stylistically reminiscent of sixteenth-century paintings, somewhere between a lower-German (or Dutch) landscape and monumental Renaissance architecture. The painting itself works on several interpretative levels. Most obvious is the expression of successful acculturation: Mosse's family and friends, Jews and Christians, are indistinguishable. Elisabeth Kraus, in her study of the Mosse family, argues that "Festival Dinner" is modelled on similar paintings by Veronese ("Dinner in the house of Simeon", "Wedding at Cana") but also bears allusions to the Last Supper. More precisely, it is a secularised version of this motif, showing the master Mosse in a circle of his liberal disciples, dressed in sixteenth-century Dutch costume. Furthermore, the arrangement of the figures and their gestures are reminiscent of an 1899 staging of Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. But there are signals for still another, more discreet – Jewish – level. The painting shows the moment in which the dominant figure at the left (in the draft Mosse, in the final version Albert Traeger or Rudolf Virchow, both prominent liberal politicians), pronounces a toast. But it also can be read as the moment of saying *Kiddush* before a meal. The elements of the benediction over wine – the elevation of the cup by a man who "speaks" but cannot be heard – seem clear, but the ability to "hear" him was restricted to a limited group of spectators, the Jewish guests in Mosse's dining room. In fact, the "German" elements dominate the scene to such an extent that the "Jewish" elements can be easily overlooked.

That a Jewish subtext was embedded in an artistic production of the German imperial spirit is not the only conclusion one can draw from this painting. What we see, at a second glance, is a painted discourse on German history. An element which appears in the draft only (now in the col-

lection of the Jewish Museum Berlin) is the “Meistersinger”-like late medieval German town in the background. The dining-room painting, as finally executed, replaced this with a countryside scene. Perhaps for Mosse’s taste there were too many signals, both “Jewish” and “German”, in the original draft. “Festival Dinner” offers a complex interpretation of present and past, and the relation between the two. It emphasises that Jews considered themselves to be part of German society, in both the past and present, and it denies any distance between them. The upper-class setting places Jews as Germans in the centre of German history and introduces them into the highest echelons of sixteenth-century noble society, although it was known that Jews had not enjoyed access to these lofty realms. Von Werner’s dining-room painting, therefore, can be read as an expression of historical interpretation and mutual consensus about the reading of history. Both sides made visible compromises, one by accepting Jews as an integral part of the glorious German past, the other by ignoring and concealing the experience of past exclusion and persecution. Nothing in von Werner’s idyllic arrangement reminds one of the sufferings of Jews in Nürnberg in 1349 or 1498, or in Berlin in 1510 and 1573. Mosse had made his peace with the past and wanted to make it known that he had done so. The construction of an obviously ahistorical counter-history as the environment of the Mosse family’s apotheosis emphasises the role which historical perception and interpretation played in the self-image of German Jews as they moved towards normality. Here, in 1899, we find Mosse at the (preliminary) end of this path. The “Festival Dinner” provided a resumé of the past, but also pointed out guidelines for modelling the future.

Nineteenth-century Jewish historians were driven by similar questions and looked out upon the same history; what they saw and how they interpreted it, however, had no obvious similarities with von Werner’s audacious but also somewhat simplifying dining-room painting. Nevertheless there were, as we shall see, some points in common, the most basic being that both needed to determine the meaning of the past with respect to the future. This essay will demonstrate how Jewish historians struggled with the perception of their own history in relation to general history and contemporary socio-political issues; it will illustrate the concerns that guided them and the ways in which they proceeded. The examination of nineteenth-century approaches to the most weighty topic in Jewish history, the memory of and knowledge about repeated persecution, reveals the divergent assessments of this subject in nineteenth-century Jewish historiography and the problems encountered in the construction of a historiographi-

cal “normality”. In contrast to von Werner’s elegantly painted reading of history, the past was a considerable obstacle as long as the notion of normality required consensus and permitted no antinomies about the meaning of the past for the future. Thus, the discourse about the past can help reveal the limits to further acculturation.

### *The Historiographical Role of Wissenschaft des Judentum*

The role assigned to hatred of Jews in Jewish history is dependent on the paradigms employed to perceive this history. If one stresses continuities, Jew-hatred and persecutions assume greater weight.<sup>3</sup> Did not Jew-hatred and suffering have a lasting effect on and even direct that history? Was not the popularity of Shabbetai Zevi in 1665/1666 a consequence of the disturbing effect of the Chmelnitski pogroms in 1648/1649? Were there not many *Tisha be’avs*? Was not 2 August 1492 also the ninth day of the month of Av, and did not, hundreds of years earlier on the same day, the star of Bar Kochba fall? Even the modern interpreter might consider *sin’at Israel* or *sin’at yehudim* (hatred of Jews) to be inextricably related to *tol’dot Israel* (history of the Jews).<sup>4</sup> The historian Alex Bein stressed, even in the title of his work *The Jewish Question: Biography of a World Problem*, that the aversion towards Jews which generated a *Judenfrage* (Jewish Question) was an integral element of Jewish history. Bein apparently believed in the existence of such a *Judenfrage*, and his work reads

<sup>3</sup> David Nathan Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, New York 1995, pp. 3–4.

<sup>4</sup> On this see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley 1993, pp. 201–206; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Ein Feld in Anatot. Versuche über jüdische Geschichte*, Berlin 1993, pp. 81–95; Evyatar Friesel, ‘The German–Jewish Encounter as a Historical Problem: A Reconsideration’, in *LBI Year Book XLI* (1996), pp. 268–269. Yom Tov Lipmann (1579–1654) noted another connection on 20 Sivan (Blois 1171/Chmelnitski 1648); see Yerushalmi, *Ein Feld in Anatot*, pp. 48–52. For modern works which stress the meaning of continuities see, for example, Léon Poliakov, *Geschichte des Antisemitismus*, vol. 1, Worms 1977, p. 10; Shmuel Almog (ed.) *Antisemitism through the Ages*, Oxford 1980. More nuanced discussions are Jonathan Frankel, ‘Assimilation and Jews in Nineteenth–Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?’, in *idem* and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth–Century Europe*, Cambridge 1992, p. 16; Michael A. Meyer, *Jüdische Identität in der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, pp. 83–113; Steven E. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises*, New York, 1996, pp. 21–27, 29.



as an apology that accepts this basic assumption and attempts to refute the conclusions that antisemites draw from history.<sup>5</sup>

In the first annual report of the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (Academy for the Science of Judaism), in 1874, Abraham Geiger presented a programmatic essay on the meaning of Jewish history. Geiger adopted a position that mediated between other undertakings to which I will refer later: “The historic deed of Judaism is its history”, wrote Geiger, arguing that its richness would be revealed progressively. For Geiger, Jewish history (and not Jewish religion or any written or oral tradition) was the source for an appropriate understanding of Judaism’s essence and the basis for a reconceptualisation of Judaism according to modern paradigms. In its historical expressions, the creative potential of history’s driving forces were unveiled. He referred only implicitly to Jew-hatred of the past, commenting that the course of history, especially that of the Jews, was “decided by external factors.” Geiger followed traditional religious observance only in part, but could not conceive of his existence without history. By emphasising history’s “purposefulness” he looked back in order to understand the present and the future in their interdependency. A supporter of intra-Jewish reform, Geiger understood reform not only as a suitable step towards modernisation but also as necessary to correct previous deviations.<sup>6</sup> One modern interpreter concluded that “emancipated Jews did not merely shed their old clothes in order to put on new ones, but attempted to become radically changed men and women”.<sup>7</sup> Yet this conclusion is perhaps not fully justified, since it is based on the external appearance of nineteenth-century changes, and perpetuates traditional and modern forms of criticism of “Reform” while ignoring the aims of modernisers. In his second annual report Geiger more closely addressed the issue of “life in exile”, maintaining that Jewish ex-

<sup>5</sup> Alex Bein, *The Jewish Question: Biography of a World Problem*, Rutherford, N.J. 1990. See also Michael A. Meyer, ‘Jews as Jews versus Jews as Germans: Two Historical Perspectives’, in *LBI Year Book XXXVII* (1992), pp. xvi–xvii; Moshe Zimmermann, ‘Jewish History and Jewish Historiography’, in *LBI Year Book XXXV* (1990), p. 39; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Seattle and London 1983, pp. 95–96.

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Geiger, ‘Erster Bericht über meine an der Hochschule f. d. W. d. J. [sic] von Ostern 1872 bis dahin 1873 gehaltenen Vorlesungen ...’ (etc.), in *Erster Bericht über die Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums in Berlin, die ersten zwei Jahre ihres Bestehens 1872 und 1873 umfassend, erstattet vom Curatorium*, Berlin 1874, pp. 4, 6.

<sup>7</sup> George L. Mosse, ‘Jewish Emancipation: Between Bildung and Respectability’, in *idem* (ed.), *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism*, Hanover and London 1993, p. 131.



istence in post-biblical times was generally confronted with a “hostile ... state”. (He did not name a specific state, but perhaps meant many “states”.) His interest was limited to the internal consequences of this situation: in order to maintain their identity, the Jews withdrew from their environment. Geiger believed himself to be “on the safe ground of civic culture and spirit”,<sup>8</sup> in contrast to the inhabitants of a threat-filled past of ruin and disorder resulting from external pressure and intellectual impoverishment. This was also the “safe ground” on which Mosse set the table for his Christian and Jewish friends – as von Werner depicted it.

Like Geiger, all the authors discussed here<sup>9</sup> were either influenced by or arose in explicit opposition to *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) and/or any kind of liberal reform.<sup>10</sup> Yet all of them offered more than pleasant artistic reflection about the past; rather, they emerged from the necessity for a profound reorientation that touched on all spheres of Jewish existence. The changes set in train by the Enlightenment and the *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment movement) unsettled traditional forms of individual and communal Jewish life. The rescinding of emancipation laws following the defeat of Napoleon and the manifestation of anti-Jewish violence during the 1819 “Hep, hep” riots made it clear that

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Geiger, ‘Zweiter Bericht: Von Ostern 1873 bis dahin 1874’, in *Bericht über die Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 10–13, 14. See also his ‘Vorlesungen, gehalten an der Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums’, Berlin 1872–1874, in Ludwig Geiger (ed.), *Abraham Geiger’s Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 2, Berlin 1875, esp. pp. 156–157; *ibid.*, [Literaturbriefe], ‘Zweiter Brief’, p. 290, where Orthodoxy and Neo-Orthodoxy are described as “erstarrende Formenherrschaft”. A contemporary survey of the state and purpose of Jewish historiography is Leo Baeck, ‘Theologie und Geschichte’, in *Zum sechzigjährigen Bestehen der Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, zugleich neunundvierzigster Bericht*, Berlin 1932, pp. 42–54. See also Michael A. Meyer, ‘Jüdische Wissenschaft und jüdische Identität’, in Julius Carlebach (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums – Chochmat Jisrael. Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa*, Darmstadt 1992, p. 10; Herbert A. Strauss, ‘Die letzten Jahre der Hochschule (Lehranstalt) für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Berlin: 1936–1942’, *ibid.*, pp. 36–38. On the Hochschule, see also Kraus, pp. 373–375.

<sup>9</sup> On Jewish historiography during the Weimar period, which is not considered here, see Christhard Hoffmann, ‘Jüdische Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland: 1918–1938. Konzepte – Schwerpunkte – Ereignisse’, in Carlebach, pp. 132–152; Steven E. Aschheim, ‘German Jews beyond Bildung and Liberalism: The Radical Jewish Revival in the Weimar Republic’, in *idem, Culture and Catastrophe*, pp. 31–44.

<sup>10</sup> There were very few non-Jewish historians (Otto Stobbe, for example). See also Friedrich Niewöhner, ‘Judentum, “Wissenschaft des Judentums”’, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 4, Basel – Stuttgart 1976, cols. 653–658; Christoph Schulte, ‘Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judentums: Die ursprüngliche Konzeption der Wissenschaft des Judentums und ihre Aktualität nach 175 Jahren’, in *Aschkenas*, vol. 7/2 (1997), pp. 277–302.

despite radical change in the wake of the French revolution and Napoleon's hegemony in Europe there was no new and reliable framework for Jewish existence. The challenge facing Jewish intellectuals on their path towards normality was to develop a new concept of Judaism by which tradition could be reconceptualised with regard to the future. Their task was to provide a new basis for Judaism, authentically preserving the essentials of Judaism while ensuring that they provided no ammunition for arguments against Jewish emancipation. Their position was thus defensive on two fronts: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* reacted to anti-Jewish impulses (including the exclusion, be it formal or informal, of Jews and Jewish matters from academic life), but did not aim at exploring Jew-hatred. What its scholars strove for was a critical examination of tradition in order to expound to the Jewish and general public the value of Jewish history and culture for European cultural and intellectual development. Their belief in the enlightening power of scholarship, and their faith in its objectivity and methods, were borrowed from the "Christian" world. The subject matter was Jewish, the purpose was emancipatory.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find that contemporary accounts of Jewish world history stress regional differentiation in Jewish religious and social life,<sup>12</sup> thus

<sup>11</sup> See Sinai (Siegfried) Ucko, 'Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Wissenschaft des Judentums' [1934], in Kurt Wilhelm (ed.) *Wissenschaft des Judentums im deutschen Sprachbereich. Ein Querschnitt*, Tübingen 1967 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 16, 1–2), pp. 315–352; Michael A. Meyer, *Von Moses Mendelssohn zu Leopold Zunz. Jüdische Identität in Deutschland 1749–1824*, Munich 1994, pp. 192ff.; *idem*, *Wissenschaft und Identität*, pp. 3–20; *idem*, 'Jewish Religious Reform and Wissenschaft des Judentums: The Position of Zunz, Geiger and Frankel', in *LBI Year Book XVI* (1971), pp. 19–41; Ismar Schorsch, 'The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism', in *LBI Year Book XXVIII* (1983), pp. 413–414, 421–422; Axel Horstmann, 'Das Fremde und das Eigene. "Assimilation" als hermeneutischer Begriff', in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 30 (1986/87), pp. 7–43; Ismar Schorsch, 'Breakthrough into the Past: The Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden', in *LBI Year Book XXXIII* (1988), pp. 3–28; Julius Carlebach, Introduction to *idem* (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums – Chochmat Jisrael*, pp. x–xi; Zeev W. Falk, 'Jüdisches Lernen und die Wissenschaft des Judentums', in Karl E. Grözinger (ed.), *Judentum im deutschen Sprachraum*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, pp. 347–356; Richard Schaeffler, 'Die Wissenschaft des Judentums in ihrer Beziehung zur allgemeinen Geistesgeschichte im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts', *ibid.*, pp. 113–131; Myers, pp. 16–22; Ulrich Wyrwa, 'Zur europäisch-jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung', in *idem*, (ed.), *Jüdisches Gedächtnis in einer veränderten Welt. Zur jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung im Europa des 19. Jahrhunderts* (forthcoming). I am grateful to my colleague Ulrich Wyrwa for sharing his unpublished paper with me.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Leopold Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*, vol. 2: *Der Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes*, Berlin 1859 (repr. Hildesheim 1967), pp. 3–7, 168–178.

enabling the authors to present Jewish history in the context of *Landesgeschichten*, i.e. regional Jewish histories in the framework of prevailing “national” histories. The result was a dynamic Jewish history that differed from place to place and from period to period. Nineteenth-century scholars aimed, despite some notorious assertions to the contrary, not at abatement of religion and tradition through historicisation but, on the contrary, at unveiling the essence of Judaism through critical examination, i.e. releasing the core of Judaism from the dusty halls of tradition.

We find this approach in the opening volume (which was in fact also the last) of the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (1822/23), where Immanuel Wolf (Wohlwill) outlined the meaning of the title and purpose of the new journal.<sup>13</sup> To Wolf, hatred of Jews played a determining role in both the inner development and outward appearance of Judaism, with thoroughly negative consequences: “The oxygen of a hostile atmosphere brought the simple idea of Judaism gradually to oxidation”; “[the] fence around the Torah expanded until the way to the interior sanctuary was blocked. The latter was buried until Spinoza revived it”. The focus here is on the religious fundamentals of Judaism and on the juxtaposition of continuities and influences. Wolf argued that in the past everything that Judaism had adopted was subordinated, assimilated and merged with the basic principle (*Grundprincip*) of Judaism, and all that emanated from Judaism bore something of Judaism in itself, “which shines (through) in every manifestation”. Judaism, Wolf maintained, had always taken a path different from that of its environment. It was founded under Egyptian influence, for example, but developed differently. Its spiritual content, the idea of Judaism, was nevertheless dispersed among the nations.<sup>14</sup> The more Judaism in exile assumed a defensive posture, the further it moved from its true essence; nevertheless Judaism was able to cope with foreign influences. Obviously, Wolf carefully formulated his claim that Judaism should be considered as an integral, productive part of occidental history and his text contains many terms and motifs found in works of the second half of the nineteenth century. At the same time his text permits varied, even conflicting, interpretations. It is possible to follow each of his arguments and understand their programmatic intent, but

<sup>13</sup> See Immanuel Wolf, ‘Ueber Wissenschaft des Judenthums’, in *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, vol. 1/3 (1822), pp. 2, 15. Wolf understood Christianity as the bearer of the idea of Judaism. See *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 2, 15. See also Ucko, pp. 342–349; Schorsch, *Breakthrough*, pp. 22–23. On the *Zeitschrift* see Meyer, *Von Moses Mendelssohn zu Leopold Zunz*, pp. 195, 201–206; see also *idem*, *Wissenschaft und Identität*, p. 6.

it appears that he attempted to reconcile conflicting arguments in order to make them accessible to a larger audience. “Estrangement”, “adaption”, “assimilation”/ “acculturation” and “enrichment” became central to nineteenth-century discourse about Jewish history and its place among other (“Christian”) European histories. Wolf dealt with persecution in an even more reserved fashion than Geiger and others. The term or related words do not figure in his text and the issue was kept “back-stage”. This attitude could perhaps be termed an historiographical “deal” – in order to conceal the darker sides of history, non-Jewish historians, too, were urged to adopt a positive attitude towards Judaism and acknowledge its fertilising impact on European history.

Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), the true father of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, did not evade confrontation with recurring threats and persecutions throughout history, but in his studies of religious history he also brought out the more “positive” aspects of such persecution.<sup>15</sup> In *Geschichte und Literatur* (History and Literature) (1845) he wrote that 2 August 1492, the day of *Tisha Be’Av*, denoted the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, yet the next day Columbus left Spain to discover a new world and a new freedom – for Jews, too.<sup>16</sup> Ten years later he adopted an entirely different approach by making persecution a central element of his narrative. Clearly in this comparatively short period Zunz’s approach had substantially changed. Since the same pattern is evident in the works of Jost and Graetz, it is likely that the contemporary socio-political situation, in particular the failure of the 1848/49 revolution, created considerable confusion and necessitated a revision of interpretative paradigms. A good example is Zunz’s *Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* (Medieval Synagogue Poetry) (first edition 1855-1859), which offers in its first volume a remarkable arrangement of chapters – between “Psalms” and “Piut, Selicha” – specific literary forms – is “Leiden” (“suffering”). In this way, Zunz made it plain that he considered the poetically worded “lament” to be an immediate mirror of medieval Jewish experience. He even imitated the style of his subject in writing: “Edom will never be satisfied or sated ... The

<sup>15</sup> See Leopold Zunz, ‘*Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur. Nebst Nachrichten über ein altes bis jetzt ungedrucktes hebräisches Werk*’, Berlin 1818, repr. in *idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, Berlin 1875, pp. 1–31; *idem*, ‘Salomon ben Isaac, genannt Raschi’, in *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, vol. 1 (1822/1823), pp. 277–384. See also Schorsch, *Breakthrough*, pp. 25–26; *idem*, ‘From Wolfenbüttel to Wissenschaft: The Divergent Paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz’, in *LBI Year Book XXII* (1977), pp. 124–125; Meyer, *Wissenschaft und Identität*, pp. 10–12.

<sup>16</sup> Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, Berlin 1845, p. 526.



princes of Edom are lovers of gold, this is why they oppress Israel.” Medieval Jewish history could be read “like a commentary” on the threats to the Jews; it “becomes a chronological funeral march from Constantine ... to Charles V.” In fact, Zunz enumerated every persecution between Spain and Poland, composing his own veritable “funeral march”. “Despots and clerics” sacrificed Albigensians, Waldensians, Protestants and heretics, and “Israel’s Selicha was only one page in this book of persecutions.”<sup>17</sup> In this account, the consoling outlook derives not from the new horizons that Jews found after catastrophes like 1492, but from analogies with non-Jewish history. Persecution no longer appeared as uniquely Jewish but as a general experience caused by ancient – and now vanquished – powers.

Zunz is not typical of the “lachrymose” tradition in Jewish historiography, which understood Jewish history as a series of persecutions and laments. Rather, he touched upon and used the lachrymose narrative but did not adopt it. When discussing the experience of persecution he wrote a comparative history following Pietistic and Huguenot narratives. His aim was a Jewish-Protestant consensus about a reading of history that saw Catholicism as the persecuting force and ignored Protestant anti-Jewish traditions. To Zunz, “proto-Protestants” such as the Albigensians were subjected to the same threats from Edom/Rome as the Jews. Perhaps Zunz would have not applauded the “Festival Dinner” in Mosse’s house, yet his ordering of the past according to contemporary political strategies was not altogether different from von Werner’s construction.

The modern revival (or reconceptualisation) of the lachrymose tradition can be ascribed to Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), or at least to his later, monumental works. In these, he made no tactical compromises and excused neither Catholics nor Protestants. Pre-emancipation Jew-hatred and persecution are broadly depicted in his *Geschichte der Juden* (History of the Jews), which appeared in eleven volumes between 1853 and 1876. The introduction to the fourth volume, in fact written as the first volume (“Vom Untergang des jüdischen Staates bis zum Abschluß des Talmud”) (From the Fall of the Jewish State to the Completion of the Talmud), starts with a clear reference to the unbroken chain of “unprecedented suffering, uninterrupted martyrdom, the increasing degradation and humilia-

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<sup>17</sup> Leopold Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*, vol. 1: *Zweite, nach dem Handexemplar des Verfassers berichtigte und durch Quellennachweise und Register vermehrte Auflage*, ed. A[aron] Freimann, Frankfurt am Main 1920 (repr. Hildesheim 1967), pp. 9, 14ff., 334–356. See also Ismar Schorsch, ‘History as Consolation’, in *LBI Year Book XXXVII* (1992), pp. 33–43; Michael A. Meyer, *Von Moses Mendelssohn zu Leopold Zunz*, Munich 1994, pp. 166–167.

tion” but refers also to “intellectual motion, restless mental activity, ceasing search.... The external history of this period is a history of suffering ... the internal is a comprehensive intellectual history ... searching and wandering, thinking and enduring, learning and suffering.”<sup>18</sup> Against this background Graetz stresses the unity of the people, emphasising this even where it apparently fragmented. True, after the first exile many Jews remained in Babylon (for Graetz, these were “the rich merchants and landowners”), but he imagined that they escorted the returnees part of the way and gave them “valuable gifts ... for the reconstruction of their home.”<sup>19</sup> Having written the history of the dark ages, it was in the future that Graetz found grounds for optimism. The luminous figure of Mendelssohn, and his continuing influence that would lead to justice and perfection, was contrasted with the darkness of the past and the difficulties of his own times.

Only a few years earlier, as a student in Breslau, Graetz had written a completely different sketch of Jewish history, a programmatic pamphlet that included little about persecution and that dated the origin of optimism and progress in Jewish history far back in the past. The *Konstruktion der jüdischen Geschichte* (The Construction of Jewish History) of 1846 stressed the richness of Jewish history, its special meaning and its importance for all humanity. Here, Graetz even conceived of the loss of the Land of Israel (under the Romans) as progress, putting Israel, in terms of historical evolution, ahead of other nations. The originality of Graetz’s earlier approach becomes even clearer when compared to a similar work published by Moses Hess in 1837, the *Heilige Geschichte der Menschheit* (The Holy History of Humanity). Hess wrote in a somewhat traditional manner about the perfection of mankind, Graetz about the course of Jewish history and its fulfillment. Hess stopped halfway between Hegel and Graetz. His almost Pauline approach was thoroughly Christian-centred, even philo-Christian, but he assigned the Jews a central role in the per-

<sup>18</sup> See Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, vol. 4, Leipzig 1853, pp. 1–2. See also Shulamit Volkov, ‘Reflections on German-Jewish Historiography: A Dead End or a New Beginning?’, in *LBI Year Book XLI* (1996), pp. 309–320.

<sup>19</sup> See Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. 2.2, p. 78; Isaac Marcus Jost (*Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf uns[er]e Tage. Nach den Quellen bearbeitet*, vol. 2, Berlin 1821, pp. 246–248), emphasised in this context the distance between those who remained and those who returned to Jerusalem. It is also worth noting that he used the term “emigration” (*Auswanderung*) rather than “Exodus”.



fection to come – they were to provide the eternal law of humanity.<sup>20</sup> Graetz, on the contrary, wrote only about Jews and declared them to be the avant-garde of history.<sup>21</sup> In this he contradicted the usual Christian-centred approach to history, but in its structure his historical sketch remained bound to traditional, teleological concepts: “A thread of logic runs through the whole history of this people.”<sup>22</sup> Some traces of Graetz’s ideas from the *Konstruktion* can still be found in his *Geschichte*, for example the universal meaning of Jewish history, “which will gradually educate the people to the knowledge of God and to gain human perfection, and from which derives fulfillment and salvation of the world”. But such elements are hidden in the *Geschichte*’s “lachrymose” narrative.<sup>23</sup>

Long before Graetz presented *Konstruktion* and *Geschichte*, Isaac Marcus Jost (1793-1860) had written his “Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf uns[e]re Tage” (History of the Israelites from the Maccabean Period until Today) (1820-1828, 1846/47).<sup>24</sup> Jost derived the legitimisation of diaspora existence throughout history from the period of exile and from the fact that many Jews remained in Babylon despite receiving permission to return to the Land of Israel. This approach

<sup>20</sup> [Moses Hess], *Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit. Von einem Jünger Spinoza’s*, Stuttgart 1837, pp. 332–346. See also Funkenstein, pp. 244–245.

<sup>21</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *Die Konstruktion der jüdischen Geschichte. Mit Fußnoten und einem Nachwort von Ludwig Feuchtwanger*, Berlin 1936, esp. pp. 7, 9, 19, 50–52. (First published in *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judentums*, vol. 2–3, 1845/46).

<sup>22</sup> Graetz, *Konstruktion*, pp. 8ff. See also Salo Wittmayer Baron, ‘Graetzens Geschichtsschreibung. Eine methodologische Untersuchung’, in *Wissenschaft des Judentums im deutschen Sprachbereich*, pp. 354ff. See also Schaeffler, pp. 123–125, 127; Ucko, pp. 345ff.; Meyer, *Von Moses Mendelssohn zu Leopold Zunz*, pp. 193ff. Ludwig Feuchtwanger, the modern editor of Graetz’s *Konstruktion*, emphasised in his 1936 epilogue the difference between the programmatic *Konstruktion* and the *Geschichte*, which Graetz finished in 1876, since with time the author had become “unsure of his Jewish consciousness”. But perhaps this assessment reflects above all the disillusionment that oppressed the editor in 1936. See Ludwig Feuchtwanger, ‘Zur Geschichtstheorie des jungen Graetz von 1846’, in Graetz, ed. Feuchtwanger, *Die Konstruktion*, pp. 97–107, 98; review by Ismar Elbogen, in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Judentums*, vol. 7 (1937), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. 4, pp. 3, 5, *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> Isaac Marcus Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf uns[e]re Tage, nach den Quellen bearbeitet*, 9 vols., Berlin 1820–1828, and suppl. vols. 10/1–3: *Neuere Geschichte der Israeliten von 1815-1845*, Berlin 1846/1847. An abbreviated summary is *idem*, *Allgemeine Geschichte des Israelitischen Volkes, sowohl seines zweimahligen Staatslebens als auch der zerstreuten Gemeinden und Sekten, bis in die neueste Zeit, in gedrängter Übersicht*, 2 vols., Berlin 1832. See also Schorsch, *Emergence*, pp. 422–423; Volkov, *Reflections*, p. 310.

distinguished him from his contemporaries Wolf and Graetz.<sup>25</sup> Jost's work is a thoroughgoing defence of the history in exile and a plea for surmounting that exile in the present by far-reaching assimilation. The Jews "were friends with their co-religionists, but they spilled their blood for their country".<sup>26</sup> Jews, he suggested, could be normal citizens and nobody had cause for concern about their loyalty – all that was necessary was to concede them the right to be citizens and to raise their consciousness of the common good (*Wohlfahrt*). Jost emphasised that difference and exclusion were consequences not of nationality but of religion. The idea of a homogeneous Jewish nation – a central argument of those who rejected the social and legal acceptance of Jews – was in his eyes misleading and chimerical. In rebuttal Jost referred to the prophets who, he said, opposed any Jewish expression of national pride; due to their efforts the Jews had managed to escape the fate of other peoples and nations that had disappeared from the stage of history following the loss of land and sovereignty. Even here, Jost was a level-headed chronicler. He saw the survival of the Jews as a peculiarity of history that revealed neither a message nor guidelines for the future. In his view, Jewish history was nothing but a series of coincidences, exacerbated by an external force and pressure for Jews to adapt.<sup>27</sup> For the most part, Jost managed to avoid speaking about "persecution". In the manner of Zunz and Geiger, he attempted to diminish its significance by comparison: Jew-hatred, he argued, was only one facet of the widespread fanaticism by which the powers "drowned their sins in the sea of infidel blood" and ultimately left the task of "purging themselves in the blood of the unlucky Albigensians and odious Jews" to "feeble townsmen, impoverished rural people and herdless herdsmen".<sup>28</sup>

Jost granted general absolution to the German kings and, in contrast to his treatment of the kings of England and France, absolved the German monarchs of any responsibility for Jewish suffering, shifting the blame instead to the "lower classes".<sup>29</sup> His reading of history appears well-suited to the needs of *Vormärz* governments. The other notable peculiarity in Jost's work is his largely negative perception of medieval Jewish existence and its alleged impact on Jewish mentality and behaviour, an attitude that reveals him to be a proponent of Dohm's concept of ameliora-

<sup>25</sup> See Graetz, *Geschichte* vol. 2.2 (1876), pp. 22–25; vol. 4 (1853/1866).

<sup>26</sup> Jost, *Geschichte seit den Maccabäern*, vol. 2 (1821), pp. 241–242.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 335–336. See also 245–247, 265–266, 337–344; vol. 7 (1827), p. 219.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 7 (1827), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 179–180, 187–188, 193, 238, 258; vol. 1, pp. viiff.

tion (*bürgerliche Verbesserung*). The Jews, he wrote, were thoroughly depraved (*verderbt*), but, like Dohm, Jost criticised those who blamed the Jews for their unfortunate state rather than their environment.<sup>30</sup> In further mitigation, Jost compared the deplorable Jewish situation to the general state of medieval societies. Here he saw the same moral and mental deterioration that he found in northern European medieval Jewish society. In Islamic culture, Jost believed, Jews became intellectuals, scholars and sages, whereas the continuous wars in western Europe corrupted everything and everybody and filled the pockets of Jews with wealth. Through money – to quote only one of his typical arguments – Jews compensated for their deprived social and intellectual state, “and this was the Jews’ revenge for their bad treatment”.<sup>31</sup> This account blamed Jews – the very targets of intolerance and persecution – for their (alleged) deeds and presented them as co-responsible for their fate. It refused to discover any *telos* and knew no plan or purpose; the past was merely a deplorable obstacle to be surmounted.

Thirty years later, Jost’s Middle Ages had changed. In 1857-1859, in his *Geschichte der Judenthums und seiner Secten* (History of Jewry and its Sects), he presented Judaism as an “essential factor of world history” with “uniform character”. Now he discovered origins, change, internal growth, influence on the general progress of the human spirit and even a “calling” (*Beruf*) for Jewish history in terms of the historical progress of humanity. The introduction starts with a fanfare: “From the ruins of Jerusalem arose a spirit, freed from the husk of the state (*Hüllen des Staats*). It provided new life to its adherents...”. Jost even called it “a resurrection of the spirit after the death of the body”, an image akin to the Christian “transfigured body”. This time, the moment of defeat is for Jost a liberation and a release of spiritual resources. With the state no more, religion as an independent spirit was discovered and could focus on its true task.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, vol. 2 (1821), p. 344; vol. 7, p. 187; Christian Wilhelm Dohm, *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, Berlin – Stettin 1781 (repr. Hildesheim – New York 1973), p. 70, with note (Dohm and Jost even share their mistakes and misinformation). See also Michael Brenner, ‘Zwischen Revolution und rechtlicher Gleichstellung’, in Michael A. Meyer (ed.) *Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, vol. 2: Michael Brenner, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel and Michael A. Meyer, *Emanzipation und Akkulturation: 1780-1871*, Munich 1996, pp. 296–297 (with reference to the Jost papers, LBI Archives, New York).

<sup>31</sup> Jost, *Geschichte seit den Maccabäern*, vol. 6 (1826), pp. 229–230. See also *ibid.*, pp. 9–10, 224–229; vol. 7, pp. 175–176, 214–220, 227, 239. Similar opinions can be found in Isaac de Pinto, *Apologie pour la nation juive, ou Reflexions critiques sur ... Voltaire, au sujet des Juifs*, Amsterdam 1762.

“Israelitism” (*Israelitentum*) came definitively to an end and “Judaism” emerged; the lost external sanctuary was replaced by a new spiritual home, the Holy Scriptures of Israel. Whereas the state had been vulnerable to attack and continuously in danger of defeat, Jost believed the core of Judaism to be “invincible and not subject to human imperfection”. Thus, to paraphrase Jost’s bold sketch, the ardour that consumed the Temple became the dawn of Judaism and the storms that dispersed the Jewish people across the entire world became the forerunners of a new creation to which all people soon had access.<sup>32</sup>

This deserves further comment. It is not only the choice of words but also the content that is strongly reminiscent of Christian motifs and arguments. At times it is not clear if Jost is talking about Judaism in the sense of the “light of the exile” motif (*me’or ha’golah*) or about Judaism’s impact on the emergence of Christianity and the enduring Jewish elements in Christianity. Even more astonishing is the fact that Jost now praised post-national, classical and medieval Judaism but almost completely ignored the long chain of persecutions. The most interesting point, however, is that the structure of Jost’s *Sektengeschichte* appears to be an elaboration of topics and ideas developed by Graetz in his *Konstruktion*.<sup>33</sup> While Graetz started with an audacious, programmatic sketch of Jewish history but later wrote a completely different work, Jost delivered the book Graetz had originally outlined but never wrote. Even more than Graetz in *Konstruktion*, Jost stressed the idea of fertilisation of other nations through their encounter with Judaism. We can read between the lines of Jost’s work: without Judaism no Orient and no Occident. But there are also differences between Graetz’s *Konstruktion* and Jost’s *Sektengeschichte*. One fundamental difference becomes obvious only upon careful analysis. Both authors date what Jost called the end of the “Israelite” state and the dawn of post-national, spiritually liberated Judaism not to the catastrophe of 67/70 C.E. but to the first destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.E) and the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Thus far they agree. Graetz, though, criticised subsequent developments, especially

<sup>32</sup> Isaac Marcus Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Secten*, 3 vols., Leipzig 1857-1859, here vol. 1, pp. viii ff., 1, 3, 5-6 (quote). See also *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 16-17; vol. 2, pp. 3-4; vol. 3, pp. 88-89, 115-117.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 8-10.

what he saw as the over-emphasis on religion, whereas Jost enthusiastically endorsed this.<sup>34</sup>

Jost's historiography was, and still is, roundly criticised, but such criticism generally ignores the development from his *Geschichte* to the late *Sektengeschichte* and relates only to the early *Geschichte* with its confusing sobriety that denies any specific aim or message in Jewish history. Even today scholars rebuke Jost for his audacious deconstruction of Jewish history that left no room for a guiding narrative in the sense of a unified, even nationalistic history.<sup>35</sup> The early Jost indeed remained an isolated figure in Jewish historiography, but despite his limited access to sources, his work merits serious consideration rather than dismissive criticism. What is important here is the remarkable fact that both Jost and Graetz published starkly contrasting works pre- and post-1848. As late as 1846, Jost criticised those who sought Judaism's "historical mission" in the perfection of mankind; this was, he wrote, a chimera (*Hirngespinnste*).<sup>36</sup> After 1848, in his *Sektengeschichte*, he wrote just such a history. The shifts in thinking – Jewish history for Jost appeared at first senseless, then meaningful; for Graetz it was first meaningful, then foremost deplorable – are so obvious that one should not assume it to be pure coincidence. As already noted, a similar shift can be found in the writings of Leopold Zunz. Although the long-term impact of 1848 on Jewish society has been considered in recent studies to be rather insignificant,<sup>37</sup> these three authors changed their paradigms entirely around the middle of the

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 13–19; cf. Graetz, *Konstruktion*, pp. 36–37, 47–51. As a further source in addition to Graetz on Jost's concept of history as presented in *Secten* one can consider Immanuel Wolf, esp. pp. 9–10.

<sup>35</sup> The latest comment to this effect is from Michael A. Meyer, in *Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, vol. 2, pp. 136–137, 143–144. See also Schorsch, *From Wolfenbüttel to Wissenschaft*, p. 144; Yerushalmi, *Modern Dilemmas*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>36</sup> Jost, *Geschichte seit den Maccabäern*, vol. 10.3: *Neuere Geschichte* (1846), p. 270.

<sup>37</sup> See Werner E. Mosse, 'The Revolution of 1848: Jewish Emancipation in Germany and its Limits', in *idem*, Arnold Paucker, Reinhard Rürup (eds.), *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, Tübingen 1981 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 39), pp. 389–410, 398; Reinhard Rürup, 'The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation', *ibid.*, pp. 1–53; Shulamit Volkov, *Die Juden in Deutschland 1780-1918*, Munich 1994, pp. 110–111; Salo W. Baron, 'The Impact of the Revolution of 1848 on Jewish Emancipation', in *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 11 (1949), pp. 195–248; Stefan Rohrbacher, *Gewalt im Biedermeier. Antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Vormärz und Revolution* (Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Antisemitismusforschung 1), Frankfurt am Main and New York 1993.



nineteenth century, and it seems that the reasons for this turn derived directly from the experiences, hopes and disappointments of 1848-49.<sup>38</sup>

Jost's late *Geschichte der Secten* would appear to fit comfortably into the dominant stream of nineteenth-century Jewish historiography. But it was more the spirit of Graetz's *Konstruktion* than Jost's *Secten* that inspired later works such as the 1864 *Das Judenthum und seine Geschichte* (Judaism and its History) by Abraham Geiger. Here, despite Geiger's impassioned criticism of both Jost and Graetz,<sup>39</sup> we once more find the idea of what might be called "transformative destruction". The Jewish "national character" (*Volkscharakter*) perished with the destruction of the Temple, but the historical mission of Judaism could nonetheless be fulfilled. To this end, Judaism would "walk with mankind on its victorious march and transfigure it with a gentle radiance". Again, the hopeful, somewhat messianic outlook marginalises historical threats and suffering. Geiger referred to persecutions without mentioning dates, places, causes or perpetrators. Referring to a better future and stressing its ideal quality, he diminished the importance of past persecution. Only after it was conceived of as the seed of future perfection did the "tragedy ... of the Jews' past" or selected moments from it merit mention. Geiger was not interested in the dark corners of a bygone history; he was interested in history only to the extent that it helped prove that despite (or thanks to) the conditions of the diaspora, Judaism was able to develop spiritual creativity in a non-Jewish environment. In this he drew on the traditional rabbinical motif of Judaism as the light in exile, which he clothed in humanistic dress. He stressed this motif both in order to legitimate Judaism in a Christian environment and to reassure a Jewish public that had become uncertain about Judaism's role and value. For this purpose, he drew even on anti-Jewish motifs, such as the wandering "eternal Jew", giving it a positive reading: "Indeed, the wanderer felt that his destination was not to march in hurry amidst the people, but to build a permanent home, to live

<sup>38</sup> Graetz's comments in letters and notes on the events of 1848/1849 give some idea about the impact of political developments on his views. See Reuven Michael (ed.), *Heinrich Graetz. Tagebuch und Briefe*, Tübingen 1977 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 34), pp. 176, 184, 196. See also the statements about, and the changing assessments of, the events of 1848/49 in the letters of Abraham Geiger, in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 5, Berlin 1878, nos. 66-69, pp. 195-208.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Abraham Geiger's 1846 letters to Zunz and Berthold Auerbach in his *Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 5, nos. 58-62, pp. 180-188, and no. 118, pp. 293-294.



there with humanity and to work there for it[s perfection].”<sup>40</sup> Further, he discovered analogies between Jewish history and the sufferings of the “*gemeinsame Mutter*” (common mother) *Germania* in times of internecine war among the sons in the “*Vaterland*” (i.e. 1866).<sup>41</sup>

A similar case was Moritz Güdemann (1835-1918), chief rabbi in Vienna, who attempted to write the history of Jewish-Christian relations as one of continuous rapprochement, regardless of the protagonists’ awareness of their situation. Like his predecessors, Güdemann presented Jew-hatred as a shadow of the past, although it greatly increased at the time of publication of the first volume of his *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens* (History of Education) in 1880. He noted it only when he saw continuities and where he thought that history might help to explain the present. Archbishop Agobard of Lyon, 816-840, for example, was conceived of in modern terms as an agitator against “Judaisation” (*Verjudung*).<sup>42</sup> Perhaps Agobard, protégé of the young Louis the Pious (Charlemagne’s son, Emperor from 814-840) and banned from his see at Lyon and from the court for his political opposition,<sup>43</sup> served here as a symbol for Adolph Sto-

<sup>40</sup> Abraham Geiger, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte. In zwölf Vorlesungen, nebst einem Anhang: Einblick auf die neuesten Bearbeitungen des Lebens Jesu*, Breslau 1864, vol. 1, pp. 140–155 (quotes from pp. 145, 147, 155). See also the English edition in one volume: *Judaism and its History*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Lanham 1985, pp. 166–168, 213–214, 363–365, 379, 381; Abraham Geiger, ‘Dritter Brief’, in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 2, pp. 316, *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Die zweimalige Auflösung des jüdischen Staates. Eine Zeitpredigt gehalten am Shabbat den 17. Thammus, den 30. Juni 1866’, in *Abraham Geiger’s Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 1, Berlin 1875, p. 415.

<sup>42</sup> Moritz Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Frankreich und Deutschland von der Begründung der jüdischen Wissenschaft in diesen Ländern bis zur Vertreibung der Juden aus Frankreich, X-XIV. Jahrhundert* (Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit, vol. 1), Vienna 1880, (repr. Amsterdam 1966), quotes from pp. 4–5. See also pp. 127–129; *idem*, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien während des Mittelalters* (Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit, vol. 2), Vienna 1884 (repr. Amsterdam 1966), pp. VII, 5–8; *idem*, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Frankreich und Deutschland während des XIV. und XV. Jahrhunderts* (Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit, vol. 3), Vienna 1888 (repr. Amsterdam 1966); pp. 3–4; Ismar Schorsch, ‘Moritz Güdemann, Rabbi, Historian and Apologist’, in *LBI Year Book XLI* (1996), pp. 309–320; *idem*, *Emergence*, pp. 434–435.

<sup>43</sup> See L. van Acker (ed.), ‘Agobardi Lugdunensis opera omnia’, in *Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis*, vol. 52, Turnhout 1981. The latest studies on Agobard are Johannes Heil, ‘Agobard, Amolo, das Kirchengut und die Juden von Lyon’, in

ecker, the controversial court preacher in Berlin. Similarly, David Kaufmann used the arsenal of medieval history to fight contemporary political struggles, but this time explicitly. Kaufmann countered Stoecker's polemics about the "Jewish press" by pointing out that, while in the fourteenth century Jews were charged with causing the Black Death by poisoning the wells, in modern times Jews were falsely charged with having caused the "modern Black Death of the printed word".<sup>44</sup> With hindsight, Güdemann found a positive effect of Jew-hatred. The continuous struggle that it necessitated prevented Jewish indifference and fortified intra-Jewish ties. Jews, he maintained, contributed to intellectual progress during the entire Middle Ages and were constantly willing to assimilate; Christian society, though, denied them full acceptance until the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> In 1906, Güdemann argued that Jews were not prevented "from being thoroughly German", since "German is clearly only a national category", and could at the same time be thoroughly Jewish since Judaism was nothing but a confessional label.<sup>46</sup>

Samuel Bäck (1834-1912), who attended the same school in Nikolsburg as Heinrich Graetz and later became rabbi at Lissa in the Prussian province of Posen, published the brief *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (History of the Jewish People) in 1878. This successful popular book saw several printings. Bäck personally supervised the third edition in 1906, while (according to the introduction) additions were the work of a "younger scholar" – his son Leo Baeck (1873-1956). It is astonishing how little information about the decades between 1848 and 1906 Baeck added to his father's book, but it is important to note what he did add and change. Apprehension about antisemitic movements in Germany and Austria, for example, was expressed and led to a reserved acknowledgement of Zionism. In contrast to the views of many ardent Jewish critics of Zionism, its legitimacy (*Existenzberechtigung*) for Baeck was beyond doubt, since the new movement served to heighten interest in Jewish af-

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*Francia*, vol. 25/1 (1998), pp. 39–76; Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, Berkeley 1999, pp. 123–145.

<sup>44</sup> David Kaufmann, 'Ein Wort im Vertrauen an Herrn Hofprediger Stoecker von einem, dessen Namen nichts zur Sache tut' (Berlin 1880), in David Kaufmann, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Marcus Brann, vol. 3, Frankfurt am Main, 1915 (repr. New York 1980), p. 528.

<sup>45</sup> Moritz Güdemann, *Frankreich und Deutschland*, pp. 4–5. The motive of indifference ("Fluch der Gleichgültigkeit") contrasts with the theory of the unifying experience of persecution in Jost, *Geschichte seit den Maccabäern*, e.g. vol. 4 (1824), pp. 173–174.

<sup>46</sup> Moritz Güdemann, *Jüdische Apologetik*, Glogau 1906, p. 87, also pp. 88–90.

fairs and especially in the Hebrew language.<sup>47</sup> When Baeck revised his father's book, he was by no means unknown. The younger Baeck had received his Ph.D. in 1895 from the University of Berlin with a work under the auspices of Wilhelm Dilthey on Spinoza's influence in Germany, a subject that is testimony to Baeck's interest in the broad field of religious and philosophical history rather than – regardless of the revision of his father's book – social and political history. In 1905, Baeck had published his *Wesen des Judentums* (Essence of Judaism), originally an argument against Adolf von Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums* (Essence of Christianity) (1899/1910), which included an anti-Jewish remodelling of the old theology of supersession.<sup>48</sup> In the introduction to his response to Harnack, Baeck outlined Jewish history as a process of change and growth, with a core of unchangeable and fundamental "internal unity" and a "common religious identity". Baeck stressed Judaism's enduring openness to renewal. Since Judaism refused dogma, its central idea was preserved. Persecutions could do little more than reveal the failure of adversaries, but the minority was nonetheless compelled to reflection and thereby attained intellectual and moral superiority. Judaism had – and we recognise this theme – a universal task. Its calling, and its acceptance of

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<sup>47</sup> Samuel Bäck, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes und seiner Literatur vom babylonischen Exil bis zur Gegenwart mit einem Anhang: Proben der jüdischen Literatur*, 3rd rev. edn., Frankfurt am Main 1906, esp. pp. 548–549. See, for comparison, *idem*, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes und seiner Literatur vom babylonischen Exil bis zur Gegenwart mit einem Anhang: Proben der jüdischen Literatur*, 2nd rev. edn., Frankfurt am Main 1894. For remarkable changes, compare p. 177 (1894) with p. 175 (1906). Compare also p. 546 (1894), "Der Geist der Humanität und Gewissensfreiheit schreitet aber unaufhaltsam fort, er kann zurückgedrängt, aber nicht mehr erdrückt werden." with p. 549 (1906) following the paragraph on Zionism, "Der Geist der Humanität und Gewissensfreiheit schreitet trotz Judenhaß und Antisemitismus unaufhaltsam fort, er kann zurückgedrängt, aber nicht mehr erdrückt werden." Another tentatively positive assessment of Zionism is Martin Philippson, *Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3 vols., Leipzig 1907–1911, vol. 2, pp. 166–171. See also Meyer, *Jüdische Identität*, pp. 67–68; Susanne Plietzsch, 'Kindheit und Jugend Leo Baecks in Lissa', in Georg Heuberger and Fritz Backhaus (eds.), *Leo Baeck 1873–1956. Aus dem Stamme von Rabbinern*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 15–25; Rachel Heuberger, "Weshalb soll der Mensch nur eine Richtung haben?" Leo Baecks Studium und Rabbinertätigkeit in den Jahren 1891–1912', *ibid.*, pp. 26–43; Zvi Erich Kurzweil, 'The Relevance of Leo Baeck's Thought to the Mainstream of Judaism', in *Judaism*, vol. 39 (1989/1990), pp. 163–170.

<sup>48</sup> An earlier argument is Leo Baeck, 'Harnacks Vorlesungen über das Wesen des Christentums', in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 45 (1901), pp. 97–120 (published separately in 1902).

the “duty for the future of mankind”, created difference and established Judaism’s exceptional position. Salvation, however, was not exclusive.<sup>49</sup>

Thereby we discover the paradoxical proximity of Liberal and Neo-Orthodox Judaism. It is remarkable how close the authors discussed thus far were to the father of Neo-Orthodoxy, Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888). Hirsch’s early masterpiece, his *Neunzehn Briefe* (Nineteen Letters), was written in 1836, before Graetz and Jost formulated their programmatic outlines of Jewish history. “The Jewish people shall demonstrate to all people that the Almighty is the progenitor and donor of all blessings ... The fall of the state did not negate the task [of Judaism] and even the state was simply a tool for that purpose.” For Hirsch, every moment of the past had meaning and purpose, even the destruction of sovereignty and state, not because his people had committed greater sins than others but because Judaism had not yet fulfilled its unique task. Hirsch understood persecution – mentioned only once in the *Neunzehn Briefe* – in a thoroughly traditional manner, as a test, and he saw no reason to argue about specific events and their context. As he expressed it: “If we were – if we could become – if we shall be – if our life were a perfect mirror of our Torah: what an omnipotent tool for the great aim of perfection of mankind!”<sup>50</sup> In fact, similar arguments had already been put forward by Jost, Graetz and Baeck. Yet, at least in comparison to Jost, there is a difference that Hirsch would have considered decisive for further arguments. He believed that the Torah was God’s immediate revelation, given to his people in order for them to spread humanity among other people, not that the Torah (regardless of its derivation<sup>51</sup>) was a source for the perfection of humanity.

<sup>49</sup> Leo Bäck [sic], *Das Wesen des Judentums*, Berlin 1905, p. 48. See also pp. 1–5, 16–17, 148–149, 158–159. See also Christian Wiese, ‘Ein unerhörtes Gesprächsangebot. Leo Baeck, die Wissenschaft des Judentums und das Judenbild des liberalen Protestantismus’, in Heuberger and Backhaus (eds.), pp. 147–171; Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Ein Schrei ins Leere?* Tübingen 1999 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, 61).

<sup>50</sup> Ben Usiel [Samson Raphael Hirsch] (ed.), *Igerot Zafon. Neunzehn Briefe über Judentum. Als Voranfrage wegen ‘Versuchen’ desselben Verfassers ‘über Israel und seine Pflichten’ nebst einer Einführung von Salomon Ehrmann*, Frankfurt am Main 1920 [first published in 1836], quotes from pp. 36, 38, 40. See also Robert Liberles, *Religious Conflict in Social Context: The Resurgence of Orthodox Judaism in Frankfurt am Main, 1838–1877*, Westport, CT 1985, pp. 8–9, 32, 45–46, 61–64, 71–74.

<sup>51</sup> See also Wolf, p. 3, where he interprets “God” à la Hegel as the “Idee der unbedingten Einheit im All”; cf. discussing the meaning of Talmud, Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. 4, pp. 410–412.

“... durch Fluten und Scheiterhaufen”

Hirsch knew as much about threats and persecution as Jost or Graetz, but had no reason to focus on the topic since his history was inserted into God’s rule in history. For the work of non-Orthodox authors, persecution became a pressing topic only by the desacralisation and historicisation of Jewish history, since in this way it was removed from the sphere of theodicy and required answers beyond metaphysics. For the “new historians” of the nineteenth century, it was permissible to indulge in analysis of the meaning of hate and violence in history only as long as circumstances were such as to allow expectations for a better future. But as we saw, from the first eager efforts by Jost and the young Graetz to the revision that the young Baeck undertook for his father’s book, this enthusiasm gradually withered and was replaced with scepticism.

In 1907, in the first volume of his *Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (Contemporary History of the Jewish People), Martin Philippon once again employed the reliable paradigm of Graetz’s *Konstruktion* and Jost’s *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Secten*. In comparison to his predecessors, Philippon’s approach was modest. He located the shift from national peoplehood to community of faith not in the far-removed sixth century B.C.E., as Jost and Graetz had, but in the nineteenth century, thus extending the past up to his own day and possibly earning additional time (in the near future) to witness a fundamental shift in the situation of the Jews and in their acceptance. Philippon’s work lacks any of the euphoria of his predecessors. One reason for this mood change was perhaps the subject of this essay – persecution. At least potentially, hate had again become an element of the present. Antisemitism became the dominant topic of his second volume (covering the years 1875-1908), in which he gives the impression that antisemitism was the only noteworthy topic of recent history.<sup>52</sup> Reality had damaged the fragile construction both of an artificially distant past and the notion of normality in the present.

Two words – *Fluten* and *Scheiterhaufen* – sufficed David Kaufmann in his 1880 polemic against Adolf Stoecker to determine the characteristics

<sup>52</sup> Philippon, *Neueste Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. II, 101–102; vol. 2, esp. pp. 2–3, 65, 153–159. It is worth noting that when Philippon wrote about general history he seemed rather uninterested in Jewish history. See *idem*, *Geschichte des preußischen Staatswesens vom Tode Friedrich des Großen bis zu den Freiheitskriegen*, 2 vols., Brüssel – Leipzig 1880-1882, e.g. vol. 1, pp. 373–378.



of the Jewish historical experience: floods and stakes, Exodus and pogrom, the passage through water and the passage through fire, salvation and martyrdom.<sup>53</sup> In the course of nineteenth-century Jewish historiography and historiographical identity-building, these topics increasingly became the cornerstones of any consideration of the past. The meaning of salvation (unimportant if considered in a traditional religious sense and/or in a political one, as emancipation) was sharpened through the experience (or the knowledge) of persecution. Persecution, therefore, was an unavoidable element in any Jewish reflection about history, but there was a remarkable variety of approaches to the topic in nineteenth-century historiography. The diverse attitudes towards the past and its most deplorable moments can also be understood as a mirror for changing patterns of identity-building. In the course of time the affirmative approach (affirmative toward non-Jewish expectations, aiming at appeasement and acceptance, for example the early Jost) was replaced by an enthusiastic attitude (which relativised and contextualised persecution and insisted on a specific mission of Judaism, for example the early Graetz, Geiger, Güdemann, Hirsch and, although expressed differently, Moses Hess), which then gave way to an audacious approach (the late Graetz). In his *Geschichte*, Graetz preferred clarity, which was painful for the Jews as it recalled persecution, and provocative to the non-Jews as it was they who were the persecutors. Graetz wrote perhaps the first modern Jewish history worthy of the name, since he offered history for its own sake without worrying about future critics. He did not seek applause from the (for the most part ignorant) non-Jewish majority; he offered a history of counter-heroes, unmasking the heroes of the dominant (Christian) historiography as persecutors of the Jews.<sup>54</sup> One might then ask to what extent the controversy between Heinrich Treitschke and Graetz in 1879-1880, beyond the antisemitic trappings with which Treitschke furnished his attacks, was an inevitable and insoluble conflict between competing and mutually exclusive concepts of history. The concerns of the Christian "High Priest of culture" and the Breslau scholar's view of history, which insisted on acknowledgement and emancipation, were in fact incompatible and revealed the boundaries of the discourse about emancipation and normality in Germany. Perhaps a sharp provocation like Graetz's *Geschichte*, which differed substantially from Jost's pre-1848 "appeasement" historiography,

<sup>53</sup> The expression was used by David Kaufmann, p. 525.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. 7 (1897), pp. 337-338; vol. 8, Leipzig (1890), pp. 2-4, 130-136. 267-268.



was necessary in order to bring this conflict to the surface. In fact, though, no explicit claim for the Torah's special mission was necessary, no claim was needed for the *Apostelamt*, as Graetz put it, to generate this conflict in the 1880s,<sup>55</sup> since even more moderate accounts such as those by Geiger or Güdemann provoked little response – either positive or negative – from non-Jewish scholars or the public.

The basic antagonistic forces at work in the growing historical awareness of both sides become obvious, for example, when David Kaufmann interpreted the “historical mission of Judaism” as being in competition with Christian claims for cultural and religious hegemony.<sup>56</sup> Paradoxically, the more Jewish historians adopted the tools of historicism during the nineteenth century, the greater the gap between Jewish and non-Jewish historical identities. Clearly, Graetz concluded that it was impossible to write a mediating Jewish-German history. Instead, he offered a Jewish counter-history which became an attack on Wilhelminian German historiography. Such a concept of the past left no space for idyllic, dreamy pictures like “Festival Dinner”, which in the final analysis was merely a decoration in Mosse's dining room, not a mirror of normalised reality.

<sup>55</sup> For the Christian “High Priest of Culture”, see Funkenstein, p.19. On the “apostolic task” (*Apostelamt*) see Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. 4 (1853/1866), p. 3. See also Funkenstein, pp. 19–20, 255–256. Stoecker reacted immediately to the “mission” motif. See Adolf Stoecker, ‘Unsere Forderungen an das moderne Judentum’, in *idem*, *Christlich-Sozial. Reden und Aufsätze*, 2nd edn., Berlin 1890, pp. 360–361. For the dispute Treitschke vs. Graetz see Walter Boehlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, Frankfurt am Main 1965. A new edition of sources related to this dispute is currently in preparation at the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Berlin. See also Rainer Erb and Werner Bergmann, *Die Nachtseite der Judenemanzipation. Der Widerstand gegen die Integration der Juden in Deutschland 1780-1860*, Berlin 1989; Gershon D. Cohen, ‘German Jewry as Mirror of Modernity’, in *LBI Year Book XX* (1975), pp. IX–XXXI; Wolfgang Benz, ‘The Legend of German-Jewish Symbiosis’, in *LBI Year Book XXXVII* (1992), pp. 95–102.

<sup>56</sup> David Kaufmann, pp. 524ff.

CHRISTIAN WIESE

Struggling for Normality:  
The Apologetics of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in  
Wilhelmine Germany as an Anti-colonial Intellectual  
Revolt against the Protestant Construction of Judaism

I.

In 1911 Emil Cohn, who had lost his Berlin rabbinate in 1907 after a controversy about his Zionist inclinations,<sup>1</sup> directed a harsh attack against the liberal Jewish establishment in an article in which he depicted the concept of identity fostered by the liberal currents within the rabbinate and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as the road towards assimilation with the Christian majority of German society. The “modern liberal talmudism of the ethics of Judaism, the talmudism of an abstract confessional religion of rational dogmas of faith”, he maintained, was not able to effect a revival of a living Jewish community that was aware of its ethnic and cultural roots. Looking back at the controversial debates held in Germany on the “Essence of Judaism” since the beginning of the twentieth century, Cohn acknowledged that the works of Jewish scholars defending Jewish tradition, ethics and culture against theological and political prejudices “in a way contributed to fostering Jewish self-esteem” but, according to his perception, they were in danger of reducing the Jewish religion to apologetics:

This is the way it has always been: apologetics is the result of one hundred years of our development, apologetics was the only possibility left to us, we ourselves are apologetics, each of us an embodiment of apologetics. Our life depends on the attacks directed against us. And if – when confronted with the praise of foreign values – we feel

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<sup>1</sup> See Emil Cohn, *Mein Kampf ums Recht. Eine Streitschrift gegen Vorstand und Repräsentanz der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*, Berlin 1907.

able to point out: 'We have this as well!' or even 'We had this before you', we consider this a cause for triumph. Apologetics: this seems to us to be the value of Jewish ethics for our times.<sup>2</sup>

A few years later Felix Rosenblüth, a leading figure of the Zionist youth movement, noted ironically that the liberal Jewish "generation of apologists" was completely dependent on "the refutation of absurd antisemitic claims" and on "reflections upon the fact that the Jewish religion in comparison with the Christian faith has certain undisputable advantages".<sup>3</sup> Remarks like these were later echoed by Gershom Scholem's famous description of nineteenth-century Jewish historiography as a "diabolical" betrayal of Jewish interests for the advancement of an assimilationist agenda. The passionate criticism of the tradition of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Scholem first developed in 1944 in his polemical essay *Mitokh hirhurim 'al khokhmat Yisra'el* (Reflections on Jewish Thought) culminated in the view that "no living and unpetrified statement on the Jewish religion" came from this circle of scholars, no word that was not contaminated by apologetics.<sup>4</sup> One of the central aspects of this criticism was that the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had, according to Scholem, paid the price for emancipation and had thereby adapted to German Protestant cultural expectations by interpreting Judaism as an idealised, enlightened rationalism and had failed to represent the living dynamics of Jewish tradition. Research on the history of Jewish studies in Germany, however, has now contradicted this judgement, arguing that Scholem, who was able to develop his scholarly work at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem - that is, without being forced permanently to react to a hostile, anti-Jewish academic context - did not treat the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and its achievements justly.<sup>5</sup>

Scholem combined this opinion with the thesis, developed in his article 'Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue', that all efforts of the Jewish community in Germany resulted in a tragic failure based on the

<sup>2</sup> idem, 'Die religiöse Judenfrage', in *Preußische Jahrbücher*, vol. 143, (1911), pp. 432-440, esp. pp. 437f.

<sup>3</sup> Felix Rosenblüth, 'Nationaljudentum und Antisemitismus', in *Jüdische Rundschau* 18 (1913), No. 13, pp. 126ff., here p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Judaica* 6. Die Wissenschaft vom Judentum, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Michael Brocke, 'Gershom Scholem: Wissenschaft des Judentums zwischen Berlin und Jerusalem', in *Freiburger Rundbrief* NF 3 (1998), pp. 178-186.

illusory aim of potential dialogue with the non-Jewish majority. Provoked by the opinion that, regardless of the Holocaust, the encounter of Judaism and German culture at this time might be understood as a “German-Jewish dialogue, the core of which is indestructible”, he vehemently espoused the counter-view that there had never been such a “dialogue”, since German society had never taken the Jews seriously and had never allowed them to express their Jewish identity in the process of social integration. The Jews abandoned their Judaism “in order to salvage an existence for the pitiful pieces of it”; to describe the whole thing as a German-Jewish symbiosis only revealed “its whole ambiguity”. Scholem’s assertion that the efforts of the Jews to engage in dialogue must be characterised as a “cry in the void”<sup>6</sup> ignited an enduring debate over whether Jewish consciousness of being German and engaging in an active connection with German society and culture prior to 1933 was really no more than an illusion.<sup>7</sup> Even now it is difficult to escape the persuasive force of his analysis, whose sharpness derived from the shock of the Holocaust and from an uncompromising Zionist interpretation of history that condemned the process of “assimilation”. The unique crime connected with the name of Auschwitz and the murder of millions of European Jews inevitably determines the perspective of any historiography dealing with German-Jewish social, political and cultural history before the period of National Socialism, since it is impossible to ignore the dreadful end to that history in the years of Nazi rule. Nevertheless, it is the historian’s responsibility not to reduce Jewish history prior to 1933 to a mere prehistory of the Holocaust, which may give the impression that all developments led inexorably to the “Final Solution”. Every period must be appreciated and interpreted in and of itself: the decades between the legal accomplishment of Jewish emancipation in 1869/1871 and its definitive end in 1933 appear as the climax of a process “in which the Jews in Germany gradually went from being objects to subjects of history” – they not only endured life with the Germans but also shaped it themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Scholem portrays the German Jews as struggling to assimilate fully into German society, even at the cost of abandoning their sense of identity as Jews. Recent historiography, however, has detected more dissimilatory

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<sup>6</sup> Gershom Scholem, ‘Wider den Mythos vom deutsch-jüdischen Gespräch’, in *Judaica* 2, Frankfurt am Main 1970, pp. 7–11, especially pp. 7ff.

<sup>7</sup> See Wolfgang Benz, ‘The Legend of German-Jewish Symbiosis’, in *LBI Year Book* XXXVII (1992), pp. 95–102.

<sup>8</sup> See Ernst G. Löwenthal, *Die historische Lücke. Betrachtungen zur neueren deutsch-jüdischen Historiographie*, Tübingen 1987, p. 4.

tendencies<sup>9</sup> and David Sorkin's description of the situation of the majority of German Jews as an invisible subculture living in creative tension with German society has gained plausibility.<sup>10</sup> This analysis of the history of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, especially of one of its major projects, the refutation of the image of Judaism championed by modern Protestantism in Germany, gives rather the impression of liveliness and the will to challenge, at least up to 1933. Furthermore, it is important not to use the term "apologetics" in a retrospective polemical sense but to understand it as it was understood by Jewish scholars themselves at the time, as a defence of their tradition against a seemingly scholarly repudiation of the religious and cultural value of Judaism that evolved parallel to more vulgar forms of antisemitism and that represented a challenge to Jewish existence itself. Based on comprehensive research into the relation between *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and Protestant theology during the Second Empire,<sup>11</sup> I shall try to analyse the complex discourse centred on the "Essence of Judaism" and the "Essence of Christianity" in the decade before the First World War from the point of view of contemporary Jewish attitudes. The main focus, however, will not be on these controversial questions of religious history themselves,<sup>12</sup> but on the public response of Jewish scholars that marked the beginning of *Wissenschaft des Judentums'* endeavour to contest the hegemony of Protestant historiography. The hidden discourse expressing itself in these debates, I would suggest, was determined by the conflicting views of Jewish and Protestant scholars concerning the appropriate understanding of Jewish "assimilation" and the conditions of Jewish integration into German society and culture.

I would like to argue that the move to write the history of Christianity as part of Jewish history was not motivated by the striving for assimilation but, on the contrary, by a consciously counter-assimilationist purpose. The encounter of Jewish scholars with liberal Protestantism in particular appears as a forceful attempt to achieve "normality" – understood

<sup>9</sup> See Shulamit Volkov, 'Jüdische Assimilation und jüdische Eigenart im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Ein Versuch', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983), pp. 331–348.

<sup>10</sup> David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840*, New York 1987, pp. 5f., pp. 113ff.

<sup>11</sup> See Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Ein "Schrei ins Leere?"*, Tübingen 1999 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 61).

<sup>12</sup> For the origins of the debate itself, see Uriel Tal, 'Theologische Debatte um das "Wesen" des Judentums', in Werner E. Mosse and Arnold Paucker (eds.), *Juden im Wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890-1914*, Tübingen 1976 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 33), pp. 599–632.



as the acknowledgement of Judaism as an equal, independent and relevant cultural and religious force in modern German society. I will try to show, on the basis of modern postcolonial theory, that there was an “anti-colonial” impulse inherent in the demand to recognise Judaism as a cultural force of at least the same value as the Western Christian tradition, if not superior in terms of religious originality and ethical strength, and in the endeavour to contest the anti-pluralist hegemony of Protestant culture in Prussian-dominated Wilhelmine Germany. Instead of assessing the Jewish outlook as one of apologetic submission, as implied by Scholem, I would like to argue that the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* started an intellectual revolt against the way Protestant historiography constructed Judaism and tried to impose its own narrative and its own system of meaning and values. One must, of course, be aware that the concept of “Postcolonialism”, as used in the fields of history, literature and cultural studies, includes a variety of complex theoretical questions and has been the subject of considerable debate in recent decades;<sup>13</sup> this article should be read not as a contribution to postcolonial theory itself but as an attempt to apply certain aspects of it to better understand the efforts of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. As Susannah Heschel has convincingly shown, postcolonial theory can serve as a useful instrument for an interpretation not only of the relation between colonising (European) and colonised (non-European) nations but also of the relations between ethnic or cultural majorities and minorities within a European nation. According to Heschel, the Protestant representation of Judaism and Jewish history in nineteenth-century Germany can reasonably be interpreted as a colonial ideology aimed at suppressing the voice of the “subaltern”, to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s term, and at displaying the religious and intellectual superiority of a (Protestant) Christianity that was obviously understood as the exclusive leading cultural force or *Leitkultur*. Judaism, not a territorial colony but an “inner colony”, the subaltern voice of Europe, “began its resistance and disruption with the rise of Jewish studies in the nineteenth century, as it not only presented its own history but reconfigured the history and sig-

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<sup>13</sup> As standard works for postcolonial theory, see, for example, Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, New York 1998; Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford 2001; Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds.), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, Oxford 2000; Diana Brydon (ed.), *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols., London and New York 2000.



nificance of Christianity by undermining its central claims".<sup>14</sup> By contesting the master narrative of Western history, which was rooted in concepts of Christian religious supremacy and which metaphorically described Judaism as a "dead", obsolete and even dangerous tradition, and by exploring Christianity from a Jewish point of view, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* served as an important element of Jewish self-empowerment and provided a new version of Jewish and of European history, subversive and disturbing from a Christian perspective but bringing relief from a Jewish perspective.

Two main aspects of postcolonial theory seem to be relevant, the first of which is the relation between knowledge and power. Despite the critical debate on many aspects of Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978),<sup>15</sup> it must be acknowledged that his "colonial discourse analysis" has rightly emphasised the extent to which "knowledge" about other cultures has been an ideological tool of colonial power, how colonial stereotyping has been used in order to marginalise and silence the knowledge and belief systems of those who were conquered or subjugated. This description can be applied to the Protestant discourse on Judaism and Jewish integration in Germany which (mostly) aimed at silencing Jewish identity and consistently made Jews the "other" in German society. The reaction of Protestant theology to the challenge of Jewish scholars in reality revealed the consistent subordination and distortion of Jewish knowledge by the politically powerful in order to suppress the true voice of Jewish Studies. The second aspect that is important to examine is the phenomenon of anti-colonial intellectual rebellion, the question of how colonised or marginalised minorities endeavour to subvert the master discourse. If we assume that German Jewry found itself in a "colonial situation" in which its traditions and identity were consistently marginalised, then it is of special importance to see the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as part of a process of anti-colonial resistance, in which the attempt to make the voice of Jewish historiography, literature and philosophy heard, played a decisive role. This does not mean, of course, that there was no assimilation to and adaptation of the ideas and concepts of the non-Jewish intellectual environment, for the findings of postcolonial theory are, as will be maintained in the following remarks, valid also for the Jewish anti-colonial revolt:

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<sup>14</sup> Susannah Heschel, 'Jewish Studies as Counterhistory', in David Biale, Michael Galchinsky and Susannah Heschel (eds.), *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1998, pp. 101–115, here p. 102. See also Susannah Heschel, Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus, Chicago 1998.

<sup>15</sup> See Young, pp. 383–394.

“Anti-colonial movements and individuals often drew upon Western ideas and vocabularies to challenge colonial rule. Indeed they often hybridised what they borrowed by juxtaposing it with indigenous ideas, reading it through their own interpretative lens, and even using it to assert cultural alterity or insist on an unbridgeable difference between coloniser and colonised.”<sup>16</sup> The analysis of the apologetic strategies of Jewish Studies, which consisted of simultaneously justifying integration *and* alterity by appropriating the language and concepts of the dominant culture while asserting the right to preserve a distinctive identity, casts further light on the complexity of the process of Jewish “assimilation” in Germany.

## II.

The intensity of the controversies between liberal Judaism and liberal Protestantism in Wilhelmine Germany must be understood against their respective historical backgrounds, namely the struggle of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to “invent a tradition” – an ethical and philosophical interpretation of the Jewish tradition aspiring to prove the legitimacy of the continued existence of Jewry and Jewishness within modernity<sup>17</sup> – and the increasing influence on the other side of an anti-pluralist nationalism and modern antisemitism, of which the systematic discrimination against Jewish Studies at the universities was but one symbolic expression. At the turn of the century many Jewish scholars, realising the anti-Jewish implications of parts of Protestant theology and religious studies, felt compelled to put their knowledge at the service of the organised defence against anti-Semitism.<sup>18</sup> It was part of the “colonial situation” of German Jewry that a good part of the refutation of the Protestant image of Judaism took place in the context of the activities of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*<sup>19</sup> or the *Verband der deutschen Juden*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Loomba, p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> Shulamit Volkov, ‘Die Erfindung einer Tradition. Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland’, in *Historische Zeitschrift* 253 (1991), pp. 603–628.

<sup>18</sup> See Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870–1914*, New York and London 1972; Arnold Paucker, ‘Die Abwehr des Antisemitismus in den Jahren 1893–1933’, in Herbert A. Strauss and Norbert Kampe (eds.), *Antisemitismus. Von der Judenfeindschaft zum Holocaust*, Frankfurt and New York 1988, pp. 143–171.

<sup>19</sup> See now Avraham Barkai, *“Wehr Dich!” Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893–1938*, Munich 2002.

<sup>20</sup> For its profile and work see Walter Breslauer, ‘Der Verband der Deutschen Juden (1904–1922)’, in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, No. 28 (1964), pp. 345–379.

Jewish scholars, therefore, openly reflected upon the notion, the concept and the strategies of Jewish “apologetics”. Martin Schreiner, for example, described why he felt compelled to devote his time to apologetic writings: as “Christian theologians, historians and philologists approached Jewish literature and history” in a biased way and completely neglected the research of Jewish historians, his own work, inevitably, did not only pursue the goals of scholarship but also “aimed practically at dispersing prejudices against Judaism and legitimising its existence”. This could not be changed, he pointed out, “as long as serious scholars were not more cautious in their judgements on Judaism ... and as long as the annihilation of Judaism was presented as a desirable aim.”<sup>21</sup>

The deliberations associated with the term “apologetics” can be seen in two programmatic statements made by Joseph Eschelbacher. In 1908 he published an article entitled ‘Aufgaben einer jüdischen Apologetik’ (The Tasks of Jewish Apologetics), in which he demanded an efficient defence strategy. The old Jewish tradition of apologetics, he maintained, had been neglected for too long and only after the struggles for emancipation had a literature defending Jews and Judaism begun to emerge. Although the brutal attacks of modern antisemitic parties had lost some of their strength, it was necessary to direct attention to the more subtle forms of “suspicion against and denigration of everything Jewish” that prevailed among intellectuals who determined public opinion.<sup>22</sup> His remarks are further characterised by the hope that scholarly enlightenment and truth would finally prove effective and by the conviction that it was more than legitimate to express loyalty to one’s own tradition. Thus Eschelbacher demanded a “systematic apologetics” – the refutation of distorted judgements as part of a broader strategy that was aware of the impact of religious stereotypes on radical antisemitic attitudes.<sup>23</sup> He proposed several projects, such as the founding of a library of apologetic works and of an archive that would document all antisemitic attacks and collect all material that was likely to refute them.<sup>24</sup> In another paper Eschelbacher gave

<sup>21</sup> Martin Schreiner, *Die jüngsten Urteile über das Judentum*, Berlin 1902, pp. vff.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Eschelbacher, ‘Aufgaben einer jüdischen Apologetik’, in *Korrespondenz-Blatt des Verbandes der deutschen Juden*, No. 3 (1908), pp. 1–10, here pp. 2ff.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 5f.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6f. In 1910 an “apologetic archive” was founded with the aim of providing arguments for every scholar involved in apologetic activities (see *Korrespondenz-Blatt des Verbandes der deutschen Juden*, No. 9 (1911), pp. 5ff.). Under its director, the journalist Simon Bernfeld, the archive first published a volume of essays on *Soziale Ethik im Judentum* (Frankfurt am Main 1913); its most important contribution, though, were the five volumes of *Die Lehren des Judentums nach den Quellen* (Berlin

during a session of the German branch of the B'nai B'rith in 1908, he demanded the appointment of a "monitoring committee" (*Überwachungskommission*) whose task would be to keep an eye on writings that were likely to denigrate Judaism and to disseminate works that could foster objective knowledge and a fair judgement on Jewish history and tradition. His arguments ring with the awareness of what we would retrospectively call a Protestant "colonial discourse":

The contempt for Jewish essence and writings, the disregard of the important participation of Jews in the general development of religion and culture, of the manifold and successful contributions of Jews in the different fields of scientific, productive and social activities in the present is based mostly on inadequate representations provided by the important books of famous authors who lend these depictions credibility. These books, written in the main by excellent Protestant scholars, dominate literature and public opinion. These are the works that are quoted and recommended for the broad public. They are considered as standard works. It is a comparable situation in the case of positions, where Jews are not being considered and have a hard time being acknowledged; even the important works of Jews are hardly paid attention to, hardly cited; they are not even to be found in the best libraries, and thus they cannot have the effect they deserve ... . We do not want to impose our opinion on anybody, but we want to be heard and respected. Our only intention is to provide the world the material necessary for a detailed and comprehensive consideration and for a just judgement.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, in addition to the Jewish scholars' awareness of their struggle against the tendentious representation of a powerful colonial knowledge-system, we can perceive the concern that the Jewish community itself might be influenced by the colonial images, which would have meant a victory of the "colonial discourse" by virtue of an internalisation of stereotypes. One of the main reasons, therefore, for the increasingly apologetic activity of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* after the turn of the century was the attempt to foster pride in Jewish tradition and to prevent Jews from losing or giving up their identity in the process of cultural assimilation through the formulation of new concepts of Jewish identity that were often developed in confrontation with Protestant images of Judaism.

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1920–1929) which were written with the help of, among others, Leo Baeck and Ismar Elbogen.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Eschelbacher, Referat zum Antrage auf Einsetzung einer literarischen Überwachungskommission für alle literarischen Neuerscheinungen, die zu Juden und Judentum in irgendwelcher Beziehung stehen. This document can be found in Jerusalem in the proceedings of the "Rabbinerverband in Deutschland", Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (4/2 vol. 1.)

The strategy employed by *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in its endeavour to make the Jewish narrative heard was to claim attention for their research in fields hitherto monopolised by Protestant historical-critical research. Scholars like Leo Baeck, Joseph Eschelbacher, Ismar Elbogen, Felix Perles and many others began to challenge the Protestant theologians in what had always been the Christians' most sacrosanct domain – the exegesis of the New Testament, the interpretation of Jesus and the exploration of New Testament history. Their hopes were that Christian theologians would finally take note both of Jewish biblical exegesis and of their interpretation of rabbinical sources, accept Jewish scholars as their academic equals and overcome their own traditional distorted images of Judaism. But their hopes were not fulfilled. In the area of historical-critical research into New Testament history, for example, the representatives of the “Religious History School” (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) polemically rejected the objection of Jewish Studies to their negative image of Pharisaic and rabbinical Judaism and claimed the superiority of their own historical approach.<sup>26</sup> Most of them were averse to taking Jewish scholars seriously as competent partners in research into early Christianity and perceived the new Jewish interpretations of Jesus as part of Pharisaic Judaism as being nothing short of intolerable presumption.<sup>27</sup>

Discussions about an appropriate understanding of the Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, were shaped by an ambivalent and discordant relationship between Jewish Studies and Protestant biblical research, because the latter had developed negative images, especially of the so-called “Spätjudentum” (Late Judaism), which was described as the product of religious decline, whereas Jesus and early Christianity allegedly brought the only valuable tradition of Judaism – prophecy – to perfection and fulfilled its intentions. One of the decisive and most interesting strategies enabling the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to challenge liberal Protestantism was the use of the Hebrew Bible and of modern Bible criticism as an argument in defence of Judaism's messianic role for modern society. While orthodox scholars rejected the Protestant description of the biblical Jewish religion altogether,<sup>28</sup> liberal Jewish scholars like Benno Jacob, Max Wiener and Leo Baeck were increasingly open to Protestant biblical research and, in

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<sup>26</sup> See Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie*, pp. 131–178.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 305–360.

<sup>28</sup> See David H. Ellenson and Richard Jacobs, ‘Scholarship and Faith: David Hoffmann and his Relationship to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*’, in *Modern Judaism* 8 (1988), pp. 27–40.



particular, adopted the neo-romantic concept of the prophets as creative individual religious heroes and the concept of the “ethical monotheism” of the prophets as a viable foundation for a strong, newly articulated identity.<sup>29</sup> The concept of “ethical monotheism”, a term coined by the Dutch scholar Abraham Kuenen in the late 1870s, served to articulate their liberal Jewish self-understanding, which meant accentuating the biblical-prophetic tradition versus the rabbinic-halachic tradition on the one hand and, as even Protestantism acknowledged that “ethical monotheism” was a Jewish achievement, claiming the value of Judaism as one of the cornerstones of modern European civilisation on the other hand. However, because liberal Protestantism asserted that Christianity, especially in its modern Protestant version, was the real heir to this prophetic tradition whereas Judaism was an obsolete religion that had long ago lost its right to exist, liberal Jewish scholars used the concept of ethical monotheism as a polemical weapon against Protestant theology. The best example of this strategy is provided by the Marburg philosopher Hermann Cohen, who in 1907 used the main arguments of Protestant Bible criticism in order to present his interpretation of Judaism: his opinion that Jewish “ethical monotheism” was ultimately the most appropriate foundation of modern culture and his conviction of the deep relatedness of the German and the Jewish “spirit” were both based on the positive historical appreciation of prophecy espoused by the school of Julius Wellhausen.<sup>30</sup> “The Bible criticism of Protestant theology”, Cohen maintained, “is the best antidote against antisemitism”;<sup>31</sup> it seemed to him that an adequate

<sup>29</sup> Leo Baeck adopted the Protestant understanding of prophecy as the basis of his interpretation of the “Essence of Judaism”: see Leo Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, Berlin 1905, pp. 18ff. and pp. 39ff. For the influence of Protestant Bible criticism on Baeck, see Hans Liebeschütz, *Von Georg Simmel zu Franz Rosenzweig. Studien zum jüdischen Denken im deutschen Kulturbereich*, Tübingen 1970 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 23), pp. 67ff. For Benno Jacob, see Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie*, pp. 182–190; idem, ‘Ein “Schrei ins Leere?” Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und ihre Auseinandersetzung mit protestantischer Theologie und ihren Judentumsbildern als Kontext des Werkes Benno Jacobs’, in Walter Jacob and Almut Jürgensen (eds.), *Die Exegese hat das erste Wort. Beiträge zu Leben und Werk Benno Jacobs*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 49–69; Almut Jürgensen, ‘Die Tora lehren und lernen. Rabbiner Benno Jacob in Dortmund (1906–1929)’, in Jan-P. Barbian, Michael Brocke and Ludger Heid (eds.), *Juden im Ruhrgebiet. Vom Zeitalter der Aufklärung bis in die Gegenwart*, Essen 1999, pp. 67–104.

<sup>30</sup> See David Myers, ‘Hermann Cohen and the Quest for Protestant Judaism’, in *LBI Year Book XLVI* (2001), pp.195–214, who interprets Cohen’s attitude as a kind of “Protestant Judaism” that was unfortunately never matched by a Protestant response.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann Cohen, ‘Religion und Sittlichkeit’, in *Jüdische Schriften*, Berlin 1924, vol. III, pp. 98–168, here p. 167.



interpretation of Judaism as a prophetic religion would force non-Jewish intellectuals to recognise the Jewish tradition as one of the main sources of modern culture and thus provide effective arguments against anti-Jewish sentiments.

While Jewish research on Jesus aimed at discrediting the dominant Protestant discourse, replacing it with its own narrative, the use of the concept of “ethical monotheism” as the basis of a messianic “Jewish mission” provides a perfect example of the process of “appropriation”, which in postcolonial theory describes the way in which a dominated culture can use the dominant discourse in order to resist its political or cultural control. By appropriating the Protestant image of the prophets and their ethical religion but describing modern liberal Judaism as its authentic and legitimate heir, scholars like Leo Baeck and others established a counter-history or counter-discourse that can be interpreted as a contestation of anti-Jewish colonial constructions of Judaism.<sup>32</sup> They could fall back on Abraham Geiger, who had formulated the theoretical foundations of the liberal Jewish self-understanding by accentuating the relevance of prophecy, which embodied the essence of Judaism as a universal prophetic and ethical religion, while Christianity had – in its dogmatic Christological tradition – deviated from its Jewish origins and prophetic monotheism. Geiger had also shaped the concept of the messianic “Jewish mission” to preserve pure prophetic monotheism, a concept which helped to defend the right of Judaism to exist and which constituted, as Susannah Heschel has so brilliantly argued, a counterhistory directed against the Protestant anti-Jewish interpretation of Jewish history. Heschel, following David Bi-ale and Amos Funkenstein, understands counterhistory as “a form of polemic in which the sources of the adversary are exploited and turned ‘against the grain’, in Walter Benjamin’s phrase”.<sup>33</sup> By analysing the New Testament from a Jewish perspective and consistently interpreting Jesus as part of Pharisaic Judaism, as Geiger did in his lectures on *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte* (Judaism and its History, 1863-64 and 1871), he was able to depict Judaism as the original and true religion while Christianity appeared as an offspring of the Jewish mother-religion that had become alienated from biblical monotheism under the influence of Greek philosophy and developed a syncretic tradition. This challenging interpretation of the relationship of the two religions, designed to counter

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<sup>32</sup> See Loomba, pp. 234ff.

<sup>33</sup> Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, p. 14. See Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley 1993, pp. 36f.

the religious-cultural rejection of the emancipation of Judaism and to foster a self-confident Jewish identity, became the foundation of the liberal wing of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* during the controversies at the end of the nineteenth century.

There is much evidence that liberal Protestant theologians saw Jewish claims for the equal value or even the superiority of modern Judaism not as a challenge but as impertinence. In this respect one example – a debate between Leo Baeck and the liberal theologian Ferdinand Kattenbusch in 1909 – deserves special attention. Leo Baeck had published an article entitled ‘Die Rückkehr zum Judentum’ (Return to Judaism), where he claimed that liberal Protestantism, in attempting an historical-critical reformulation of Christian dogmatics, especially the Christological tradition and the dogma of the Trinity, and by focusing on ethical questions, was giving up Christianity – a Christianity furthermore that, according to Baeck, had darkened the original truth of the teaching of Jesus, which he saw as a Jewish, Pharisaic teaching – and was finally turning back to its Jewish origins, to the tradition of ethical monotheism that Judaism had preserved over the centuries.<sup>34</sup> Kattenbusch naturally, and indeed without hiding his contempt for Jewish scholars like Baeck, claimed that Jews were unable to understand Christianity, that they should refrain from criticising it and should listen to Christian theology in order to learn something about the truth of religion.<sup>35</sup> What, then, was the meaning and purpose of Baeck’s formula of a “return to Judaism”? He did not expect Christianity or even liberal Protestantism to turn back to Judaism and relinquish Christian identity. Rather, he had a twofold aim: he wanted, on the one hand, as Abraham Geiger had done previously, to depict Judaism as the original religion and the “religion of the future”, in order to foster Jewish self-respect and loyalty to the Jewish tradition (for some Jews of the time, the intellectual attractiveness of liberal Protestantism went some way towards legitimising conversion); on the other hand, even in his polemic Baeck was aiming to offer a dialogue, to accentuate the proximity of both liberal currents. He wanted liberal Protestants to perceive the

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<sup>34</sup> Leo Baeck, ‘Umkehr zum Judentum’, in *Korrespondenzblatt des Verbandes deutscher Juden* 1909, pp. 1–5. Baeck maintained his position later in his article ‘Judentum in der Kirche’ (1925), in idem, *Aus drei Jahrtausenden. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des jüdischen Glaubens*, Tübingen 1958, pp. 120–140. For Baeck’s attitude towards Christianity, see Walter Homolka, *Jüdische Identität in der modernen Welt. Leo Baeck und der deutsche Protestantismus*, Gütersloh 1994.

<sup>35</sup> Ferdinand Kattenbusch, ‘Jesus, ein Gott?’, in *Christliche Welt* 23 (1909), No. 33, pp. 781ff.

Jewish elements of Christianity and tried to convince them that they were not forced to interpret Jesus in contrast to Judaism but could understand him as part of Judaism and *vice versa*, and use this as a bridge for mutual understanding. This argument shows, despite its polemical aspects, that Jewish scholars like Leo Baeck had an inclusive vision of the “Jewish mission” that not only conceded to Christianity its theological right to exist but also ascribed to it an important function in the process of spreading the universal truth of “ethical monotheism”.

Obviously, Baeck’s challenge to liberal Protestantism was directly connected to his political vision, developed at that time in several essays, of a pluralistic German society and culture open to diverse religious traditions and minorities. In an article on “Christian culture”, published in 1909, he emphatically rejected the Protestant concept of a dominant, exclusive Christian culture and demanded that Judaism should be accepted and taken seriously as an equal part of Germanness (*Deutschtum*). It was, as Baeck said, the merit of modern culture that it was conscious of the value of religious and cultural minorities – an achievement that should not be restricted by illiberal, if not positively medieval interpretations of Jewish assimilation.<sup>36</sup> Instead, as Baeck expounded in 1911 in an essay on ‘Judaism among the Religions’, a society could only be called modern if it abandoned the concept of an absolute religion and if it was founded on pluralism and tolerance, a tolerance “based on sympathy ... [that] tries deeply to understand the essence and soul of the other”. Baeck’s argument was, on the one hand, part of a polemical strategy that Jewish intellectuals had already long pursued: several prominent nineteenth-century German Jewish historians, including Heinrich Graetz and Abraham Geiger, had argued that the narrow-mindedness and intolerance of the Middle Ages were the genuine products of Christianity, whereas modernity’s open-mindedness stemmed from Judaism’s teachings concerning tolerance and acceptance of others. On the other hand, it was an expression of the “normality” liberal Jews hoped for at that time – to be accepted as an integral part of a multicultural society instead of being excluded from a homogeneous *Leitkultur* and rejected as the “other”, symbolic of values contrary to German culture. Judaism, Baeck maintained, had the right to be perceived without prejudice as one of several legitimate ways to the final revelation of truth; in political terms this meant that the non-Jewish

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<sup>36</sup> Leo Baeck, ‘Christliche Kultur’, in *Liberales Judentum* 1 (1908/1909), pp. 311f.

majority should acknowledge that “our particularity is no *Sondertümelei*, but belongs to the valuable possessions of humanity”.<sup>37</sup>

These few examples show that the relationship between liberal Judaism and liberal Protestantism was full of tension and ambiguity. “Liberal Protestantism is not our enemy”, Joseph Eschelbacher wrote in 1907, “but definitely a dangerous adversary.”<sup>38</sup> The question of the “essence of Judaism” was far from a playful intellectual debate on the history of Judaism, but must rather be understood as part of a sometimes hidden, sometimes explicit debate on the legitimacy of the continued existence of Judaism within modernity – this was, though often unspoken, the real issue of dissent. These controversies were part of the reformulation of the identity of liberal Judaism after a period of crisis and of its endeavour to attract alienated Jews who would otherwise have been attracted either by atheism or by liberal Protestantism; they were also, last but not least, the expression of a deep rivalry with a liberal Protestant movement that seemed to share many of its concepts and values but, convinced of the absoluteness of Christianity, had no inclination to acknowledge liberal Judaism’s religious and cultural legitimacy. This analysis of the discourse confirms Uriel Tal’s thesis of a dialectical relationship between liberal Judaism and liberal Protestantism, which was marked by an astonishing affinity with regard to theological and ethical concepts on the one hand (especially the focus on reason, on ethical questions and the historical-critical reformulation of dogmatic traditions) and by a strong compulsion towards mutual demarcation on the other hand.<sup>39</sup> Dialogue and “normality” as conceived by Jewish intellectuals would have meant taking the specific self-understanding and theological problems of the other tradition seriously and talking about common features and differences. Instead, in looking for self-fulfilment both sides tried to verify, by their own historical traditions, the religious concepts of identity that they held to be modern and progressive and played them off against the rival religion, above

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<sup>37</sup> idem, ‘Das Judentum unter den Religionen’, in *Korrespondenzblatt des Verbandes deutscher Juden* 1912, No. 11, pp. 9–15. As an interpretation of Baeck’s challenge see Wiese, ‘Ein unerhörtes Gesprächsangebot. Leo Baeck, die Wissenschaft des Judentums und das Judentumbild des liberalen Protestantismus’, in Georg Heuberger and Fritz Backhaus (eds.), *Leo Baeck 1873-1956. Aus dem Stamme von Rabbinern*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp.147–171.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Eschelbacher, *Das Judentum im Urteile der modernen protestantischen Theologie*, Leipzig 1907, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870-1914*, Ithaca and London 1975, passim; Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie*, pp. 240–292.

all in regard to the question of their respective “essence”. Liberal Protestantism with its historical-critical reformulation of Christology that eliminated the dogmatic tradition and underscored the unique and incomparable personality of Jesus seemed, even more than conservative Christianity, forced to mark the differences between Jesus and early Judaism; their theological programme almost inevitably had anti-Jewish implications. The claim of conservative Protestantism that this critical approach to Christology was a threat to traditional belief and had to be interpreted as a “Judaisation” of Christianity reinforced this tendency.<sup>40</sup> Liberal Judaism in turn seemed forced to differentiate itself from Protestantism, because its own critical attitude towards halachic traditions and its emphasis on the biblical-prophetic heritage of Judaism was used polemically by its Orthodox opponents who argued that liberal Judaism was relinquishing its Jewish identity and becoming a Protestant heresy.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from this, the decisive reason for the ideological character of the debate was the interdependence between the theological and political dimensions of the discourse. Most divisive were the political implications of liberal Protestantism’s claim to superiority, which reduced Judaism to a superseded early stage of religious history. As Protestant theologians continued to champion, undiminished, the traditional value judgements on the Jewish religion despite their theoretical political approval of Jewish emancipation and integration, they prevented the development of a climate of tolerance and dialogue that might have fostered resistance against antisemitism. It was impossible, Jewish scholars felt, for Protestant colleagues to continue to teach contempt for Judaism and to provide theological images of the alien character and inferiority of the Jewish religion while continuing to declare their solidarity against antisemitic slander and action. The hope of Jewish Studies, therefore, that liberal Protestant theology could support an equal status for the Jewish religion and speak out clearly against anti-Jewish stereotypes soon gave way to deep disillusionment. A nationalism based on liberal Protestant culture seemed to aim at a uniform society determined by Protestant ethics and left no room for a separate Jewish identity.

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<sup>40</sup> See Reinhold Bieling, ‘Die Rückkehr zum Judentum’, in *Geisteskampf der Gegenwart* 55 (1909), pp. 384–387.

<sup>41</sup> See the bitter conflict between the liberal rabbi Cäsar Seligmann of Frankfurt and Joseph Wohlgemuth of the Orthodox rabbinical seminary in Berlin: Cäsar Seligmann, *Eine Abrechnung mit Herrn Dr. Wohlgemuth und mit den “Erklärungen” gegen die Richtlinien zu einem Programm für das liberale Judentum*, Frankfurt am Main 1913; Joseph Wohlgemuth, *Gesetzestreu und liberales Judentum*, Frankfurt am Main 1913.



Liberal Protestant theologians ignored Jewish self-understanding while trying to give modern Protestant identity the status of the leading cultural force of modernity, and in urging the Jewish minority to prove its complete social integration by unambiguously renouncing its so-called “special identity” (*Sonderbewußtsein*), they questioned its very right to exist. This confirms Steven Schwarzschild’s interpretation of the relationship between liberal anti-Jewish attitudes and the concept of Protestant cultural hegemony in a Prussian German state.<sup>42</sup> From being a potential partner for dialogue, liberal Protestantism became liberal Judaism’s most challenging and disappointing adversary. Liberal Jewish thinkers saw themselves continually forced to counter an anti-pluralist concept of assimilation with Jewish self-understanding – namely, striving for acculturation *and* particularity, for integration *and* protection of identity. They felt forced to polemically establish the right of modern Judaism to exist, against the exclusive theological and cultural aspirations of liberal Protestantism. Even the most liberal Protestant theologians, with only a few exceptions, seemed unable to imagine a process of acculturation that included Jewish identity; instead, they assumed that the price for emancipation was the gradual dissolution of Judaism, the merging of Jews into a society and culture dominated by Protestantism. The generally negative encounters of Jewish scholars with their liberal Protestant colleagues led to intensified efforts to foster *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as an independent, emancipated discipline that was able effectively to teach the Jewish narrative and to struggle for the acknowledgement of Judaism as a cultural factor in Germany. Contemporary sources attest to a growing self-confidence on the part of Jewish Studies during these disputes, but also to a deep disappointment that the response to its attempts to engage in dialogue was generally either the total silence of contempt or intimidating polemics.

There were repeated protests at the marginalisation of Jewish scholarship, together with insistent calls for the establishment of university chairs in Jewish Studies.<sup>43</sup> The exclusion of Jewish Studies from the uni-

<sup>42</sup> Steven S. Schwarzschild, ‘The Theologico-Political Basis of Liberal Christian Jewish Relations in Modernity’, in *Das deutsche Judentum und der Liberalismus – German Jewry and Liberalism*, ed. by the Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung, London and St. Augustin 1986, pp. 70–95.

<sup>43</sup> See Ignaz Ziegler, ‘Universitätsprofessuren für jüdische Theologie’, in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 71 (1907), No. 9, pp. 102–104; No. 10, 114–116; Felix Perles, ‘Die Wissenschaft vom Judentum an den deutschen Universitäten’ (1908), in idem., *Jüdische Skizzen*, Leipzig 1912, pp. 78–82. For the debate on the academic integration of Jewish Studies, see Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 335–365.



versities was symbolic of the “colonial discourse” that took place in Germany at that time, and the struggle of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* for emancipation can reasonably be interpreted as an anti-colonial revolt against the hegemonic construction of Judaism by the privileged disciplines of history and Christian theology. Contemporary sources document the awareness of Jewish scholars of being caught in an apologetic situation, and their wish to be able to do their scholarly work without constantly being forced to engage in polemics. Felix Perles, for example, rabbi of Königsberg, who had passionately participated in the historical controversies, advocated the establishment in 1906 of chairs in Jewish studies at German universities, expressing the pious hope that this might finally allow Jewish scholars to present important historical works that were more apt to gain respect for Jews and Judaism than futile polemics against people whose views scarcely deserved refutation.<sup>44</sup>

Generally, it can be said that there was never any real breakthrough with regard to the academic integration of Jewish Studies and the attempt to give Christian theology an effective new orientation failed, mostly because of deep-rooted anti-Jewish reservations. A cautious shift took place in the historical field, led by an increasing interest on the part of Christian theology in historical research into the post-Biblical Jewish tradition and rabbinical literature, which made the exclusion of Jewish Studies appear counter-productive.<sup>45</sup> The few Protestant initiatives to allow for participation by Jewish scholars in teaching and research mostly failed to meet any expectations that Jewish Studies would be recognised and encouraged as an independent academic discipline to be pursued by Jewish academics. Instead, most non-Jewish academics tended to favour viewing the study of Judaism either simply as a part of Oriental Studies or as a Christian-dominated research topic within the theological field.<sup>46</sup> The only real breakthrough appeared likely when plans for the re-establishment of the university of Frankfurt am Main included the possibility of establishing an entire faculty for Jewish theology. Genuine prospects that this idea would be implemented arose from the fact that a not insubstantial propor-

<sup>44</sup> Perles, ‘Jüdische Wissenschaft’, in *Königsberger Hartung'sche Zeitung* No. 431, 14 September 1906, republished in idem, *Jüdische Skizzen*, pp. 73–77.

<sup>45</sup> See Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer. Ihr Verständnis als Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz*, Tübingen 1997, pp. 405–514.

<sup>46</sup> See Wiese, ‘“Das Ghetto des Judentums wird nicht eher gänzlich fallen, als bis das Ghetto seiner Wissenschaft fällt.” Die Wissenschaft des Judentums im Kampf um akademische Anerkennung vor 1933’, in Michael Brocke, Aubrey Pomerance and Andrea Schatz (eds.), *Neuer Anbruch. Zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur*, Berlin 2002, pp. 143–160.

tion of the money required for the endowment of the university had been contributed by Jews. But it was a Christian theologian, Martin Rade, a colleague of Hermann Cohen at Marburg University, who took up this cause in a series of essays published in 1912 and 1913. His justification for the need for Jewish Studies to have an academic presence was not based solely on the fact that – on academic grounds – no serious study of religious history could do without the authentic Jewish sources; it also took account of political considerations regarding the position of the Jewish community in Germany. Judaism, he said, was “the living religion of 600,000 citizens of the German Reich” and hence a major cultural factor, but it “still led a ghetto existence, concealed, unknown”, an “abnormal” condition that could be eradicated only by the integration and encouragement of Jewish Studies. Rade therefore called for the public teaching of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* at German universities, ideally in the context of a fully-fledged Jewish theological faculty, and also hoped that this would lead to an improvement in Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>47</sup> But the opposition of many of Rade’s Protestant colleagues is clear from a letter he received from the eminent “liberal” Old Testament scholar Hermann Gunkel:

“Are you really familiar with contemporary Jewish Studies? Do you know whether it has reached the stage at which it can occupy a position of honour in a Prussian university? Otherwise the procedure has always been – quite rightly – that new disciplines must first demonstrate their right to exist, and that positions are only created once the subjects exist, not the other way round! But you propose establishing an entire new faculty before the subject is ready! What I personally know of ‘Jewish Studies’ has never inspired me with any particular respect. Most of our Jewish scholars have yet to reach the Renaissance! The fact is that Protestantism is still the only denomination in which the academic spirit is truly possible.”<sup>48</sup>

This, of course, is “colonial discourse” in its purest form. In Gunkel’s words we can hear the arrogance, widespread at the time, of a privileged Protestant university theology that claimed for itself the monopoly on enlightenment and scientific objectivity even with regard to Judaism, while

<sup>47</sup> Martin Rade, ‘Eine jüdische, theologische Fakultät in Frankfurt a.M.’, in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 10 (1913), pp. 332–336. See Willy Staerk, ‘Zur Frage der theologischen Fakultät in Frankfurt’, in *Die Geisteswissenschaften* I (1914), pp. 429f; idem, ‘Das Judentum als wissenschaftliches Problem’, in *Der Neue Merkur* 2 (1914), pp. 407–420. For reasons why this project failed see Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 343ff.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Hermann Gunkel to Martin Rade (26 March 1912), in Records of Martin Rade, University Library, Marburg, Ms. 839.

disparaging Jewish Studies as a discipline that was apologetic, rooted in prejudice and hence unworthy of integration into the academic world. It is no coincidence that this ties in with his ideological position concerning the integration of Jews in Germany. In 1907 he had published an article on ‘The solution of the Jewish question’, in which he argued that Jews should not be given full civil rights until they proved by radical assimilation that they had really become Germans; in his opinion the “Jewish question” would “only disappear with the Jews themselves”.<sup>49</sup> From this point of view it was only consistent when Gunkel wrote to Rade that no German government should “foster the Jewish spirit by establishing a Jewish Theological faculty instead of contributing to its gradual dissolution”.<sup>50</sup> He finished with the remark that Protestant theologians had absolutely no reason to carry on a dialogue with Jewish scholars because of their impertinence towards Christianity and Christian colleagues.

### III.

This voice of contempt, which shows once again the connection between the discrimination against Jewish Studies and the larger Protestant inclination to dispute Judaism’s very right to exist in a German society dominated by Protestant culture and ethics, leads back to Gershom Scholem’s reflections on the apologetics of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The available sources – reviews, books, articles and private correspondence – clearly indicate how intensely Jewish scholars were involved in an apologetic project, how they attempted to contradict Christian images and prejudices, how urgently they demanded respect for their self-understanding and how they felt hurt by the disregard for their identity and scholarly achievements. In contrast to Scholem’s verdict, however, these documents show that the work of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was neither confined to desperate and ineffective defensive reactions nor motivated by an assimilationist agenda. Rather, its representatives devoted a high degree of intellectual energy and creativity to formulating their own theological and historical views and self-confidently claimed the right to participate in contemporary discourse. They tried to reformulate modern Jewish identity in the wake of these controversies with Protestant theol-

<sup>49</sup> Hermann Gunkel, in Julius Moses (ed.), *Die Lösung der Judenfrage. Eine Rundfrage*, Berlin and Leipzig 1907, pp. 231f.

<sup>50</sup> Gunkel, letter to Martin Rade.

ogy and thus brought about a temporary renaissance of liberal Judaism in order to counter assimilation and indifference.<sup>51</sup> By bringing the tools of modern historiography to their interpretation of Jewish history, by critically analysing the beginnings of early Christianity and by appropriating the concept of “ethical monotheism”, they challenged the intellectual hegemony of the Christian image of Western history and culture and forced the Christian scholars, at least in the long run, to rethink their historical views. The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was driven to apologetic reactions in order to counter the claims of its mighty adversary and was thus prevented from emphasising the positive starting-points of a possible theological “dialogue”. One should add that Jewish scholars were not entirely free from the tendency to distort Christian tradition when espousing an allegedly universal Jewish religion of reason or claiming the superiority of Judaism. Many Jewish scholars, however, expressly reflected on this tendency, and it constituted a painful restriction on their work that exposed them to the danger of polemics or of idealising their own tradition. One might even ask, as in every anti-colonial intellectual revolt, to what extent the polemics of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was dependent on the Protestant construction of Jews and Judaism, instead of being able to describe Jewish history according to its own interests and categories. Amos Funkenstein has observed that the modern counter-history of Christianity in a sense posed a threat to Jewish identity because the “forger of a counter-identity of the other renders his own identity [dependent] on it.”<sup>52</sup> Or, as Loomba put it: “In what voices do the colonised speak – their own, or in accents borrowed from their masters?”<sup>53</sup> The liberal Jewish internalisation of the Protestant norm of prophetic universalism and the difficulties liberal Judaism experienced in fighting, reinterpreting and defending the halachic tradition all in the same breath are but examples of the complex phenomenon of formulating a counter-identity. Another aspect that posed a threat for Jewish identity was emphasised by Susannah Heschel: “Making Judaism’s significance to Western civilization so intimately linked to the figure of the Jewish Jesus forges a dependence that relies on the Christian theological realm rather than

<sup>51</sup> See Walter Breslauer, ‘Die “Vereinigung für das liberale Judentum in Deutschland” und die “Richtlinien zu einem Programm für das liberale Judentum”. Erinnerungen aus den Jahren 1908-1914’, in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, No. 36 (1966), pp. 302–329; see Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 267ff.

<sup>52</sup> Funkenstein, p. 48.

<sup>53</sup> Loomba, p. 231.

resting independently on Jewish identity.”<sup>54</sup> Not for nothing did Franz Rosenzweig, in an essay in 1923 on Leo Baeck’s interpretation of Judaism, evoke the danger of “apologetic thinking”, i.e., the inclination to “perceive one’s own tradition as the ideal one while focusing on the broad historical and historically distorted alien tradition”. Although he acknowledged the value and dignity of Jewish apologetics, he deplored its tendency to be ensnared by the dialectic of the rival tradition, in this case Protestantism, and consequently to idealise its own tradition while suppressing the contradictions that made it a living religion.<sup>55</sup> Like Scholem, Rosenzweig criticised the inclination to interpret Judaism in terms of a purely rational, universal ethical religion in order to legitimise its existence in modern society, but unlike Scholem he fully understood that German Jewish scholars were dominated by what could be called the tragedy of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* at that time, namely that they were constantly compelled to react defensively and offensively to the challenges of the non-Jewish scholarly world and their political implications, instead of being allowed to concentrate on their own agenda.

As for Scholem’s judgement about the “myth of a German-Jewish dialogue” and the image of the Jewish “cry in the void”, it seems difficult to contradict. It applies to the relationship between Judaism and Protestantism in general, but also to the encounter of their respective liberal wings, which in many respects were so near to each other as to share common views and values. The truth of the matter was that the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* never found a partner willing to recognise Judaism as a relevant and legitimate cultural factor in German society and to respond to it, let alone take it seriously as a partner for dialogue. An historical analysis of the discourse, however, allows for some differentiation within this view, though this can be sketched only briefly here. If the apologetic activities of Jewish Studies in the Wilhelmine period and later during the Weimar Republic are actually understood as a “cry” with which Jewish academics raised the claim to fair recognition of Jewish self-understanding, and if the scholarly and political controversies and discourses are assessed by contemplating the image of a “cry in the void”, then there are different shadings and nuances to discover. These extend, on the Protestant side, from silence and the refusal of any recognition or response to cautious attempts at perceiving the Jewish challenge and be-

<sup>54</sup> Heschel; ‘Jewish Studies as Counterhistory’, p. 109.

<sup>55</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, ‘Apologetisches Denken’, in *Gesammelte Schriften III: Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, Dordrecht, Boston and Lancaster 1984, pp. 677–686.



ing drawn into learning processes which, while they cannot be characterised as a “dialogue”, at least stem from the effects of the Jewish apologetics. There were also different nuances on the Jewish side, ranging from apologetic monologues and polemics to the explicit acknowledgement of the achievements of Protestant theology and to serious offers of dialogue with regard to common roots, values and prospects for the future. By and large, however, Scholem’s yardstick of a dialogue as characterised by “two persons who listen to each other, who are ready to recognise what the other one is and what he represents, and to reply to him”<sup>56</sup> leads one to conclude that the image of a “cry in the void” is correct when interpreted in terms of the fundamental Protestant refusal engage in open discourse. That Jewish apologetics had in many respects the structure of a monologue was due to the fact that only in very rare cases did those Protestant scholars who were directly challenged hold a reply – let alone a revision of their image of Judaism – to be necessary.

The effect of the Jewish anti-colonial revolt was above all limited by an obvious political-social asymmetry. The Protestant disregard for the self-understanding of modern Judaism and the findings of Jewish historiography make it unmistakably clear that the “discourse” described took place between a community struggling for emancipation and a socially and culturally dominant community; the ever-present question of the social position of Jews and Judaism made a “normal”, open relationship of mutual respect nearly impossible. Jewish criticism of Christianity had no political consequences at all. Christians could just ignore or reject it, whereas the Protestant image of Judaism was at all times a threat to Jewish existence and equality, even when theologians rejected openly antisemitic attitudes. A tradition of equal scholarly discussion and collaboration did not develop, in particular because the anti-Jewish elements on the Protestant side in their fatal connection with growing antisemitism forced Jewish scholars to make ever-new apologetic efforts in “defence” of the Jewish community.

In terms of the process of acculturation, it can be said that there was, in fact, a kind of search for “normality” or a vision of “normality” inherent in the intellectual revolt of Jewish scholars against the Protestant construction of Judaism. It can be described in terms of two aspirations that were intertwined from the very beginnings of modern Jewish scholarship in the nineteenth century: the hope for the ultimate acknowledgement of Judaism as a legitimate cultural and religious force in modern Germany

<sup>56</sup> Scholem, ‘Wider den Mythos’, p. 8.



and the claim that the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* should be accepted as an independent and equal academic discipline at German universities. The aim of the revolt was to break the link between the exclusion of Jewish Studies and discrimination against the Jewish community, and only a serious reception of and a respectful approach to Jewish scholarship would have made possible a long-term open dialogue that would have given the non-Jewish side a sense both of the Jewish narrative and of the danger of antisemitism. "Normality", from a Jewish point of view, would have meant the freedom to express and foster Jewish identity and to interpret Jewish history and existence within a free, pluralistic society. Jewish scholars claimed the – from their point of view "normal" and legitimate – right to interpret Judaism according to the modern cultural, aesthetic and ethical standards of their non-Jewish environment and yet to develop a specifically Jewish identity different from the cultural expectations of a Christian society. This included the freedom to internalise certain values and ideas of the dominant Protestant culture, while at the same time giving them an identifiable Jewish expression, distancing the modern interpretation of Judaism from Christianity and fostering counter-assimilationist tendencies within Jewish society. In the face of this utopian vision of "normality", as it were, we can talk about a Jewish experience of "refused normality". The majority of non-Jewish society, including most of the liberal intelligentsia, developed a completely opposite concept of "normality" that culminated in the claim that Jews should gradually give up their so-called *Sonderbewußtsein* and thereby demonstrate their successful social and cultural integration. Such a concept left no room for the academic integration of a discipline aimed at preserving and fostering Jewish identity. At the risk of being repetitive, by and large the liberal Protestant response to the Jewish anti-colonial challenge must be interpreted in terms of a fundamental refusal to engage in discourse; furthermore, a "normal discourse" without apologetic elements was impossible, because the "counter-discourse" described was undertaken by a minority struggling for emancipation that encountered a socially and culturally dominant community. But although Protestant theology did not respond to the Jewish challenge, thus making it appear as a "cry in the void", it did not succeed in silencing it, at least not until 1933. The efforts of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to contest the cultural domination of Protestantism and to discredit its prevailing constructions of Jewish history certainly represented a strong attempt to make the Jewish voice heard in German society and, most important, to counter feelings of inferiority and tendencies to relinquish loyalty to Judaism. Whatever the limits of the ef-

ficacy of Jewish apologetics and despite its admittedly problematic aspects, it deserves to be understood as part of the process that led to what Michael Brenner has called the “Renaissance of Judaism” during the Weimar Republic<sup>57</sup> and as an expression of the will to openly contradict the verdict of so many non-Jewish intellectuals that Judaism was religiously and culturally dead.

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<sup>57</sup> Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, New Haven and London 1996.



DEBORAH HERTZ

## The Troubling Dialectic Between Reform and Conversion in *Biedermeier* Berlin

### I.

In November 1999, Lt. Gamaliel Peretz of the Israeli Defence Forces was teaching a mandatory class for soldiers on the status of women in Judaism. During the discussion, he became agitated by questions from a female soldier, the daughter, as Lt. Peretz was aware, of an Israeli Reform rabbi. Growing increasingly irritated, he decided to share with the entire group his views on modern Jewish history, declaring that “Reform and Conservative Jews are not Jews to me”. As the female soldier left the room in protest, he remarked that “the Reform and the Conservative Jews caused the assimilation of eight million Jews, and this was worse than the Holocaust, in which only six million people were killed”.<sup>1</sup> Many readers will dismiss Peretz’s words as those of a crank whose views do not deserve an airing. At best, some might admit that his diatribe has relevance for the ongoing debate about the status of non-Orthodox converts inside Israel. Thankfully, here we do not enter this complex Israeli dispute. Rather, we use Peretz’s formulation as a primitive but provocative hypothesis about the relationship between reform and conversion. Is there any truth in Peretz’s notion that reform Judaism is or was a gateway to conversion?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah Sontag, ‘Israeli Army Ousting Officer for Intolerance’, *New York Times*, 23 November 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Peretz is of course not the only observer to claim a link between reform and conversion. See the article ‘Reform Movement’ in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, New York 1943, pp. 101-103, which claims that “many Jews, thwarted in their efforts

In the pages which follow we explore this problem by focusing on an important chapter in the history of Reform Judaism, on the years when the first reform services flourished in Berlin. It was in 1815 that Israel Jacobson first opened his home to what was called a “German service”. For eight years, Jacobson’s prayer group proved to be tremendously popular. But government officials, supported by traditionalist rabbis, decided that no alternative should be permitted to the traditional services, and in 1823 King Frederick William III issued an order closing down what he called the “sectarian” services. For the next two decades there was no public alternative ritual in Berlin. Beginning in 1818, Hamburg was home to a reform congregation and after 1820 visitors to the Leipzig commercial fair were able to attend modern services. But the central European city with perhaps the most acculturated and sophisticated Jewish population had no public space for alternative prayers in the years after 1823. Those committed to a new style of worship held services at a local Jewish school or organised private confirmation services in their homes. It was not until 1846 that public reform services reappeared in Berlin and it took almost a decade for a new reform congregation officially to open its doors on the Johannisstrasse, in 1854.<sup>3</sup>

The tale of the painful birth of reform Judaism in Berlin during these years teaches us many historical lessons. We shall see that the roles played by various personalities and institutions in this episode were not predictable from our contemporary vantage point. In this essay, I will approach the story from four different angles. To begin with, I ponder two ways of interpreting the entire German Jewish experience. This debate will remind us of the great importance of what happened in Berlin. We then move back into the past itself, to learn why the services were so popular during the eight years they were permitted. Third, we learn that although officials and rabbis both opposed reform, their reasons for opposition were entirely different. Finally, I use conversion statistics to ex-

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at Reform and persecuted by the Orthodox, became converted to Christianity”, here p. 102. By use of the term ‘reform Judaism’, I do not mean to suggest that activists at the time always used this term or formed a united movement. See the discussion in Maria Baader, ‘Inventing Bourgeois Judaism: Jewish Culture, Gender, and Religion in Germany, 1800—1870’, Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University 2002, p. 21. I am grateful to Maria Baader for many conversations on these themes.

<sup>3</sup> See Harold Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen in Deutschland. Geschichte einer Baugattung im 19 und 20 Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Hamburg 1981, pp. 162-163. See also Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, Oxford 1988.

plore whether conversion rates might have been lower had the reform alternative continued after 1823.

## II.

Across the generations, Jewish Germans were understandably proud of their many accomplishments. After the Holocaust, critiques of these same accomplishments, mainly articulated by Zionists, carried increased weight. The years under consideration here were crucial for this important debate about the fate of German Jewry. For the changes in life habits which we see among the wealthy in Berlin were later adapted by wider and wider circles of Jews in Germany and beyond. The essence of the Zionist critique was that Jews gave up too much in the rush to become so very German, a case argued by Gershom Scholem with great passion and eloquence. According to Scholem, the first years of quasi-emancipation following the 1812 Edict should be seen as a “false start” to the modern era. Moreover, Scholem denied that there had ever been a true symbiosis between Jews and Christians in Germany and claimed that the so-called symbiosis was one-sided because Jewish intellectuals rarely sought to preserve the values or symbols of Judaism in their creative work.<sup>4</sup> A recent volume of social history by Steven Lowenstein reinforces Scholem’s view that the first decades of the modern era were a time of dramatic change, when much that was Jewish was abandoned. Lowenstein demonstrates that between 1770 and 1830 many elite extended families in Berlin left Judaism, using a wealth of primary sources to show that conversion, intermarriage, low birth rates and divorce decimated the rich and powerful families who had been the pillars of eighteenth-century Berlin Jewry.<sup>5</sup>

Scholem’s and Lowenstein’s pessimistic stance is very much at odds with a more benevolent view of what Haskalah (Jewish enlightenment) activists accomplished. According to this view, Jewish intellectuals faced daunting challenges. In one formulation, these were years when it “would

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<sup>4</sup> See Gershom Scholem, ‘Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue’, pp. 61-64, and ‘Jews and Germans’, pp. 71-92, in his collected essays *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, New York 1976.

<sup>5</sup> See Steven Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830*, New York 1994, and my ‘Theilhaber’s “Racial Suicide” or Scholem’s “Flight of the Avant-Garde”? Interpreting Conversion Rates in Nineteenth-Century Berlin, in Willi Jasper and Joachim Knoll (eds.), *Preußens Himmel breitet seine Sterne: Beiträge zur Kultur- Politik- und Geistesgeschichte der Neuzeit*, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York 2002, pp. 339-355.



have required a cohort of dozens of religious intellectuals of the calibre of Maimonides even to begin meeting the challenge of modernity".<sup>6</sup> A major point of this essay is that even had there been "dozens of religious intellectuals" of such brilliance, the alliance of rabbis and officials would nonetheless have repressed the reform services. The story we tell here shows that although much went awry in these years, this was also a time when lay activists created a new way to be Jewish. Their accomplishments are all the more impressive if we consider that precisely at this moment many of the "best and brightest" intellectuals were leaving behind not just Judaism as a religion but also Jewish politics, Jewish culture and Jewish values. This more positive evaluation of the era is strengthened if we use a broad definition of religious innovation. David Sorkin pointed the way forward when he proposed a new way of understanding what was secular and what was Jewish in these years. Sorkin has shown that acquiring *Bildung* often kept Jews Jewish, even though the content of their cultured activities was rarely Jewish at all.<sup>7</sup> Jews who would never have set foot in a reform congregation could deepen their ties to one another in public settings where they enjoyed music, novels, poetry, scholarship and politics. Sorkin's point is that we should look to patterns of ethnic affiliation rather than just to the content of culture if we wish to understand how educated Jews coped with the challenges of modernity.

In this essay I inquire whether Scholem was correct in his harsh interpretation of this era. Undoubtedly he was on the mark when it comes to the wave of conversions in these years. Regarding the prominence of the converts and the extent of conversion, his negativity is indeed rather convincing. Many of the converts of this era, such as Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Dorothea Mendelssohn Veit Schlegel and Friedrich Julius Stahl, saw themselves as leaving behind not just religion but all things Jewish. In this sense the lives and the creative work of many well-known converts confirms Scholem's lament. But when it comes to those we meet in this essay, those who remained committed to Judaism, Scholem's critique seems wrong. At the close of the essay, perhaps readers will agree that we have at least made some interesting trouble for Scholem's notion that in this era we see a "false start" to modern Jewish life in Germany.

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<sup>6</sup> Norman Cantor, *The Sacred Chain: The History of the Jews*, New York 1994, p. 233. I am grateful to my father Marcus Hertz for suggesting that I read this book.

<sup>7</sup> David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840*, New York 1987.

## III.

Let us leave behind the conflicting interpretations of the long sweep of history and move back in time. The opening moment of the reform drama was when Israel Jacobson moved to Berlin in 1814. The Napoleonic wars had convulsed central Europe for decades. Now, in the fall of 1814, Napoleon had been banished to the island of Elba and the Congress of Vienna was set to begin. Indeed, we see the consequences of Napoleon's collapsing empire in our smaller story. For it was the demise of Napoleon's Kingdom of Westphalia in 1813 that prompted Jacobson to move to Berlin. He was then forty-six, and had served as the president of the Jewish consistory in Westphalia during the five years of French control. Jacobson, a financier for King Jerome Bonaparte, had been a natural choice for this position. In 1801 he had donated funds to endow a primary school which trained both Jewish and Christian artisans. Jacobson was a modest man who spent only 4,000 thaler a year on support for his family, giving away 26,000 thaler to worthy philanthropic projects. During his five years as president of the consistory, he funded and organised new schools and new services across Westphalia, in cooperation with local rabbis and young maskilim.<sup>8</sup> Jacobson's choice of Berlin was certainly vindicated by the immense enthusiasm for an alternative service. The moment was ripe for his project. For the partial civic emancipation announced in the Edict of 1812 had made reform both more pressing and easier. Reform was more pressing because further civic emancipation was dependent upon Jews changing their entire way of life, from prayer to language, from dress to food. The notion that further civic emancipation would be a reward for acculturation was not an idea forced on the Jews by hostile state officials. The truth is that avant-garde Jews and Christians alike agreed that civic rights should be predicated on discarding behaviour considered "too Jewish".

The state initiated the process of civic emancipation with the Edict of Emancipation of March 1812. This law did not grant absolute and immediate equality, but was nevertheless most progressive. Jews could now more easily change their residence and enter occupations long closed to them. Collective liability for individual debts and the elaborate system of

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<sup>8</sup> See Salomon Wininger (ed.), *Grosse Jüdische National-Biographie*, vol. 3, Cernauti 1928, pp. 238-239. See additional biographical portraits of Jacobson in *Jüdisches Athenäum*, Leipzig 1851, pp. 109-111; *Jüdischer Plutarch: Biographisches Lexikon der Markantesten Maenner und Frauen juedischer Abkunft*, vol. 1, Vienna 1848, pp. 91-101.

special taxes was abolished.<sup>9</sup> We know now there were many setbacks ahead in the struggle for full civic equality, but in 1814 hopes were high, with reason, that Prussia would be the model state in central Europe for Jewish emancipation.

The emancipation project which began in 1812 explicitly encouraged religious reform. Over time, local Jewish communities across Prussia had been losing the right to govern themselves as “states within a state” and the 1812 Edict removed most of their remaining autonomy.<sup>10</sup> Here of course we hear the voice of Scholem, reminding us that the ease with which the rabbis relinquished their autonomy should be seen as one aspect of the “false start” to modernity in this epoch. When Jacobson arrived in Berlin in 1814, traditional community organisations were still thriving, alongside the new enlightened projects launched by the maskilim. On occasion, given all the attention to what was modern about Berlin, we tend to forget that at least half of its over three thousand Jews at this point were poor and observant. Several of the richest families were also strictly traditional in their ritual practices. The community supported three rabbis and a yeshiva with forty students.<sup>11</sup> While Moses Mendelssohn was still alive the wealthy had for a time supported both the traditional community projects and the new enlightened books and schools. By 1814, however, they were abandoning the traditional institutions and some even questioned whether they should fund the *haskalah* endeavours. Alienated from both old and new Judaism, many wealthy Jewish Berliners were spending their fortune on paintings, salon entertaining, secular books and the theatre instead of on yeshivot and dowry funds for poor girls. This is why Jacobson’s timing was so auspicious. He had found a means of keeping the powerful families within Judaism at a moment of crisis. When we ask why the intellectuals around Jacobson were so anxious to create an alternative to traditional worship, we must remember the rapid increase in conversion rates in these years. Some historians have argued that the 1812 law reduced the need to convert and have speculated that conversion rates fell after 1812.<sup>12</sup> But a closer look at the statistics

<sup>9</sup> A classic survey can be found in Ludwig Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, Berlin 1871; reprint Berlin 1988, especially chap. 4, pp. 123-45.

<sup>10</sup> See Ismar Elbogen, *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*, Berlin 1935, p. 200, on the readiness of communities to give up their religious autonomy.

<sup>11</sup> See Lowenstein, chap. 6, esp. p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> The claim that rates fell after 1812 can be found in Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, New York 1978, p. 122. Raphael Mahler takes the same view in his *A History of Modern Jewry 1780-1815*, London 1971, p. 216.

suggests that immediately after 1812 conversion rates actually rose dramatically. Contemporary observers commented that with so many converting and so many alienated from traditional practice, the religious situation in Berlin was “chaotic” and the “synagogues were empty”.<sup>13</sup>

Jacobson’s first public alternative service took place in the spring of 1815, on Shavuot, a the spring harvest festival, when he held a confirmation service for his son.<sup>14</sup> In the following weeks and months, Jacobson sponsored a two-hour service in his home each Saturday morning. At the time he was living in an apartment suite owned by Daniel Itzig, on the Burgstrasse.<sup>15</sup> While the new services were much shorter than the traditional version, most of the prayers were in Hebrew and although it was morning the room was lit with candles.<sup>16</sup> The Torah was read in the Sephardi pronunciation, men’s heads were covered, and men and women sat separately.<sup>17</sup> The singers in the choir were Jewish and Christian students from a local Berlin school directed by Jeremias Heinemann. Heinemann had worked with Jacobson on reform projects in Westphalia, and was a prolific intellectual, publishing school texts, pedagogical pamphlets and criticism of contemporary German poetry. In Berlin, he included girls among his students and conducted an annual “religious fest” for girls and boys.<sup>18</sup> His students sang in German and Hebrew, accompanied by organ music. The sermon was in German, delivered either by Jacobson himself or by one of the maskilic university students studying at the new University of Berlin. Jacobson himself covered all costs. One report noted that at the service there were men “who after twenty years of alienation from Judaism spent the entire day at the services; men thought to be above religious feeling were shedding tears of devotion”.<sup>19</sup> The reference to tears is fascinating, for critics at the time and later complained

<sup>13</sup> See Jacob Marcus, *Israel Jacobson: The Founder of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, Cincinnati 1972; *Jacobson*, p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> See Lowenstein, p. 27, on the Itzig home and p. 137 on Jacobson’s first services.

<sup>16</sup> See Marcus, p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> These details can be found in Michael A. Meyer, ‘Jewish Communities in Transition’, in *idem* (ed.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 2, New York 1997, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> On Heinemann, see Wininger, *National-Biographie*, vol. 3, p. 39. For a discussion of Heinemann’s values see Baader, pp. 112-113. See also Max Freudenthal, ‘Ein Geschlecht von Erziehern’, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*, N.S. 6, 1935, pp. 146-154. On the ‘Religions-Fest’, see *Jedidja* 1 (1817), pp. 167-177; 2 (1818-19), pp. 1-2 and 207-216.

<sup>19</sup> This is the report of Leopold Zunz, as noted in Nahum Glatzer, ‘On an Unpublished Letter of Isaak Markus Jost’, *LBI Year Book XXII* (1977), pp. 129-137, p. 130.

that the new services were too “cold” and rational to attract those who were seeking a deeper spiritual experience than that available in a traditional Jewish service.

The services held in Jacobson’s apartment suite attracted sizeable crowds, up to a reported four hundred.<sup>20</sup> Two years later, in 1817, the services moved to an even larger home, owned by Amalia and Jacob Hertz Beer. At this point, the Beers were in their mid-forties, parents to four boys, three of them immensely talented. Amalia and Jacob were themselves the products of prominent and wealthy families, and with their avid participation in high culture they were very much the avant-garde Jewish couple of their generation. Over the next eight years, close to one thousand local Jewish adults were listed as having attended services at the Beer home in the centre of town, on Spandauer Street.<sup>21</sup> This meant that well over one third of Jewish adults in Berlin were showing at least some interest in the new prayer style.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, those who came to the Jacobson-Beer services tended to be younger and richer than the community at large.<sup>23</sup> The Beers spent 7,000 thaler renovating their home in order to provide an appropriate space for the services, which took place in three connected rooms. The central room was decorated with “golden tassels, gold-covered columns, and curtains embroidered with images of golden crowns”.<sup>24</sup> But apparently the Beers’ generosity was not sufficient

<sup>20</sup> See Meyer, ‘Jewish Communities,’ p. 125. At least one source suggests that Jacobson’s services were separate from the Beer services, although most accounts stress that after 1817 the two efforts were joined. See Hammer-Schenk, p. 152; Baader, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> See Berndt Wessling, *Meyerbeer: Wagners Beute-Heines Geisel*, Düsseldorf 1984, p. 29. The list of the 972 who attended the services can be found in the Jacob Jacobson Collection at the Central Archives of the Jewish People, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Further research comparing these individuals to lists of converts would be useful. I am grateful to Steven Lowenstein for a conversation on these themes in September 1999.

<sup>22</sup> This estimate is from Meyer, ‘Jewish Communities,’ p. 125. It seems fair to assume that the one thousand participants would not include children, whereas the total population figure would include them.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>24</sup> For an idea of how much money this was at the time, a simple labourer earned roughly 150 *thaler* a year, while a professor with children would typically live on approximately 600 *thaler* annually. The figure of 7,000 *thaler* can be found in a letter of 30 September 1817 written by an important reformer of the era, Isaak Markus Jost. The letter is cited in Glatzer, p. 135. For annual income information, see my *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*, New Haven 1988, p. 58, n. 18. The details about the service can be found in Glatzer, ‘Jost,’ p. 135.



to pay all the costs associated with hosting the services. Thus, for the High Holy Day services there was a charge of five thaler.<sup>25</sup>

Jacobson and the Beers worked with Christian sympathisers in preparing the services. That the reformers attracted the energies of sympathetic Christians forces us to recast the debate about whether they were simply imitating Lutheran practice.<sup>26</sup> At least two Christian composers who tutored the Beer sons, Carl Friedrich Zelter and Bernard Anselm Weber, composed music for the services and the influential Protestant minister Friedrich Schleiermacher visited on at least one occasion. Family members sometimes assisted too. When the services began in 1815 the Beers' eldest son Giacomo was no longer living in Berlin, but he sent music for the services at least once.<sup>27</sup>

We can be quite sure that Moses Mendelssohn would not have been happy with the new services. Over the long view, however, we might well conclude that Jacobson and the Beers were keeping Mendelssohn's legacy alive. This was not a task for which Mendelssohn's own children showed much enthusiasm. Four of Moses and Fromet Mendelssohn's six children converted and neither of the two who remained Jewish were active in the work of reforming Judaism. With their very articulate loyalty to Judaism, Jacobson and the Beers were very much in the enlightened, maskilic tradition that Mendelssohn had helped to invent. But now, three decades after Mendelssohn's death, the Beers were venturing well beyond what Mendelssohn and his circle had accomplished. To begin with, their service was for its time a radical departure from traditional Jewish prayer styles. Moreover, the Beers, and especially their sons, were also far more integrated into the institutions of German high culture than Mendelssohn or his followers had been in the previous generation. Just how well connected the Beers were with the powerful of their day is apparent from the fact that the Prussian chancellor Karl August von Hardenberg dined at

<sup>25</sup> Glatzer, p. 134.

<sup>26</sup> See Michael A. Meyer, 'Christian Influence on Early German Reform Judaism', in Charles Berlin (ed.), *Studies in Jewish Bibliography: History and Literature in Honor of Edward Kiev*, New York 1971, pp. 289-303. Of course, the issue of imitation of Protestant practices is complex and one must consider the architecture of the new synagogues when considering this question. For illustrations, see Helmut Eschwege, *Die Synagoge in der deutschen Geschichte. Eine Dokumentation*, Dresden 1980.

<sup>27</sup> See Heinz Becker's introduction to his edition of Meyerbeer's correspondence, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4 Vols., Berlin 1960, vol. 1, pp. 30, 130. Apparently Meyerbeer relied on a convert, Baron von Delmar, to hand-deliver the music for the services. I am grateful to Barbara Hahn for this reference.



their home regularly, often every week, between 1810 and 1820.<sup>28</sup> Jacobson, too, was Hardenberg's friend, as well as his long-standing personal banker. These relationships bring to mind the lives of the Court Jews in the previous century. Yet much had in fact changed over time. Wealthy Jews were participating more avidly in cultural and national life, their gifts to the state were more public and the demands they made on the state more controversial.

Like many other patriotic wealthy Jewish families in Berlin, the Beers had provided generous loans to the Prussian state in 1807. This had been a dramatic turning point, when Prussian soldiers had been soundly defeated by Napoleon's armies on the battlefield. After Prussia's surrender in the summer of 1807, Napoleon demanded punitive fines in exchange for allowing a rump Prussia to retain even a vestige of autonomy. To have their state saved by rich Jews was no doubt humiliating to many, and they might well have interpreted the 1812 Edict of Emancipation as a reward for Jewish generosity. The relevant point here is that power in the Jewish community, Jewish financial aid to the state and government willingness to sponsor emancipation were intertwined in the years before and after 1812. But a decade later, most senior government officials had turned against further emancipation. It followed, therefore, that religious reform, once seen as a very important path toward emancipation, was no longer supported by those in power.

We see that Hardenberg knew how to repay his wealthy Jewish friends for the lavish dinners and for the loans of 1807. In the summer of 1815, when a nasty satire about super-assimilated Jews called *Unser Verkehr* ("The Company We Keep") became popular in Breslau, Jacobson personally requested that Hardenberg forbid the play to open in Berlin. Hardenberg convinced his colleagues in the government that riots against the Jews might coincide with the play's opening, and *Unser Verkehr* was not allowed to open. But public pressure mounted, the ban was lifted and ultimately the play exerted enormous influence on public opinion regarding the Jews.<sup>29</sup> This incident shows that a liberal statesman such as Hardenberg was constrained by an increasingly antisemitic public. In principle, Jewish emancipation seemed to belong in the liberal program, but the vast wealth of the local Jewish elite and their obvious economic contributions to the state did not make them popular with the artisans who were suffer-

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<sup>28</sup> See Lowenstein, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> See Marcus, p. 109; Hans-Joachim Neubauer, 'Auf Begeh: Unser Verkehr: Über eine judenfeindliche Theaterposse im Jahre 1815', in Rainer Erb and Michael Schmidt (eds.), *Antisemitismus und Jüdische Geschichte*, Berlin 1987, pp. 313-337.

ing greatly during and after the Napoleonic wars. Painful years would follow, as Jewish emancipation drifted apart from other progressive causes of the day.

#### IV.

It was not only the government's turn against emancipation which endangered the fragile new reform tendency. Within the reform camp itself we find tensions that threatened to undermine its progress. Some of the leading maskilim had long been critical of wealthy reformers such as the Beers. As time went by, their day-to-day experiences preaching at the new "temple", as it was called, seemed to have turned some reformers against their powerful patrons. Isaak Markus Jost, for example, the eminent historian who at this time taught in a Jewish school in Berlin, planned to bring his students to the Beer temple for High Holy Day services in the autumn of 1817. He requested that the students be included in his ticket, but they were turned away and Jost and his entourage left.<sup>30</sup> Later, he complained about the elitism of the seating arrangements of the services, where the front seats were reserved for the wealthy. In response, the temple leadership consented to set up a section for "the learned" near the seats for the rich. This was scarcely a democratic solution, but at least those in possession of *Bildung* managed to achieve some parity with those in possession of *Besitz*.

That same year, 1817, also saw the first attempt by the government to shut down the services. Five years after the Edict, there were still a few government officials who believed in emancipation and religious reform. Others, though, disagreed. The single most prominent opponent of continued reform and emancipation was King Frederick William III, who opposed sects in both religion and politics. If dissident Jews could start their own branch of Judaism, other kinds of dissidents might try to start new religions or new political movements. The king therefore ordered a halt to the services. But Jacob Hertz Beer intervened with Chancellor Hardenberg and on this occasion Hardenberg prevailed and the reform services were allowed to begin again in the Beer home. The official rationale for this was that the Beer services were a temporary measure, allowed only so long as renovations to the large public synagogue were not yet complete. Meanwhile, the dedication of some of the brightest intellectuals af-

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<sup>30</sup> See Glatzer, p. 131.

filiated with the services was faltering. Five years later, in 1822, Leopold Zunz resigned from his paid position as preacher at the temple. Zunz was then twenty-eight, a leading light in *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (Science of Judaism) circles.<sup>31</sup> Zunz explained his decision with reference to his unhappiness about “preaching in the face of official arrogance and communal apathy”. These, he lamented, were “incompatible with his honour”.<sup>32</sup> A year after Zunz’s resignation, on December 9, 1823, the government permanently shut down the temple.<sup>33</sup>

How can we explain the decision to close the Beer services in 1823? An answer to this question reveals the odd alliances of the time. To begin with, after Hardenberg died in 1822, the king set Jewish policy with greater independence than during Hardenberg’s long tenure as chancellor. With the charismatic Hardenberg out of the way, there was a marked turn away from the promises of the 1812 Edict. Although the Edict was not officially revoked, there was a general curtailment of Jewish freedoms. In both rhetoric and policy the Prussian state was becoming increasingly Protestant. A missionary society was founded in Berlin in 1824 and its leadership included several influential government ministers who were close friends of the king.<sup>34</sup> In 1822 the government ruled that Eduard Gans must convert if he wished to become a professor at the University of Berlin.<sup>35</sup> For several years this case had attracted attention and concern, since the question of whether conversion was required for high state posts had not in fact been spelled out in 1812. In short, inside governing circles conversion was replacing reform as the preferred path away from tradi-

<sup>31</sup> See Luitpold Wallach, *Liberty and Letters: The Thoughts of Leopold Zunz*, London 1959; Peter Wagner, *Wir Werden Frei Sein: Leopold Zunz, 1794-1886*, Detmold 1994.

<sup>32</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol.12, Jerusalem 1972, pp. 699-704, here p. 701.

<sup>33</sup> See Michael A. Meyer’s extensive publications for further details, including his *Response to Modernity*; *idem*, ‘The Orthodox and the Enlightened—An Unpublished Contemporary Analysis of Berlin Jewry’s Spiritual Condition in the Early Nineteenth Century’, in *LBI Year Book XXV* (1980), pp. 101-130; *idem*, ‘The Religious Reform Controversy in the Berlin Jewish Community, 1814-23’ in *LBI Year Book XXIV* (1979), pp. 139-155; *idem*, ‘“Ganz nach dem alten Herkommen?” The Spiritual Life of Berlin Jewry Following the Edict of 1823’, in Marianne Awerbuch and Stefi Jersch-Wenzel (eds.), *Bild und Selbstbild der Juden Berlins zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik*, Berlin 1992, pp. 229-243.

<sup>34</sup> See Christopher Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728-1941*, Oxford 1995, pp. 124-130.

<sup>35</sup> See my article ‘Why Did the Christian Gentleman Assault the *jüdische Elegant*? Four Conversion Stories from Berlin, 1816-1825’, in *LBI Year Book XL* (1995), pp. 85-106.

tion. Whether or not there was any justification in regarding conversion as a short-term substitute for authentic civic emancipation is a crucial question for the entire epoch.

The king's decision to close down the reform services was wholeheartedly supported by the traditional rabbis in Berlin. Naturally, the rabbis and the king had utterly opposite causal models of reform and conversion. The officials came to oppose reform because they thought that continued reform would reduce the increase in the conversion rate. From their standpoint reform and conversion were alternative paths away from traditional Judaism. If Jews could leave tradition by affiliating with reform, they might be less likely to leave tradition by becoming Christians. For the rabbis, reform was one step away from tradition and baptism was a further step on that same path. At this juncture, it was exceedingly rare for rabbis to aid the work of religious reform. Like Jacobson, most reformers were lay activists. Whereas the reformers believed their new services would lower conversion rates, the rabbis were certain that reform had already led to the spurt in conversions. Thus the government and the traditional rabbis jointly opposed reform, although their analyses of the dialectic between reform and conversion were diametrically opposed. It was a sign of the changing times that the rabbis needed to work with the state to close down the temple, rather than achieving their ends as the empowered authorities within Jewish society.

## V.

Let me move towards a conclusion by examining the statistics which might help clarify whether the government or the rabbis were correct about the relationship between reform and conversion. Before plunging into the numbers, readers should be alert to the limits of this kind of counterfactual analysis. Obviously we do not know what would have happened if the services had continued to meet after 1823. Yet readers might agree that this kind of counterfactual analysis helps us organise and refine our knowledge.<sup>36</sup> A remarkable variety of conversion statistics exists for these decades, and we are blessed with Steven Lowenstein's meticulous forays into the community's own records. To his work we can

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<sup>36</sup> For an argument along these lines and an example of this research, see John Murrin, 'The French Indian War, The American Revolution, and the Counterfactual Hypothesis: Reflections on Laurence Henry Gipson and John Shy', in *Reviews in American History* 1 (1973), pp. 307-318. I am grateful to Martin Bunzl for this citation.

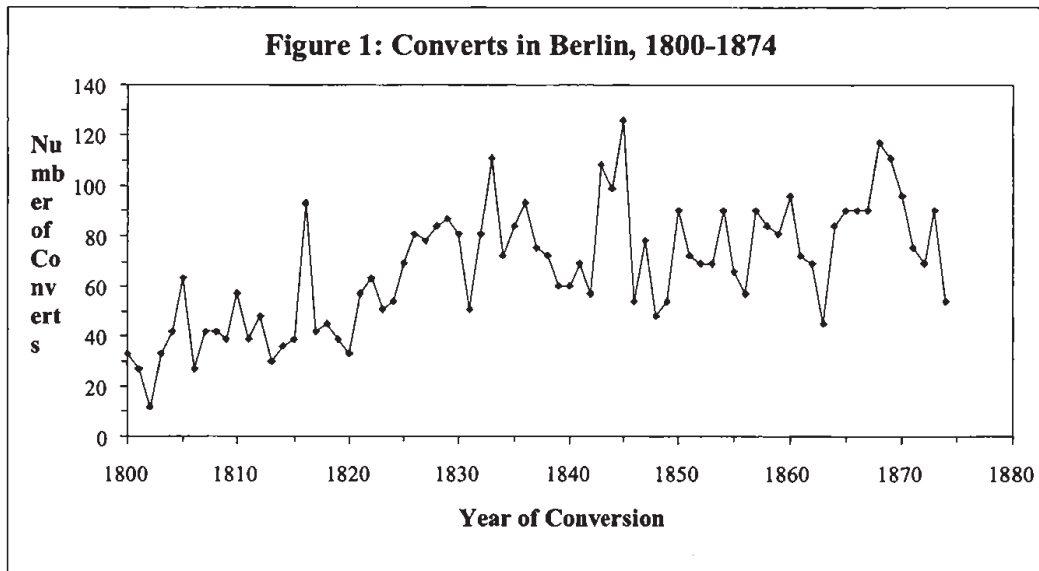
add analyses from the so-called *Judenkartei*, a set of notebooks summarising original parish registers, which were created by the Protestant church during the Nazi years.<sup>37</sup> Research over the decades has clarified the broad pattern. We know that proportional conversion rates in the first decades of the nineteenth century were higher than later in the century. Past this point of agreement there is much which remains to be explained about conversion in this era. We still do not know precisely when the trend to higher rates began, nor how to label it, nor how dramatically it threatened Jewish continuity in Berlin. Nor are we yet sure exactly when the trend came to an end.<sup>38</sup>

In the same year that the Jacobson services began, in 1815, we see the highest absolute and proportional peaks of the entire seventy-four years of the nineteenth century included in the *Judenkartei*. The rise in absolute numbers is evident in Figure One. From under 40 converts a year, the number converting in 1815 rose sharply to almost 100. After this dramatic surge, rates fell between 1815 and 1823, when the reform temple was open. This supports the view that reform was an alternative rather than a prelude to conversion. During these eight years, the absolute numbers ranged between 40 converts per year in 1818 to the low point of 30 converts per year in 1820. The analysis of the officials seems vindicated by these numbers. With reform as an option, baptisms declined. But after the services were closed, beginning in the mid-1820s, the absolute numbers rose again for the rest of the decade. During the 1830s and 1840s, the graph of absolute numbers of converts shows a rather jagged pattern. Figure Two reveals that a drop in the proportion of Jews choosing conversion is not visible until the middle of the 1830s and even then, when the trend is clearly downward, we see a return to a higher proportion converting around 1840. The point is that rates dropped during the years the reform services were open and rose after the king closed the services in 1823.

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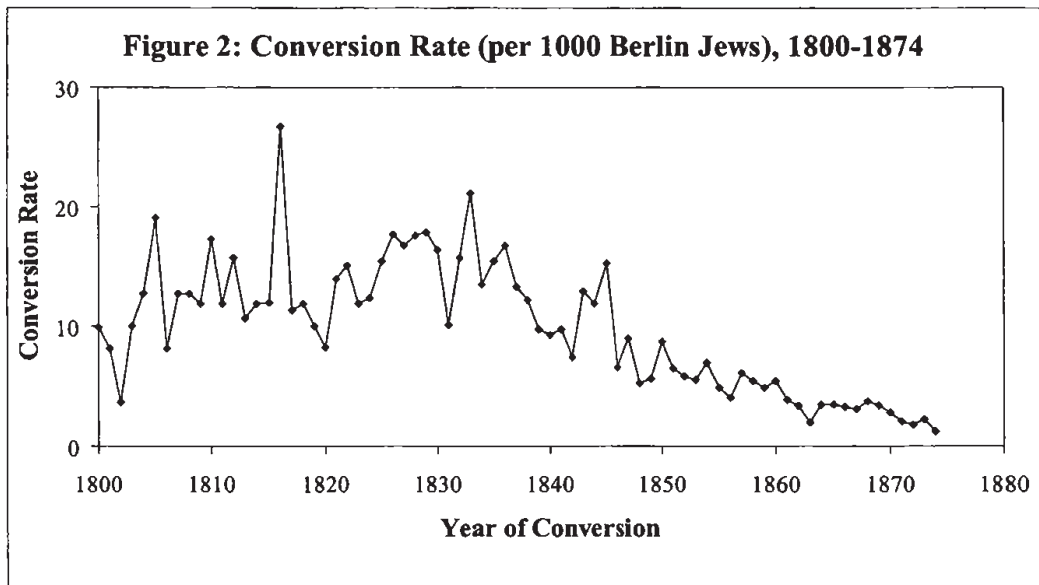
<sup>37</sup> The *Judenkartei* can now be found in the central Evangelical church archive in Berlin. While Lowenstein analyses the *Judenkartei*, and makes important comments on these records, my research extends the time period under analysis and explores statistical themes which Lowenstein does not address. For a summary of the political background of the creation of the records, see my 'The Genealogy Bureaucracy in the Third Reich', *Jewish History* 11 (1997), pp. 53-78.

<sup>38</sup> I discuss these themes in my 'Racial Suicide' article. See note 5.



Number of Cases: 5034

Source: Judenkartei, *Evangelisches Zentralarchiv*, Berlin, Germany



Number of Cases: 5034

Sources: Judenkartei, *Evangelisches Zentralarchiv*, Berlin, Germany, and Seeliger, Herbert. 1958. "Origin and Growth of the Berlin Jewish Community." *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 3:159-68.



We should of course be careful not to exaggerate the implications of an analysis of a small population of converts in just one town over a few decades. Nonetheless, we can say that the model of reform and conversion imagined by the officials fits these statistics better than the causal model posited by the rabbis. Further evidence that successful reform would lead to a drop in conversion is that in the late 1840s, when planning began for a permanent reform temple, we see another drop in the rates. This supports the idea that reform was a way for alienated Jews to remain Jewish rather than a first step in their eventual departure from Judaism altogether.

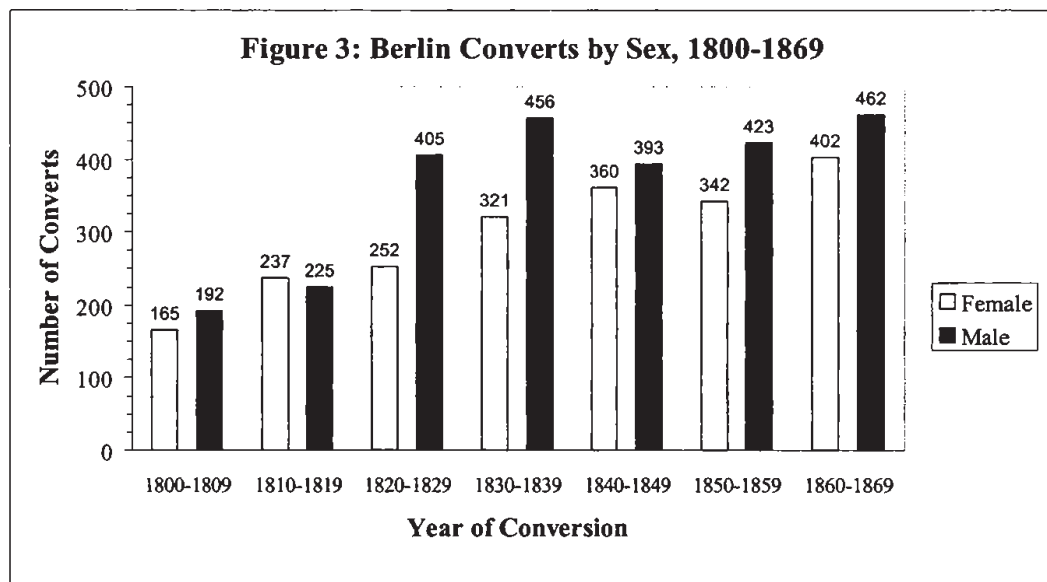
Now let us move inside the aggregate numbers, to examine the gender, age and social position of the converts. Let us look at the women's situation first. Here we find rather slim support for the counterfactual that continued reform would have prevented female conversions. Reformers tended to worry a good deal about the status of women in contemporary Jewish life. Some were aware that female conversion rates were unusually high in these years. We are less well informed about what women did for the work of reform. In September 1817 the first real confirmation service for girls was conducted in the Beer temple. The seating plan shows that men and women sat on the same level without a partition, although in separate galleries. Amalia Beer helped plan the services.<sup>39</sup> We have one more hint that reform was a subculture open to women. A group of single women and widows signed a petition to request that the services be allowed to continue when the government was planning to close them in the early 1820s.<sup>40</sup>

Did the closing of the temple affect female conversion rates? After 1823, the number of women converting rose, but certainly not dramatically. Figure Three shows the male to female rates by decade. The amount by which the female rate rises from the 1810s to the 1840s is not very large. Male conversions, however, shoot up in the 1820s and 1830s. We might well argue that these are the conversions which created the conversion wave of the epoch. This was a significant change from earlier years, when the genders had either converted in equal proportion or marginally more women had converted than men. Between 1810 and 1820 there was a predominance of female converts, while during the 1820s the

<sup>39</sup> I discuss these themes in greater detail in my forthcoming article, 'Amalia Beer, High Culture Motherhood, and the Birth of Reform Judaism in Berlin', in Michael Brocke, Christiane Müller (eds.), *Der Differenz auf der Spur: Frauen und Gender im Aschkenasischen Judentum*, Berlin 2002.

<sup>40</sup> For details, see Baader, p. 242. On the seating plan, see Glatzer, p. 130.

gap between male and female converts was higher than at any point during the nineteenth century.



Number of Cases: 4635

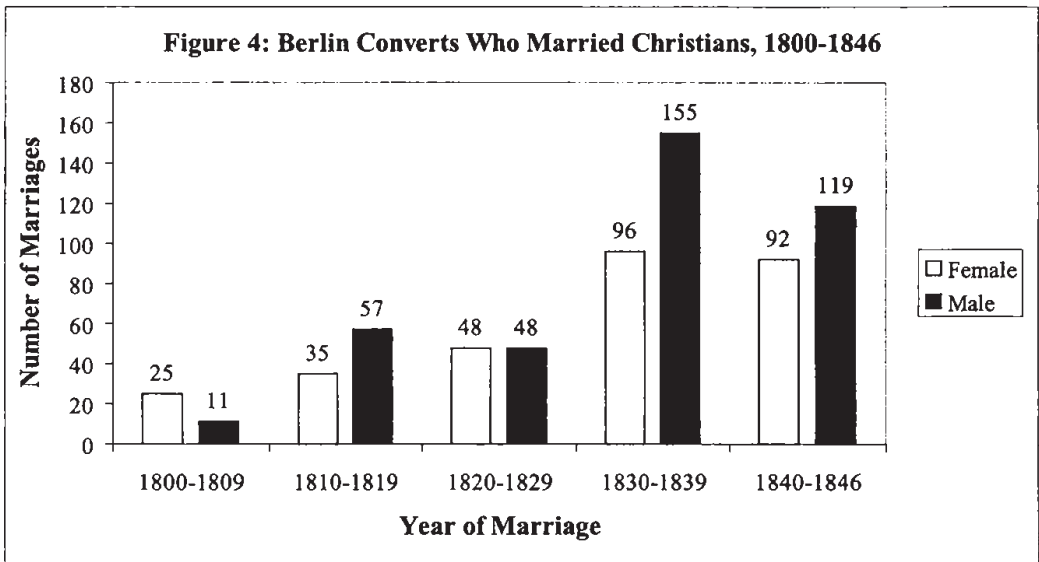
Source: Judenkartei, *Evangelisches Zentralarchiv*, Berlin, Germany

To understand why women were choosing conversion and intermarriage less often than they had before, we might examine how salon socialising had been changing over the past years. Salons did not disappear in Berlin after the Congress of Vienna, but the proportion of Jewish women hosting them definitely declined.<sup>41</sup> We know that Jewish women who participated in the old regime salons often married Christians. In an era without civil marriage, a Jew had to become a Christian in order to intermarry. Indeed, in the years when Jewish women were less likely to host salons we see that the rate of women's intermarriages failed to keep up with Jewish men's intermarriages. But now, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Jewish salons, female conversion and female intermarriage rates had all declined.

Figure Four shows that the peaks in the female intermarriage rate took place earlier, during the first decade of the century. Thus, even when it became more difficult for Jewish women to host salons, female intermarriage rates did not rise dramatically. But the point is that Jewish women

<sup>41</sup> On the changes in salons after the Vienna Congress, see Petra Wilhelmy, *Der Berliner Salon im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin and New York 1989.

did continue to marry Christian men at a stable rate and this stable female intermarriage rate helps explain women's continued presence among the converts. Indeed, perhaps our best way to explain why women were converting in the 1820s and 1830s is because they were still marrying Christians. But whether or not fewer women would have converted had the services continued must remain an open question.



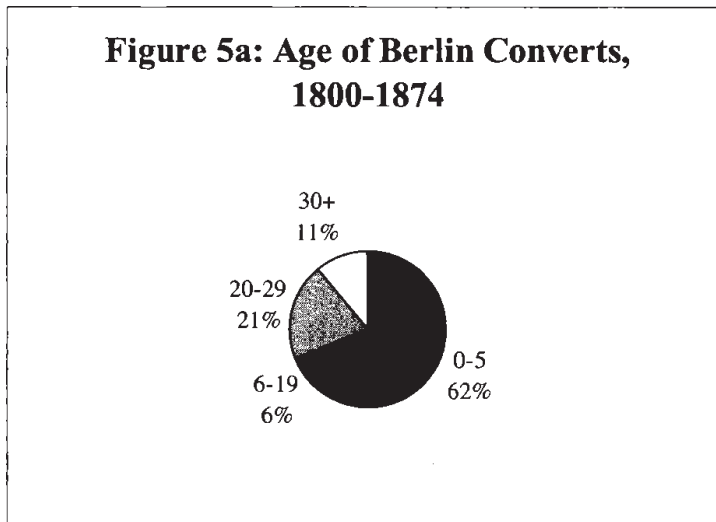
Number of Cases: 686

Source: *Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany*

The age of the converts seems more relevant to our counterfactual question. Figure Five shows that during the first four decades of the century, except during the 1820s, over half of the converts were under the age of five.<sup>42</sup> But in the 1820s and 1830s, the rate of child conversion dropped. And we have just seen that the proportion of women converting was not growing dramatically in these years. These, then, were decades when the ranks of the converts were increasingly filled with adult men, especially men in their twenties. And here there is a clear connection with the reform services. We know that the participants in the reform services tended to be young adults. We suspect, but do not know, that many if not most of these young adults were men. All in all, the shifts in the age pat-

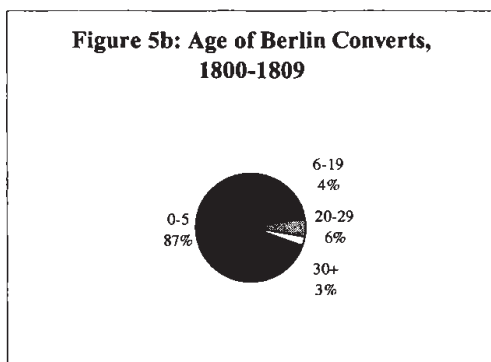
<sup>42</sup> See Lowenstein, p. 123 for some interesting points regarding the large number of children and whether or not the inclusion of some of these children in the *Judenkartei* affects the usefulness of the statistical source.

terns in the statistics lend some initial support to the counterfactual. Just after the services were closed down, the proportion of adults converting increased.



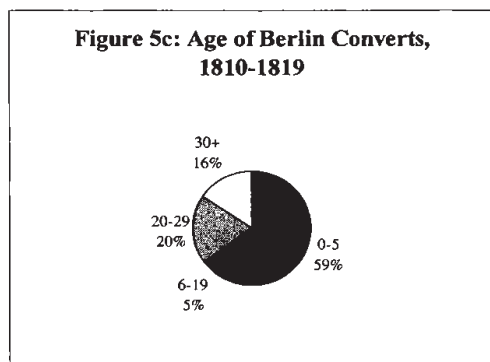
Number of Cases: 4938

Source: Judenkartei, *Evangelisches Zentralarchiv*, Berlin, Germany



Number of Cases: 321

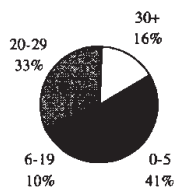
Source: Judenkartei, *Evangelisches Zentralarchiv*, Berlin, Germany



Number of Cases: 441

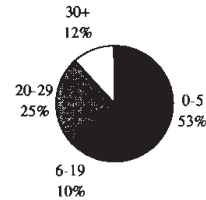
Source: Judenkartei, *Evangelisches Zentralarchiv*, Berlin, Germany

**Figure 5d: Age of Berlin Converts, 1820-1829**



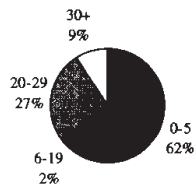
Number of Cases: 642  
Source: Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany

**Figure 5e: Age of Berlin Converts, 1830-1839**



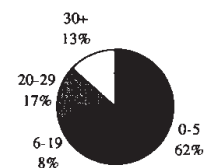
Number of Cases: 771  
Source: Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany

**Figure 5f: Age of Berlin Converts, 1840-1849**



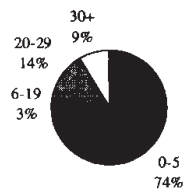
Number of Cases: 753  
Source: Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany

**Figure 5g: Age of Berlin Converts, 1850-1859**



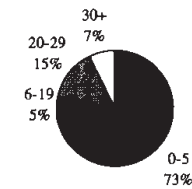
Number of Cases: 762  
Source: Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany

**Figure 5h: Age of Berlin Converts, 1860-1869**



Number of Cases: 864  
Source: Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany

**Figure 5i: Age of Berlin Converts, 1870-1874**



Number of Cases: 384  
Source: Judenkartei, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany

Now let us turn to the social position of the converts in the years after the services were closed. After 1830 the proportion of wealthy converts employed in finance dropped considerably.<sup>43</sup> As time went on, the male converts tended increasingly both to come from the eastern provinces of Prussia and to list their occupations as students and teachers. This is prime evidence for Lowenstein's thesis that the family crisis of the very rich was ending toward the middle of the century. The increase in migrant student converts, however, does not support our counterfactual about reform and conversion. For we have good reason to doubt that the poorer young men who converted at some point after arriving in Berlin would have been happy in the reform subculture. In other words, just because there were many young men in the services, and just because there were many young men among the converts after the services were closed down, we cannot assume that these were the same men. To come to this conclusion we would need a biographical rather than an aggregate analysis.

In arguing that the migrant student converts would not have found their home in a reform subculture, we are faced once more with the fact that the lay activists who initiated reform in Berlin were extremely wealthy. We have seen that there was considerable tension between the intellectuals, such as Zunz, who delivered the sermons and the families, such as the Beers, who paid their wages. It is not clear why Jost and Zunz were so angry at the Beers and Jacobson, the very people funding the institution which Jost and Zunz favoured as the correct path to the Jewish future. Presumably, the psychological burden of their dependence upon the Beers of the world was heavy. The point is that poorer Jewish men who lived in Berlin might well have avoided the reform subculture even if the temple had remained open after 1823.<sup>44</sup> In sum, the record of the statistics is mixed. The dominance of young male converts in the years after the services were closed down suggests that if the services had remained open these men might not have converted. Yet the shift in the class position of the converts after 1823 is an argument against the claim that continued reform services would have kept the lid on rising conversion rates.

A good way to explore further the way in which the closing of the services helps explain changing conversion rates is to consider alternative explanations for the rise in rates in the 1820s and 1830s. To begin with, although a new missionary bureau opened its doors in Berlin in the early

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>44</sup> This argument draws on themes which I have discussed with Todd Endelman of the University of Michigan for many years.



1820s, scholars are dubious whether many baptisms occurred because of the efforts of the missionaries.<sup>45</sup> A possible cause for the rise in rates after the services closed is that Jewish families became less likely to ostracise a converted relative. These trends are difficult to track, but evidence suggests there was a change in the patterns of socialising between converted and unconverted Jews which could help explain the rise in rates. For novels, memoirs and letters tell us that there was an increasing tendency of Jews to mix with converts. For example, in August Lewald's semi-autobiographical novel *Memoiren eines Bankiers*, the narrator and his wife, who live in an east Prussian town in the 1820s, both convert. But the prominent Christians whom they invite to their home do not reciprocate. Instead of continuing to invite them, the couple decides to socialise among a circle of converted Jews and Jews considering conversion.<sup>46</sup> If converts did not have to fear social isolation, an important barrier to converting was removed.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the most widely cited conversion motive for this era was career. Jewish students were eager to attend elite high schools and universities across Germany in these years. Positions as professors, military officers, lawyers and diplomats were closed to the unconverted. In particular after 1822, when Eduard Gans was informed that conversion was a prerequisite for a professorship, hopes were dashed that these doors would open. The conversions of many of the "best and the brightest" of the times, men such as Heinrich Heine, Eduard Gans, Julius Eduard Hitzig, Daniel Lessmann and Moritz Saphir can often be best explained by ambition.<sup>48</sup> The high rates of child conversion offer a degree of statistical support for this interpretation, as parents who wanted their sons to enter prestige careers converted them as children. Further, the career motive fits very well indeed with the changing class composition of the adult

<sup>45</sup> See Clark, *Politics of Conversion*, p. 153. See also *idem* 'The Limits of the Confessional State: Conversions to Judaism in Prussia 1814-1843', in *Past and Present*, 147 (1995), pp. 159-179, and *idem* 'Jewish Conversion in Context: A Case Study from Nineteenth-Century Prussia', in *German History*, 14 (1996), pp. 281-297.

<sup>46</sup> The novel can be found in August Lewald, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 12, Leipzig 1846, pp. 125-388.

<sup>47</sup> I discuss this theme in my article, 'The Lives, Loves, and Novels of August and Fanny Lewald, the Converted Cousins from Königsberg', in *LBI Year Book XLVI* (2001), pp. 95-112.

<sup>48</sup> For an excellent discussion of this circle, see Lothar Kahn, 'Heine's Jewish Writer Friends: Dilemmas of a Generation, 1817-1833', in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover and London 1985, pp. 120-136.

converts in the 1820s and 1830s. After 1830 male converts tended to be poorer and it is logical that poorer young men would convert as a step in their climb up the ladder of success.

One theme worth exploring in future work is whether left-wing movements were more attractive to such men than reform. Take Ludwig Börne, for example, who suffered from antisemitism both before and after he converted in 1818. Although immediately after his conversion he published a few articles in support of Jewish rights, in later years he did not look to either civic emancipation or religious reform to change Jewish status. He saw himself as a theorist and leader of the emergent democratic political movement, in Germany and abroad. We could benefit from an investigation of just why it was that other major figures of the period who saw themselves as political radicals, including Heinrich Heine and Ferdinand Lassalle, rejected the path of reform Judaism.

We must also consider whether the rise in conversion rates in early nineteenth century Berlin was affected by the cultural style of the reformers. It might well have been that the approach of the reformers was out of step with broader trends in the culture. Perhaps converts sought the subjectivist and emotional versions of Lutheranism popular in Prussia in these years, in preference to the enlightenment-era stance of the reformers. The two religions were changing in quite different ways in these years. Lutheranism was becoming a “thicker” religion, as the pietists and then Friedrich Schleiermacher brought nationalist and individualist values into Lutheran practice and theology. Meanwhile, the reformers were making Judaism a “thinner” religion as they detached themselves from the messianism, rituals, superstitions and the disorderly habits of traditional worship. We can observe in Heinrich Heine’s wry commentary on the Hamburg temple an articulation of this critique of reform.<sup>49</sup>

One further research project which might help us evaluate the long-term historical salience of reform as an alternative to conversion is a study of the family stories of those involved. It has been suggested, for example, that the biography of Victor Klemperer, whose diaries have been so illuminating for our understanding of the final chapter of Jewish life in Germany during the Nazi years, was typical of others with a similar background. Klemperer’s father had been a reform rabbi, and the translator of the English edition of the diaries has suggested that many children of reform families ultimately chose conversion, as did Klemperer

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<sup>49</sup> See Siegbert S. Prawer, *Heine’s Jewish Comedy: A Study of his Portraits of Jews and Judaism*, Oxford 1983, pp. 180-181.

and several of his siblings.<sup>50</sup> It would be immensely helpful if we could investigate this claim by tracing the membership rolls of reform congregations throughout the nineteenth century. If we see that some families remained within reform over generations, we are more justified in concluding that reform was an institution which kept Jews Jewish. But if we find that in each generation the affiliates of the temples came from new families, we may well conclude that in particular eras it was true that reform was a way-station on the path towards conversion and disappearance from Jewish life.

The study of Berlin reform in the early years of the nineteenth century provides only minimal support for the conclusion that continued reform would have been likely to keep conversion rates lower. The strongest point in support of this argument is that for the eight years of the Beer-Jacobson temple's existence conversion rates dropped. Much more research is needed before we can conclude that had the officials and the rabbis not jointly opposed reform, troubled Jews in Germany could have found a "true start" to the challenges of modern life.

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<sup>50</sup> See Martin Chalmers' introduction to the English translation of the diaries; Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years 1933-1941*, New York 1998, p.viii.

SIMONE LÄSSIG

The Emergence of a Middle-Class Religiosity:  
Social and Cultural Aspects of the German-Jewish  
Reform Movement During the First Half  
of the Nineteenth Century

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, German-speaking Jews were a predominantly lower-class group. Three generations later, however, German Jews were perceived as a middle-class social group par excellence. This fascinating socio-cultural transformation has already been the focus of numerous historical studies.<sup>1</sup> One perplexing question, though, has yet to be properly explained: why were Jews in Germany, a country whose approach to emancipation could be characterised as rather “unbourgeois”, so successful in becoming middle class? We still lack an adequate understanding, in particular, of the complex problems surrounding the cultural process of embourgeoisement (*Verbürgerlichung*). The transformation of mentalities, lifestyles, value systems and cultural practices and, with this, of religion and religiosity has yet to be investigated in this context. This is surprising, in particular when one considers that German Jews were perceived not only as a synonym for an almost collective social ascent, but have also come to be considered as the forerunners of a modern Judaism. It was German Jews who first dared to reform their religious system, and it was German Jews who laid the foundation for the pluralisation and “confessionalisation”<sup>2</sup> of Judaism.

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Translated from the German by Tom Lampert.

<sup>1</sup> See the instructive essay by Shulamit Volkov, ‘Die Verbürgerlichung der Juden als Paradigma’, in *idem*, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus*, Munich 1990, pp. 111–130.

<sup>2</sup> “The terms ‘confession’ and ‘confessionalisation’ are translations of the German ‘Konfession’ and ‘Konfessionalisierung,’ that have a somewhat more specific meaning than their English cognates. In German, ‘Konfession’ refers to a community of believers that shares a common faith or ‘confession’ (*Bekennntnis*). ‘Konfessionalisierung’ thus refers to that process by which distinctive understandings of Christianity emerge in

These two phenomena – the social success of German Jews and the “invention” of a Judaism that unleashed the potential for modernisation even on the part of the Orthodox – have, for the most part, been investigated separately.<sup>3</sup> Questions about the degree and the ways in which these two phenomena were intertwined have scarcely been addressed.<sup>4</sup> Given their temporal overlap, it might be worthwhile to investigate a problem initially raised in Max Weber’s studies of world religions: the question of whether and to what degree religious interpretive models can explain social and economic developments.<sup>5</sup> Can this approach help us to understand German Judaism during the emancipation period? Can we apply it to the complex cultural and social process of Jewish embourgeoisement? Such an approach would direct our attention, in particular, to the following questions. To what extent was the process of German Jewish embourgeoisement carried out or even intensified through transformations in the religious domain? Did Judaism, a religious system that at least appeared to have remained unchanged for centuries, perhaps liberate creative

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tandem with one another.” Philip Gorski, ‘Historicizing the Secularization Debate’, *American Sociological Review* 65 (February 2000), p. 151, n.5.

<sup>3</sup> See David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840*, New York and Oxford 1987; *idem*, ‘The Impact of Emancipation on German Jewry: A Reconsideration’, in Jonathan Frankel and Steven Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 177–198; Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York 1988; *idem*, *Jüdische Identität in der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main 1992; Shulamit Volkov, ‘Die Erfindung einer Tradition: Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland’, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 253 (1991), pp. 603–618; *idem*, *Deutsche Juden und die Moderne*, Munich 1994; *idem*, ‘Verbürgerlichung’; Jacob Toury, ‘Der Eintritt der Juden ins deutsche Bürgertum’, in Hans Liebeschütz and Arnold Paucker (eds.), *Das deutsche Judentum in der deutschen Umwelt 1800-1850*, Tübingen 1977 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 35), pp. 139–241; Jacob Katz, *Aus dem Ghetto in die bürgerliche Gesellschaft: Jüdische Emanzipation 1770-1870*, Frankfurt am Main 1988; Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Mechanics of Change: Essays in the Social History of German Jewry*, Atlanta 1992; Werner E. Mosse, *The German-Jewish Economic Élite 1820-1935: A Socio-cultural Profile*, Oxford 1989.

<sup>4</sup> On the relationship between the politics of emancipation and religious reform, see Michael A. Meyer, *German Political Pressure and Jewish Religious Response in the Nineteenth Century*, New York 1981; Sorkin, ‘The Impact’.

<sup>5</sup> Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Tübingen 1988. See also Hartmut Lehmann and Günther Roth (eds.), *Weber’s Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*, Cambridge 1993; Gordon Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism: An Essay on Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic Thesis*, London 1982.

forces?<sup>6</sup> Did the modernisation of Judaism intensify the accumulation of a special form of cultural capital, that is, an immaterial capital that could, under appropriate conditions, also become socially relevant? Are the well-known specific characteristics of Judaism in the German *Kulturbereich* perhaps connected to the emergence of a middle-class religiosity, to the invention of a middle-class Judaism?

This article will attempt to answer these questions in three steps. In the first section, I will review the current state of research on the subject and discuss my analytic approach, which builds upon a central hypothesis of Max Weber's sociology of religion and upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital. At the same time, it also takes into account more recent research on the middle class, and thus should be understood as a signpost pointing towards a normality for German-Jewish historiography, a normality based in principle on the intimate connection and mutual penetration of general and Jewish research perspectives. In the second section, I will briefly sketch those potentials already inherent in the religious system of Ashkenazic Judaism at the beginning of the emancipation period that supported integration into the middle class, and the barriers erected against such integration. Finally, I will explore the extent to which these new elements and attempts at modernisation within Judaism – for example, the aestheticisation of religious services, the redefinition of religious gender roles and the establishment of sermons in the German language – were used by reformers to instil (through the medium of religion) values, norms and attitudes that were constitutive for the “firmament of middle-class moral values” and a way of life oriented around these values.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Clifford Geertz, ‘Religion as a Cultural System’, in *idem*, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York 1973, pp. 87–125.

<sup>7</sup> Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (eds.), *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel: Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2000; Ulrike Döcker, *Die Ordnung der bürgerlichen Welt: Verhaltensideale und soziale Praktiken im 19. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main 1994; Wolfgang Kaschuba, ‘Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit nach 1800: Kultur als symbolische Praxis’, in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*, vol. 2, Göttingen 1995, pp. 92–127; Jürgen Kocka, ‘Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit als Problem der deutschen Geschichte vom späten 18. zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert’, in *idem*, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1987, pp. 21–63; Rainer M. Lepsius, ‘Zur Soziologie des Bürgertums und der Bürgerlichkeit’, *ibid.*, pp. 79–100; Manfred Hettling, ‘Bürgerliche Kultur – Bürgerlichkeit als kulturelles System’, in Peter Lundgreen (ed.), *Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Bürgertums: Eine Bilanz des Bielefelder Sonderforschungsbereichs 1986-1997*, Göttingen 2000, pp. 319–340.



*Religion as a Cultural System and as Cultural Capital?*

Recent research on the middle class has paid increased attention to the constellation of middle-class culture (*Bürgerlichkeit*) and religion. Investigations of transformation in forms of piety within the middle class, of the participation of the old and new middle class in church governance, or of the socio-cultural profile of pastors have given us a more differentiated view of middle-class religion.<sup>8</sup> A specifically Jewish focus, however, has hardly been integrated into this context at all; investigations of Jews and Judaism during this period have been limited primarily to studies concentrating on issues of theological and intellectual history.<sup>9</sup> David Sorkin's comment that scholars of German Jewish history have identified the issue of religious reform primarily with religious thought remains valid. Only rarely has this issue also been understood as part of a social and cultural process.<sup>10</sup> If we inquire about the grounds for the successful integration of

<sup>8</sup> See Lucian Hölscher, 'Die Religion des Bürgers: Bürgerliche Frömmigkeit und protestantische Kirche im 19. Jahrhundert', in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 250 (1990), pp. 595–630; Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, *Bürgerlichkeit und Religion: Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der evangelischen Pfarrer in Baden 1860-1914*, Göttingen 2002; Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Princeton 1984; *idem*, 'Kirchengeschichte or the Social and Cultural History of Religion?', in *Neue Politische Literatur*, 3 (1998), pp. 13–35; Bernard Groethuisen, *Die Entstehung der bürgerlichen Welt- und Lebensanschauung in Frankreich*, Tübingen 1978; Horst Alfred Fild, *Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte der bürgerlichen Weltanschauung in Deutschland dargestellt an der protestantischen Predigt zwischen 1740-1800*, Erlangen 1965.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Meyer, *Response*; *idem*, *Von Moses Mendelssohn zu Leopold Zunz: Jüdische Identität in Deutschland 1749-1824*, Munich 1994; *idem*, 'Recent Historiography on the Jewish Religion', in *LBI Year Book XXXV* (1990), pp. 3–16; Heinz Mosche Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums: Geistesgeschichte der deutschen Juden 1650-1942*, Hamburg 1977; George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, Bloomington 1985; Alexander Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, Hanover, NH and London 1981; Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayer-Book Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism*, New York 1968; Ismar Schorsch, 'Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate', in Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker and Reinhard Rürup (eds.), *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, Tübingen 1981 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 39), pp. 205–247; Steven M. Lowenstein, 'The 1840s and the Creation of the German-Jewish Religious Reform Movement', *ibid.*, pp. 255–297.

<sup>10</sup> David Sorkin, 'Religious Reforms and Secular Trends in German Jewish Life: An Agenda for Research', in *LBI Year Book XL* (1995), pp. 169–184. Also important are Andreas Gotzmann, *Jüdisches Recht im kulturellen Prozess: Die Wahrnehmung der Halacha im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen 1997 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 55); *idem*, 'The Dissociation of Re-

Jews into the German middle class, then this social and cultural dimension becomes virtually indispensable. A number of arguments support this assertion.

The cultural process of creating a middle class had a much greater impact in the German states than in most other European countries and this, in turn, exerted a sustained influence on the entire process of emancipation in Germany. As long as Germany was not a political or economic entity, but at best a cultural entity, middle-class action found a common expression initially and primarily on the level of culture. For this reason, recent research has placed particular emphasis on the socialising function of middle-class culture. As an analytic category, *Bürgerlichkeit* (according to Jürgen Kocka) stands for “a new outline or blueprint of existence, based upon labour, achievement and education, upon reason and the public sphere, but also upon self-reflection, individualisation and intimacy”.<sup>11</sup> The core elements of this existential blueprint were the principles of individualism, independence and self-responsibility, the enormous value placed upon individual performance, *Bildung* (education) and the continual development of personality, a positive attitude towards regular labour, a rational way of life tending towards asceticism, a continuous interplay between the public sphere and the private realm (which was grounded in emotions, but legally protected and which provided the basis for the new concept of the family), the establishment of the modern principle of association and – integrating all the aforementioned elements – the hope of a self-regulating society of free and autonomous middle-class citizens.

In this context, the symbolic forms and aesthetic dimensions of life were of central importance. On the one hand, language, education and taste served to maintain or create distinctions. On the other hand, the middle-class model of identity was bound together with these elements in terms of practice.<sup>12</sup> Thus, *embourgeoisement* designates not only socio-economic affiliation to a fragile new social group or ascent into that group but also the social and cultural processes of socialisation as well as changes in legal status, political behaviour, educational goals, family life,

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ligion and Law in Nineteenth-Century German-Jewish Education’, in *LBI Year Book XLIII* (1998), pp. 103–126; David Sorkin, ‘Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History’, in *LBI Year Book XXXV* (1990), pp. 17–33; *idem*, *Transformation*; Robert Liberles, *Religious Conflict in Social Context: The Resurgence of Orthodox Judaism*, Frankfurt am Main 1985; Lowenstein, *Mechanics*.

<sup>11</sup> See Kocka, ‘Bürgertum’, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> See Döcker, *Die Ordnung*; Hettling and Hoffmann, *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel*.

experiential horizons and lifestyles. Under these conditions, enlightened civil servants, a core group of the new middle class, understood emancipation less as an act of political expression than as an educational process. In this respect, the demand for the “middle-class improvement” of Jews, which had become an explicit goal of almost all of the individual German states following Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s 1781 treatise *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (On the Civic Improvement of the Jews), represented more a cultural than a political endeavour. In other words, equality was tied to prior concessions, which emphatically obligated German Jews to the normative foundations of the middle-class cultural and social model, with its centrepiece of “education and morality” (*Bildung und Sittlichkeit*).<sup>13</sup>

If we integrate Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of capital into this argument, we might presume that the conditional emancipation of German Jews, coupled with the adoption of middle-class moral values, represented not only an imposition but also an enormous opportunity. According to Bourdieu, different kinds of capital exist: in addition to material capital, there is, for example, social and cultural capital as well. One form of capital can be converted into another and the possession of one form can, therefore, compensate for the lack of another.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, we should ask whether the appropriation of cultural capital – which includes education, academic titles and cultural goods, as well as specific lifestyles, value

<sup>13</sup> Reinhard Rürup, *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus*, Göttingen 1975; Katz, *Ghetto*; *idem*, *Zur Assimilation und Emanzipation der Juden*, Darmstadt 1982; Jacob Toury, *Soziale und politische Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland 1847-1871*, Düsseldorf 1977; Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst (eds.), *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation State in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Manchester 1999; Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*, Princeton 1995; Peter Pulzer, ‘Emancipation and its Discontents: The German-Jewish Dilemma’, in Edward Timms and Andrea Hammel (eds.), *The German-Jewish Dilemma: From Enlightenment to the Shoah*, Lampeter 1999, pp. 5–24; George L. Mosse, ‘Jewish Emancipation: Between Bildung and Respectability’, in *idem*, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism*, Hanover, NH and London 1993, pp. 131–145; Shulamit Volkov, ‘The Ambivalence of Bildung’, in Klaus L. Berghahn (ed.), *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered: A Symposium in Honour of George L. Mosse*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 81–97.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn: Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*, Frankfurt am Main 1987; *idem*, *Sozialer Raum und “Klassen”*, Frankfurt am Main 1985. See also Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ‘Pierre Bourdieu: Das Zentrum seines Werks’, in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Die Herausforderung der Kulturgeschichte: Essays*, Munich 1998, pp. 15–44; Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ‘Kulturelle und symbolische Praktiken: Das Unternehmen Pierre Bourdieu’, in Wolfgang Hardtwig and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), *Kulturgeschichte Heute*, Göttingen 1996, pp. 111–130.

systems and modes of behavior – facilitated the acquisition of economic capital in Germany, a land in which emancipation and embourgeoisement assumed a profound cultural dimension. Education, aesthetics and morals, the anchoring of middle-class mentalities and the development of corresponding social behavior – these factors could, from this perspective, have been the first and most significant steps for many poor Jews in the process of becoming middle class. The fact that these Jews were pushed precisely in this direction through pressure and promises from the state and civil service may have given this transformation process particular force. As a result, the normality to which German Jews were supposed to adapt themselves and to which they did indeed soon struggle to adapt, was defined initially and emphatically as middle-class. In this respect, the concept of embourgeoisement describes a special case of acculturation. In comparison with the general paradigm of acculturation, however, the concept of embourgeoisement has a much more pronounced social dimension, since the expected and desired normality in lifestyle and culture was always oriented around the cultural matrix of one particular social group – that of the rising middle class. Thus as research paradigms, acculturation and embourgeoisement do have significant points of intersection. They are, however, by no means identical.

Assuming that the social transformation within German Judaism cannot be explained without a concomitant transformation of cultural norms and practices, we need to direct our attention to religion and its influence on mentalities. Adopting Max Weber's hypothesis about the social relevance of religious world-views and rites of piety, we might presume that collective behavioural dispositions and interpretive models were altered through the religious system. This also raises the issue of modernising and disciplining processes within the religious domain, as well as the politico-cultural basis and the social scope of such processes. Could the reform of religious systems have perhaps aided the collective appropriation of cultural capital, which then promoted the process of becoming middle-class? Or was this merely a crude adaptation to the expectations of hegemonic society, and thus of an acculturation that demanded giving up one's own Jewishness in many domains and that understood normality as the grinding away of all particularity?

When I speak of religion here, I am, again following Weber, Durkheim and Geertz, less concerned with theological doctrines and systems than

with the cultural, symbolic and social logics of the religious domain.<sup>15</sup> My focus, therefore, centres less on the “great ideas” or theological positions of individual Jewish reformers than on the cultural codes that were transmitted through religious media and that could potentially function as cultural motives for social transformation. Did this new Judaism promote in this sense the adoption of a middle-class system of behaviour? Were patterns of culture generated or produced within the religious domain that could also become relevant for the socio-economic embourgeoisement process? To what extent, for example, were family life, education, aesthetic norms or even economic ethics codified by and modelled on religion? Did a redefinition of gender models also arise in this context? What values supported a Judaism that was, at the beginning of the emancipation process, perceived by many contemporaries as an unstable, outdated system in need of reform?

#### *Potentials and Obstacles in Pre-Modern Judaism to Embourgeoisement*

If we formulate the question about the religious potentials and barriers promoting or hindering the embourgeoisement process in this way, we are forced to confront Max Weber’s work on the subject.<sup>16</sup> Inspired by Werner Sombart’s controversial study *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, Weber asked whether Jews had played a significant role in the development of modern capitalism.<sup>17</sup> In attempting to answer this question, he initially discovered several parallels between Jews and Puritans, including an affinity for rationalism, religious reservations about the unrestrained consumption of luxury goods, and a renunciation both of “institutional grace” and of religious hurdles to material profit (which were un-

<sup>15</sup> See Geertz, *Interpretation*, pp. 87–125; Emile Durkheim, *Die elementaren Formen des religiösen Lebens*, Frankfurt am Main 1981; Weber, *Religionssoziologie*, especially p. 252; *idem*, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, Tübingen, 1976.

<sup>16</sup> Weber, *Wirtschaft*, chap. 5. See also Gary A. Abraham, *Max Weber and the Jewish Question*, Urbana 1992; Derek Penslar, *Shylock’s Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe*, Los Angeles 2001, pp. 53–54, 153–60; Werner E. Mosse, ‘Judaism, Jews and Capitalism: Weber, Sombart and Beyond’, in *LBI Year Book XXIV* (1979), pp. 3, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*, Leipzig 1911. See also Paul Mendes-Flohr, ‘Werner Sombart’s *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*: An Analysis of its Ideological Premises’, in *LBI Year Book XXI* (1976), pp. 87–107.



derstood as symptoms of divine grace).<sup>18</sup> Weber, however, clearly found more important the differences between Puritanism and Judaism, differences that resulted from Judaism's lack of belief in predestination, in its messianic dimension and its orthodox character (i.e. the strict observance of religious laws). In Judaism, according to Weber, religious values and labour coexisted unrelated next to one another, a fact that explained why there was a deep chasm between the (vocational) world and religious law in Judaism. Labour served to secure material existence in the world, but it did not function as "works" through which one could attain divine grace. In Judaism, one could secure this only through knowledge of religious laws and through obedience to those laws, i.e., through a piety that was indeed ascetic but also, and more importantly, other-worldly.<sup>19</sup>

From Weber's perspective, the religious system of Judaism appeared primarily as an obstacle to embourgeoisement. We must bear in mind, however, that while the "capitalist spirit" analysed by Weber did indeed represent one central element of middle-class culture, the middle-class way of life cannot be reduced to an ethics of acquisition. Furthermore, Weber, in his ideal-typical analysis, hardly goes beyond ancient Judaism.<sup>20</sup> Weber does not seriously consider the historicity of Judaism, an issue that continues to represent a great challenge for historical research on Judaism of the pre-emancipation period. This is true in particular for the interaction between religious system and religious practice, an issue that has only recently been investigated in detail.<sup>21</sup> Historians who have addressed this issue have shown that the traditional world of Judaism that has been conjured up for so long was in fact a construct. Already in the nineteenth century, this construct had been invented with apologetic intentions and fulfilled ideological functions:<sup>22</sup> either those elements that

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<sup>18</sup> Weber, *Wirtschaft*, p. 721.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182, 367. See also Erich Fromm, *Das jüdische Gesetz: Zur Soziologie des Diaspora-Judentums*, Weinheim 1989, p. 43; Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber*, Tübingen 1967 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 17), p. 316.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Eckart, *Max Webers Studien des Antiken Judentums*, Tübingen 2002.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Gotzmann, *Recht*; *idem*, 'Rabbiner und Bann: Zur Problematik der Analyse und Bewertung zweier Topoi des aufklärerischen Diskurses', in *Aschkenas*, vol. 4 (1994), pp. 99–125.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Amos Funkenstein, 'Reform und Geschichte: Die Modernisierung des deutschen Judentums', in Volkov, *Deutsche Juden*, pp. 1–8; *idem*, *Jüdische Geschichte und ihre Deutungen*, Frankfurt am Main 1995; *idem*, 'Erfindung'; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zachor: Erinnere Dich! Jüdische Geschichte und jüdisches Gedächtnis*, Berlin 1988.



were ostensibly inherent in Judaism and did not fit into the middle-class era were greatly exaggerated, or those elements that proved to be incompatible with middle-class culture were harshly criticised.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, I think it makes more sense to focus analysis of this period solely on the contemporary discourse about the Jewish religion, to concentrate not so much on “real” religious ideas and practices but rather on the difficulties that Jewish reformers encountered in the programme of middle-class improvement. This is how I will now proceed. At the same time, however, I will also briefly introduce a number of more systematic considerations as a possible stimulus for further research.

At the beginning of the emancipation period, Judaism possessed a number of features potentially able to promote the process of *embourgeoisement*. First, the Jewish firmament of moral values, in contrast to those of Catholicism, presented no religious barriers to social ambitions. In Judaism, social mobility was viewed positively. Furthermore, Jewish social ethics were not grounded solely upon a feeling of brotherly love towards the poor. Rather, charity (*tzedakah*) – together with prayer and religious learning – was one of the three foundations of the Jewish religion, which, with its focus on helping others to help themselves, functioned as a kind of anticipation of primal liberal virtues.<sup>24</sup> Second, *Bildung* functioned as a traditional channel of ascent in Judaism. The absence of a separation between laity and priests in Judaism, as well as the obligation (related to this and valid for every male) to study the religious laws, meant that learning had an extremely positive connotation among Jews. As a result, being educated was closely tied to relatively high social prestige. In Judaism, the strategy of social ascent through education – typical for this era – had already long been established and, in contrast to Catholic priests, was also connected to the prospect of social inheritance. Third, *Halakhah* (Jewish Law) gave rise to a distinctly ascetic way of life, which potentially promoted the development of central middle-class virtues and mentalities – moderation, self-discipline and the commitment to achievement. Finally, the role of the family in Judaism also appears to have anticipated middle-class norms in a number of ways. On the one hand, given the great mobility of Jews, Jewish families were forced to provide greater cohesion than the families of less mobile groups. On the other hand, real or imagined pressure from outside led to a strengthening

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<sup>23</sup> A third approach emerged later, invoking in highly idealised fashion the “good old days”, especially in the realms of family and ghetto life.

<sup>24</sup> See also Fromm, *Das jüdisches Gesetz*, p. 36.

of family ties among Jews, which also promoted the development of a romantically transfigured image of the Jewish family, an image that was conjured up as much by Jews “injured by modernisation”, as by those bent on demonstrating the compatibility of the Jewish and middle-class family models.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to these latent progressive potentialities, there were also significant obstacles to modernisation inherent in early modern Judaism. The formalism and the obligatory nature of Jewish religious laws, for example, clearly conflicted with central middle-class values such as individualism, rational action and historical consciousness. To a great extent, *Halakhah* continued to dictate the rhythm of life and individual daily routines. In this respect, Judaism was not merely expected to provide instructions to assist the individual in coping with the everyday problems of life: it was, rather, life itself.<sup>26</sup>

Since the social framework of Ashkenazic communities was defined to a great degree through the study of and obedience to *Halakhah*, a religious exclusivity had developed among Jews that gave rise to a social particularism and form of life foreign to non-Jews. For pre-modern corporate society, this separation was not particularly problematic. With the rise of the modern state and middle-class society, however, this developed into a bone of contention. For Judaism to become middle-class, it was necessary for it to “confessionalise” and to relinquish the early modern notion of a Jewish “nation”.<sup>27</sup> The collectivist structure of Judaism also developed into a barrier to the process of embourgeoisement. In early modern Judaism, it was not individuals who decided what was pleasing to God, or even what was “rational” in the sense of the Enlightenment. Rather, every Jew was given precisely defined rules that he or she was to follow. This meant that Jews were not, as individuals, directly responsible to God. The beginning and end of all action was, instead, the collective, i.e., the local

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<sup>25</sup> See Steven M. Cohen and Paula E. Hyman (eds.), *The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality*, New York 1986; Sabine Hödl and Martha Keil (eds.), *Die jüdische Familie in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Berlin 1999; David Kraemer (ed.), *The Jewish Family: Myth and Metaphor*, Oxford 1989.

<sup>26</sup> Volkov, ‘Die Erfindung einer Tradition’, p. 7. See also Gotzmann, *Recht; Graupe, Die Entstehung*; Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, New York 1961.

<sup>27</sup> See also Andreas Gotzmann, ‘Zwischen Nation und Religion: Die deutschen Juden auf der Suche nach einer bürgerlichen Konfessionalität’, in Andreas Gotzmann, Rainer Liedtke and Till van Rahden (eds.), *Juden, Bürger, Deutsche: Zur Geschichte von Vielfalt und Differenz in Deutschland 1800-1933*, Tübingen 2001 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 63), pp. 241–262.

congregation and the Jewish nation as a whole. Thus, in the pre-emancipation period, Judaism could hardly be a private matter. Finally, Judaism presented itself as timeless in substance and as ostensibly unalterable. Such a static temporal consciousness did not correspond with the challenges of the modern age; it did not facilitate change, but rather tended to obstruct it.

It is, admittedly, risky to draw such a crude distinction between potential for change and barriers to it, in spite of the analytic insights one might hope to gain. There are always numerous domains in which the two are intimately intertwined. One example of this is the issue of child rearing. Young boys in particular were introduced at a very early age to the formal world of adults – to adult labour, adult sociability and adult ways of learning. This, however, clearly contradicted the middle-class approach of permitting children to have their own social sphere – “a children’s room”. In addition, instruction at the traditional Jewish school, the *heder*, centred on Jewish religious laws rather than on the acquisition of non-Jewish culture. Religion was education, and all education was religious.<sup>28</sup> This kind of unworldly knowledge could hardly stand up to the central Enlightenment principles of reason and utility. At the same time, however, Jewish learning did have its own distinctive rationality and was devoted to the development of logical stringency.<sup>29</sup> The considerable literacy of Jews, rooted in the prescribed study of religious laws, and the widespread respect for erudition were also potentially conducive to the reception of a middle-class model of culture, which was defined to a great degree through education. The “clever Jew” was a more or less philo-semitic stereotype, as the literacy rate of Jews was in fact lower than has usually been assumed. We should not use the culture of Jewish elites to draw conclusions about Jews from lower social groups. At the same time, the majority of Jews was probably more familiar with education and reading than their average Christian counterparts.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> See Julius Carlebach, ‘Deutsche Juden und der Säkularisierungsprozess in der Erziehung’, in Liebeschütz and Paucker (eds.), pp. 55–93; Mordechai Eliav, *Jüdische Erziehung in Deutschland im Zeitalter der Aufklärung und Emanzipation*, Münster 2001.

<sup>29</sup> See Carlebach, ‘Deutsche Juden’.

<sup>30</sup> See Simone Lässig, ‘Sprachwandel und Verbürgerlichung: Zur Bedeutung der Sprache im innerjüdischen Modernisierungsprozess des frühen 19. Jahrhundert’, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 270 (2000), pp. 617–667; Sander L. Gilman, *Die schlauen Juden: Über ein dummes Vorurteil*, Hildesheim 1998; Paula E. Hyman, ‘The Social Contexts of Assimilation: Village Jews and City Jews in Alsace’, in Frankel and Zipperstein (eds.), pp. 110–129.

In traditional Judaism, gender roles were also derived from the religious system, and in particular from the respective duties assigned to men and women.<sup>31</sup> Women were primarily responsible for those religious rites carried out within the home, while men were responsible for those duties related to religious learning and the synagogue. On the one hand, such a separation of the spheres along gender lines does appear proto-middle-class. On the other hand, women were understood as separate or dissociated from men and not, as in the nineteenth century, as an equally valuable supplement or complement to them. Since Jewish women were forbidden from participating in the most honourable task – studying the Torah – religion was available to them only in an “inferior” form, as long as Judaism was defined essentially through religious learning. Religious functions were thus clearly structured in gender-specific terms and were also evaluated very differently. Men studied the religious laws; it was their presence alone that counted at religious services when a *minyan* (quorum) was required. Women as a rule received no religious education and many of them did not know Hebrew, the language required for studying the Torah and for religious services. The category of gender defined a social and cultural difference, a difference that was reflected in a number of realms of middle-class life but that also conflicted with the middle-class ideal of an equal partnership.<sup>32</sup>

We should bear in mind, then, that while several important religious resources did prove useful in the process of embourgeoisement, pre-modern Judaism also erected a series of formidable obstacles to this process. Given Judaism’s encompassing nature at this point, an opportunity emerged too: since the desire to become culturally middle-class could

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<sup>31</sup> Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*, Washington 1995; Julius Carlebach (ed.), *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Frau in Deutschland*, Berlin 1993; *idem*, ‘Family Structure and the Position of Jewish Women’, in W. E. Mosse, Paucker and Rürup (eds), *Revolution and Evolution*, pp. 157–187; *idem*, ‘The Forgotten Connection: Women and Jews in the Conflict between Enlightenment and Romanticism’, in *LBI Year Book XXIV* (1979), pp. 197–326; Anne Sheffer, ‘Beyond Heder, Haskalah and Honeybees: Genius and Gender in the Education of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Judeo-German Women’, in Peter J. Haas (ed.), *Recovering the Role of Women: Power and Authority in Rabbinic Jewish Society*, Atlanta 1992; Marion Kaplan, ‘Women and Tradition in the German Jewish Family’, in Cohen and Hyman, pp. 62–80.

<sup>32</sup> See Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, *Vom Patriarchat zur Partnerschaft: Zum Strukturwandel der Familie*, Munich 1977; Martine Segalen, *Die Familie: Geschichte, Soziologie, Anthropologie*, Frankfurt am Main 1990; Rebekka Habermas, *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums: Eine Familiengeschichte 1750-1850*, Göttingen 2000.

only be realised by altering fundamental social and cultural group structures, Judaism had to function as a coordinating point in the embourgeoisement process if it wanted to remain viable as a religion. One decisive factor in the success or failure of the German project of Jewish middle-class improvement was therefore whether the religious system – which had until then been the stabilising element of Judaism – obstructed the embourgeoisement process, or whether it mutated into a medium through which new, middle-class mentalities and values could be transmitted and then transformed into practical reference points for life outside the synagogue.

### *The Invention of a Middle-Class Judaism*

Using these reflections as a starting point, we are forced to revise to some degree the assumption that German-Jewish reform movements were concerned primarily with conforming to Christianity or with adapting to central elements of Christian religious practice.<sup>33</sup> Almost all “modernisers”,<sup>34</sup> whether they would later be classified as radical reformers or even as part of neo-Orthodoxy, sought primarily to establish a religiosity that corresponded with the aesthetic norms of the middle class, a religiosity that enabled inner-directed action and supported middle-class individualism. This required, in turn, a transformation from the strict observance of religious law to religious belief, a turn towards inwardness, contemplation and devotion. The fundamental goal of these various attempts at modernisation, based upon different logic and thus leading in different theological directions, was a Judaism that no longer clashed with the middle-class model of culture but rather supported and even co-produced it. From this perspective, it was not *Halakhah* or the Talmud that were obsolete, but merely those elements that conflicted with rational thought and with the fundamental values, manners and tastes of the middle class. Modernisers of different persuasions only wanted to change as much in Judaism as seemed absolutely necessary in order to produce a middle-class religion. If we measure them according to this goal, and not according to a funda-

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Alexander Altmann, ‘Zur Frühgeschichte der jüdischen Predigt in Deutschland. Leopold Zunz als Prediger’, in *LBI Year Book VI* (1961), pp. 3–59.

<sup>34</sup> Here the term denotes all those who thought a change of religious practice and a willingness to face contemporary challenges were necessary. Unlike “reformer”, which is ambiguous in a Jewish context, it also encompasses observant Jews looking for new directions.



mental renewal of the theological foundations of Judaism, then we must conclude that they were thoroughly successful.<sup>35</sup>

In this article, I am able to present only in exemplary form the diverse processes of religious modernisation (connected to and related to one another) and the partial stabilisation of these processes.<sup>36</sup> This means that I will outline only three processes here: the aestheticisation of religious services, the discourse concerning a re-evaluation of gender roles and the establishment of German-language sermons. I have consciously limited my focus to the issue of middle-class culture. As a result, I forgo any analysis of intellectual or religious history and I exclude, to a great extent, those opposing tendencies, which (and I wish to emphasise this) could still be found in the reform centres for an extended period of time, but which do little to illuminate the tendencies and processes that ultimately proved to be dominant and influential in German Judaism over the long term.<sup>37</sup>

In Enlightenment and emancipation discourse at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the idea of the equality of Jews as individuals and as members of the middle class (*Bürger*) found growing acceptance, although it did not yet represent a majority view. The religious system of the Jews continued to be regarded as a synonym for formalism, ossification and opposition to Enlightenment, as well as profoundly incompatible and even opposed to middle-class cultural practices. From the perspective of a theology guided by reason and

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<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Jacob Toury views the German Reform movement as merely the “residue” of an initially much more ambitious reform programme. See Jacob Toury, ‘The Revolution that did not Happen’, in *Zeitschrift für Religion und Geistesgeschichte*, 36 (1984), pp. 193–203.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed analysis of the various elements involved in the making of the middle class, and their interdependences, see Simone Lässig, *Ursachen eines präkären Erfolges: Die Verbürgerlichung der Juden in Deutschland im Zeitalter der Emanzipation*, unpublished “Habilitation dissertation”, Dresden 2002.

<sup>37</sup> For the latter, see Meyer, *Response*; *idem*, *Mendelssohn*; *idem*, ‘Recent Historiography’; Moshe Pelli (ed.), *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany*, Leiden 1979; Graupe, *Entstehung*; Sorkin, *Transformation*; Gotzmann, ‘Nation’; *idem*, ‘Dissociation’; Altmann, *Essays*; Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg, *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover, NH 1985; G. L. Mosse, *German Jews*; Ismar Schorsch, ‘Scholarship in the Service of Reform’, in *LBI Year Book XXXV* (1990), pp. 73–101; Shmuel Feiner, ‘Eine traumatische Begegnung: Das jüdische Volk in der europäischen Moderne’, in Michael Brenner and David Myers, (eds.), *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute*, Munich 2002, pp. 105–122; Steven Lowenstein, ‘Jüdische Religion zwischen Tradition und Transformation’, *ibid.*, pp. 123–129.



oriented towards science, Judaism appeared as outdated and hostile to education, even as something that obstructed the desired middle-class improvement of Jews and their equality with non-Jewish citizens. The traditional forms of Jewish observance soon collided with the new awareness and transformed consciousness of values that had gradually found approval within Jewish society. Above all, those Jews whose self-understanding already approximated that of the educated middle-class felt repelled by religious rites and forms of religious service that, according to middle-class norms, seemed to rob Judaism of its dignity and to obstruct universal claims of “refinement”. Among the points of friction that soon found expression in modern synagogue rules as “offensive” cultural practices were such things as “haggling” in the synagogue, the presence of “improperly dressed persons”, “cries that were foul-sounding and disturbed contemplation”, “rocking or swaying back and forth, shouting and making noise, laughing and talking during prayers”, taking off one’s shoes and “entering or leaving loudly”. In addition to their lack of regularity, the “unnatural expansion” of religious services was also sharply criticised, since this only promoted the thoughtless repetition and soulless performance of ritual (as did the restriction to the Hebrew language) and left no space for contemplation, devotion and emotion.<sup>38</sup>

In this respect, it is clear that the reform of religious services has a profound aesthetic component. The reformers struggled consistently either to “spiritualise” or to do away with all “naïve” and seemingly uncouth ceremonies. The fundamental “purification of worship of ... accumulated waste”<sup>39</sup> was supposed to provide Jewish synagogues with a worthy character so that it would no longer be possible to ridicule Jewish rites.<sup>40</sup> This desire, however, did not arise solely from the hope or expect-

<sup>38</sup> From the multitude of available sources, see Peter Beer, *Reminiscenzen bezüglich auf Reorganisation des öffentlichen Gottesdienstes bei den Israeliten*, Prague 1837, p. 20; Elias Grünebaum, *Zustände und Kämpfe*, Karlsruhe 1843, p. 44; Salomon Herxheimer, *Sabbath-, Fest- und Gelgenheitspredigten*, Bernburg 1838, p. 245; Salomon J. Cohen, *Historisch-kritische Darstellung des jüdischen Gottesdienstes und dessen Modificationen*, Leipzig 1819; Joseph Wolf, *Sechs deutsche Reden*, Dessau 1812, p. 17; Gotthold Salomon, *Predigten in dem neuen israelitischen Tempel zu Hamburg gehalten*, Hamburg 1820, “Vorwort”.

<sup>39</sup> Bernhard Beer, cited in Gerson Wolf (ed.), *Catalog der Bibliothek des sel. Herrn Bernhard Beer in Dresden*, Berlin 1863, p. XVI.

<sup>40</sup> Synagogue rules have only recently received attention, and the cultural formation of the middle class has not been thoroughly explored. See Lowenstein, ‘The 1840s’; Michael A. Meyer, ‘“How Awesome is this Place!” The Reconceptualisation of the Synagogue’, in *LBI Year Book XLI* (1996), pp. 51–63; Wolfgang Se’ev Zink, *Synagogenordnungen in Hessen 1815–1848: Formen, Probleme und Ergebnisse des Wandels*

tation of being accepted by the Christian middle-class. No less important, indeed presumably even more significant, was the attempt to draw every “educated and enlightened Jew” who had become estranged from traditional religious services back into the synagogue. The introduction of choral singing, sermons, confirmations or synagogue rules, innovations that could sustain the transformation from religious law to religious belief, served this purpose. This appeared indispensable because, according to the basic tenor of intra-Jewish reform discourse, laws and norms that were imposed from the outside could not conform to the rational thought of the middle class.<sup>41</sup>

An era of progressive individualisation and privatisation, an era at times (mis)understood in all too undifferentiated a manner simply as one of “secularisation”, demanded that religion, in order to survive in a middle-class world, must awaken the capacity to inner-directed action and to independent and self-conscious judgments. God must be present within individuals, in their hearts as well as in their minds. For example, the Viennese preacher Isaak Noah Mannheimer urged that synagogues should promote an “independence of spirit”.<sup>42</sup> And Gotthold Salomon expected the following of his temple congregation in Hamburg: “that we do not orient ourselves slavishly according to others, and that we do not ... pay homage to forms that have been made sacred merely by a tradition that has long lost its spirit.” In this case, Salomon was referring principally to the modernisation of religious services, but by asserting, “You should not slavishly ape others, but should behave independently and freely in your own circles”, he appealed to and reinforced a mental attitude that was applicable to all realms of middle-class life.<sup>43</sup>

The accent thus clearly shifted from a practice of piety pre-shaped from above and from an orientation towards the collective to an inwardness and an individuality of belief, to devotion, moral instruction and emotional strengthening. In accord with the progressive separation of the private and public spheres, it was thought that the boundaries between secular and sacred life in middle-class society should become clearly perceptible, as should the domain within the synagogue influenced by the

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*synagogaler Gottesdienstgestaltung und ihrer Institutionen im frühen Jahrhundert*, Aachen 1998; Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Frankfurt am Main 1931.

<sup>41</sup> For more details, see Lässig, *Ursachen*, pp. 361ff.

<sup>42</sup> See Meyer Kayserling (ed.), *Bibliothek jüdischer Kanzelredner*, vol. I, Berlin 1870, p. 89.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 184.

middle class. The intention of reformers here was that religion should no longer determine the entirety of everyday life for Jews, and that the secular should no longer be seen as desecrating the sanctity of the house of God.

Given this background, attempts at reform reflected the fact that a new social and cultural awareness, centred around the paradigm of *embourgeoisement* and a changing consciousness of values, was still hardly compatible with traditional forms of religious observance. We can therefore only understand such efforts if we recognise the degree to which reformers already understood themselves as part of the educated middle class (*Bildungsbürger*), and how intensively their own thinking and behaviour already moved within the parameters of the middle-class value system.<sup>44</sup> Just as the early middle class sought to transpose its cultural model onto other classes, middle-class Jews sought to do this with their many fellow Jews who had yet to become middle-class. In this regard, the religious reforms of the early nineteenth century appear as an absolutely earnest attempt, anchored in Judaism, to understand Jewish religiosity and middle-class culture as compatible and to implement the transformation from a national-religious identity to a middle-class “confessionality” without any profound break in tradition.

As a consequence of the growing importance of the values of inwardness, belief and emotion, the Reform movement increasingly devalued central masculine elements of Jewish religiosity – *Halakhah* and the study of Talmud and Torah, lectures and disputes. Those elements ascribed by contemporary discourse primarily to women were, on the contrary, strengthened. The natural disposition of women provided them, in this view, with a great capacity to receive and communicate feelings and emotions. As a result, women could make a specific contribution to the religious vitality and moral perfection of the family, a contribution that men themselves could not naturally provide. Women became the guarantors of a Judaism that needed to prove itself viable in the face of secularisation as well as anti-Jewish sentiment.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See also David Sorkin, ‘Teacher, Preacher, Publicist: Joseph Wolf and the Ideology of Emancipation’, in Frances Malino and David Sorkin (eds.), *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe 1750-1870*, Cambridge 1990, pp. 107–125.

<sup>45</sup> See Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen, ‘Die Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert’, in *idem*, *Frauen unter dem Patriarchat der Kirchen: Katholikinnen und Protestantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1995, pp. 9–21; Rebekka Habermas, ‘Weibliche Religiosität – oder: Von der Fragilität bürgerlicher Identitäten’, in Klaus Tenfelde and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), *Wege zur Geschichte*

The emotionalisation and aestheticisation of religious services were, therefore, both a reaction to the middle-class model of women and a consistent implementation of a middle-class concept of religiosity, which tended to emphasise female elements and was primarily projected onto the family. In this respect, the development of a middle-class religious system for German Judaism was based upon a clear re-evaluation of gender models.<sup>46</sup> In spite of this, almost all attempts to emancipate women through the religious laws of Judaism failed. Women were not accepted as fully equal members of a *minyan*, nor were they admitted to Torah readings. There was, in other words, no fundamental feminisation of Judaism here.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, the transformation of the Jewish social order from a culture of masculine religious learning and ritual observance to a religious system influenced primarily by middle-class values almost inevitably pushed women from the periphery to the centre of attention. Almost all supporters of the Reform movement saw women as the most powerful weapon in the battle against an abating piety and religiosity. Consequently, the separation of the sexes within the synagogue needed to be mitigated (by, for example, attractive, unscreened women's galleries) and worship had to be adapted to the ostensible needs of women, in particular through the emotionalisation of religious services. A letter from the eighteen-year-old Minna Diamant suggests that these efforts did find resonance among Jewish women. Diamant, who came from the Orthodox city of Pressburg, witnessed a Reform service in Vienna for the first time in May 1883, and reported enthusiastically about it in a letter to her fiancé Leon Biach: "I cannot possibly express in words the emotions that I felt when I saw this temple and the crowd that had gathered, and watched

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*des Bürgertums*, Göttingen 1994, pp. 125–148; Hugh McLeod, 'Weibliche Frömmigkeit – männlicher Unglaube? Religion und Kirchen im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert', in Ute Frevert (ed.), *Bürgerinnen und Bürger: Geschlechterverhältnisse im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1988, pp. 134–156; Edith Saurer (ed.), *Die Religion der Geschlechter: Historische Aspekte religiöser Mentalitäten*, Vienna, Cologne and Weimar 1995; Lucian Hölscher, '“Weibliche Frömmigkeit”: Der Einfluss von Religion und Kirche auf die Religiosität von Frauen im 19. Jahrhundert', in Margret Kraul and Christoph Lüth (eds.), *Erziehung der Menschen-Geschlechter: Studien zur Religion, Sozialisation und Bildung in Europa seit der Aufklärung*, Weinheim 1996, pp. 45–62.

<sup>46</sup> Carlebach, 'Connection'; *idem*, 'Family Structure'; Bettina Kratz-Ritter, *Für "fromme Zionstöchter" und "gebildete Frauenzimmer": Andachtsliteratur für deutsch-jüdische Frauen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Meyer, *Response*; Schorsch, 'Emancipation'; Schorsch, 'Scholarship'; Lowenstein, 'The 1840s'.

these festive ceremonies. ... And when the singing began in those heart-throbbing tones, it seemed to me as if one could only truly be devout in such a location." Minna Diamant was so moved by this experience that she paid a second visit to the temple the very next day and wrote no less emphatically about it in another letter: "It looks like a palace here. I would need weeks to describe all of this, and even then I would need Börne's mind, Scott's descriptions and Zschokke's eloquence."<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the innovations in the forms of religious service, the reformers also demanded the substantive power to create meanings and definitions, a power that they hoped would reach from the synagogue into profane everyday life and anchor the concept of a family religion there. In this context, most "family sermons" devoted three to four times as much space to women's duties as to men's. This issue also played an extremely important role in German-Jewish journalism of the time.<sup>49</sup> These two examples indicate that the desired changes for women were much more profound than those for men. Women were now regarded as "priestesses of the home".<sup>50</sup> Reformers were prepared, however reluctantly, to accept declining religious observance among men if, in place of men studying the Talmud, women now felt themselves responsible for religiosity and piety. Gotthold Salomon, for example, argued that while a man was indeed degraded if he lacked sufficient respect for God, there were external means that could be used to discipline him: "First it is fame, then honour, then office and then business that protect him from the fall ... he throws himself into the whirl of life and is strewn along a thousand paths."<sup>51</sup> "The external world, however," Salomon reminds his female listeners, "makes no demands upon you, and when she calls you, you cannot and must not satisfy her claims. Your home is your sphere of influence! ... You are the soul of your home – woe to you, should that soul become ill, for how will it enliven those four walls?"<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Minna Diamant, *Ein Briefwechsel aus der Biedermeierzeit*. Privately printed. Leo Baeck Institute Library, New York.

<sup>49</sup> This holds true also of independent moral treatises such as Gotthold Salomon, *Selima's Stunden der Weihe, eine moralisch religiöse Schrift für Gebildete des weiblichen Geschlechts*, Leipzig 1816. See Lässig, *Ursachen*, pp. 472–480; Kratz-Ritter, *Zionstöchter*.

<sup>50</sup> See Maria Baader, 'From the "Priestess of the Home" to "The Rabbi's Brilliant Daughter": Concepts of Jewish Womanhood and Progressive Germanness in *Die Deborah* and *The American Israelite* 1852-1900', in *LBI Year Book XLIII* (1998), pp. 47–72.

<sup>51</sup> Kayslerling (ed.), *Bibliothek*, p. 192.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p. 193. See also p.155.



Despite, or rather because of these clearly defined, gender-specific social spaces, the sacralisation of marriage and the family also promoted a turn towards the ideal of equal-weighted and complementary genders: women could fulfil their new religious function only if they no longer stood beneath men, but rather next to them as a partners. For this reason, a number of preachers also lectured to Jewish men “about the great value of Israelite woman”.<sup>53</sup> These new Jewish sermons, now in German, essentially reflected the middle-class gender discourse of the era. This was also true, to name but one example, of the question of how educated women could and should be. On the one hand, Jewish preachers regarded education as an indispensable prerequisite for raising children properly, as well as for creating a stimulating home atmosphere for working men and for an up-to-date religiosity. On the other hand, leading Jewish intellectuals also polemicised vehemently, in the wake of the “reading addiction” debate at the end of the eighteenth century, against “improperly educated” women. In the eyes of leading male intellectuals, women who concerned themselves with abstract sciences became “sophists” who were unable to fulfil their vocation as housewives and who therefore ridiculed religion. “Profound reflections on such subtle objects ... [are not] matters for women, ... [nor] according to women’s nature should they be.”<sup>54</sup>

Jewish Enlighteners also scorned women who were not able to stimulate their husbands in spiritual-moral terms. “However unnatural educated women might be,” Ignaz Jeitteles remarked, “however ridiculous it might sound when a lady speaks about abstract matters ... a woman without any scientific education, a woman whose sphere does not extend beyond the kitchen and the cellar, whose powers of judgment do not extend beyond a recipe for peas or knitting a sock, is just as contemptuous ... No reasonable man will respect philosophy in women’s garb, but no one can love a shallow goose either.”<sup>55</sup> The Hamburg preacher and pedagogue Eduard Kley had similar views on the matter, formulating his idea for the education of woman as follows: “She says only that which she should say; she speaks only about that which is demanded of her. In the little that she does say, however, she reveals her proper education.”<sup>56</sup> And he addressed the following message directly to women: “You, too, will educate your

<sup>53</sup> This was the title of a sermon by Salomon Herxheimer in Herxheimer, pp. 214–220. See also *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, (1837), pp. 345–48, 358, 371.

<sup>54</sup> *Sulamith*, (1806), pp. 477–478.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, (1808), pp. 69–70.

<sup>56</sup> Eduard Kley, *Predigten in dem neuen Israelitischen Tempel zu Hamburg*, Hamburg 1819, p. 77.



mind. The goal that you have here, however, will not be the world; it will not be applause and amazement. The world belongs to men; their influence is public. You belong to men, and your beneficial influence should become evident in the silent circle of your home. But here your divine gifts will work in the most beautiful way.”<sup>57</sup>

Almost all leading Jewish intellectuals attributed to women a specific cultural mission, which had both profane and sacred components. This was true over long stretches of time for the new Orthodox Judaism, as represented, for example, by Samson Raphael Hirsch. Although “modern Orthodoxy” understood itself as the defender of *Halakhah* and fundamental religious rites, it also practiced a Judaism that was no longer exclusively a fraternity of men. Rather, “modern Orthodoxy” also promoted the familialisation of Judaism, something that could not have been realised without a turning away from the old culture of Jewish learning and without a re-evaluation of gender roles. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, all spokesmen of German Judaism saw the main task of women as lying in the maintenance of Judaism within the family and, at the same time, in the anchoring of middle-class values and practices.<sup>58</sup> In particular, women were supposed to instil in their children those cultural codes supporting their socialisation to the middle class. Detailed studies of everyday Jewish life during the *Kaiserreich* have demonstrated that this idea not only became a norm but also rapidly influenced everyday life.<sup>59</sup>

The apparent success of this new gender model had much to do with the invention of the German-language sermon. Sermons in the German language had already been established by around 1830 in a series of larger and smaller congregations, in some locations sporadically, in others as a regular practice.<sup>60</sup> The acceptance and institutionalisation of

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> See especially Baader, ‘From the “Priestess of the Home” ’.

<sup>59</sup> Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York 1991); *idem*, ‘Gender and Jewish History in Imperial Germany’, in Frankel and Zipperstein (eds.), pp. 199–124; *idem*, ‘Tradition and Transition: The Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration of Jews in Imperial Germany: A Gender Analysis’, in *LBI Year Book XXXVII* (1982), pp. 3–35; *idem*, ‘Women and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity in Imperial Germany’, in Volkov, *Deutsche Juden*, pp. 57–74.

<sup>60</sup> To date, research has focused on the adaptation of Christian forms of sermons, or on analysing particular genres such as sermons on war or on the consecration of synagogues. See Altmann, ‘Frühgeschichte’; Meyer, ‘How Awesome’; Marc Saperstein, ‘War and Patriotism in Sermons to Central European Jews 1756-1815’, in *LBI Year*

German-language sermons within synagogues took place at the latest at the end of the 1840s.<sup>61</sup> In the majority of congregations, sermons not only functioned to shape new images of the world and intra-Jewish linguistic transformations: frequently, the establishment of German-language sermons opened the way for reform of worship and, with this, the development of middle-class religious practices; in many places, these “moral talks” preceded the change in religious practice, even paving the way for them. German-language sermons were also held (and met with approval) in locations where worship was still thoroughly traditional.<sup>62</sup> Only rarely was there active resistance to such reforms from the Orthodox. The example of the Westphalian Rabbi Abraham Sutro, who called upon all opponents of Reform to occupy the synagogues in order to obstruct sermons in German as well as modified religious services,<sup>63</sup> appears to have been an exception. From the middle of the nineteenth century there were, rather, complaints that supporters of Orthodoxy had left this terrain to the reformers. *Der Israelit*, for example, complained in 1863 that, with the exception of Salomon Plessner, there were very few good Orthodox orators.<sup>64</sup>

Salomon Plessner did indeed distance himself from the “profane eloquence of merely entertaining the listener” and from those “empty, theatrically imposing declamations” that he had experienced so often listening to the new preachers. “The tears cried by a few ladies,” he remarked ironically, “shone as a sufficient reward in the face of the superficial orator and with this he believed he had fulfilled the purpose of his talk.” Plessner also clearly distanced himself, as did the reformers, from the old *derashot* (sermons), which were for him often “more a dishonouring than

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*Book XXXVIII* (1993), pp. 3–14; Thomas Kollatz, ‘Modernity and Tradition as Reflected in German Sermons Delivered by Orthodox Rabbis’, in *Jewish Studies*, 39 (1999), pp. 35–43.

<sup>61</sup> Historians have demonstrated that didactic talks were held on a regular basis in a series of rural Jewish congregations at this time. See Sorkin, ‘Religious Reforms’; *idem*, *Transformation*, pp. 231–235. See also Meyer Kayserling, *Ludwig Philippson. Eine Biographie*, Leipzig 1898, p. 177.

<sup>62</sup> Gotthold Salomon, *David, der Mann nach dem Herzen Gottes als Mensch, Israelit und König. Ein heiliges Lebensgemälde in 26 Kanzelvorträgen*, Hamburg 1837, “Vorwort”.

<sup>63</sup> Susanne Freund, *Jüdische Bildungsgeschichte zwischen Emanzipation und Ausgrenzung. Das Beispiel der Marks Haindorf Stiftung in Münster 1825–1942*, Paderborn 1997; Kollatz, ‘Modernity and Tradition’.

<sup>64</sup> *Der Israelit*, 1863, p. 41. Already in the 1840s the Orthodox *Der treue Zionswächter* had printed sketches of sermons. In May 1848, for example, it published the thoughts of Altona’s Chief Rabbi Etlinger on the topic of temperance.

an explanation of the divine word”.<sup>65</sup> Already in the 1830s, Plessner had pleaded that “the sermon today should consist of coherent remarks held in the language of the country, remarks that are understandable for the young and the old, and that edify and move, and that accord in form and presentation with the general requirements of a good powerful talk that captivates and enthralls its audience.”<sup>66</sup>

This confirms the fact that despite the conflicts and debates about religious law and despite the deep chasms between Reform and Orthodoxy, a new consensus typical for German Judaism as a whole had emerged, a consensus that was no longer primarily of religious character. To a great degree, this took shape beyond religion and beyond the modernisation of the religious system, and ultimately radiated also into the profane sphere of everyday life. In striving to find new ways and forms that could once again make religious life attractive and thus secure the survival of Judaism in the modern era, both Reform and Orthodoxy adopted the middle-class understanding of *Bildung* as well as middle-class aesthetics and language, so that precisely these elements – despite the growing differences between Reform and Orthodoxy – could develop into a lowest common denominator that found its liturgical expression, in particular, in the edifying sermons held in the German language. It was no longer the sermon and its function that were controversial, but only the style and the question of how much Jewishness was presumed to be indispensable. In this respect, there are good reasons to assume that the sermon – as a completely new element established initially outside of the synagogue, i.e., in schools and associations – contributed decisively to defining new mentalities in religious services and, in this way, created reference points for coping with a rapidly changing daily life.

The title and the contents of most sermons indicate that they were communicative texts of social relevance, with a morally binding character. Here, directly in the religious domain, models of identity and patterns of behaviour that had become fixed stars in the firmament of middle-class moral values were constructed and disseminated. This was true for gender roles, for educating and child-rearing, for middle-class virtues such as order, modesty and thrift, and for the middle-class ethics of vocation and duty (which often recall Weber’s spirit of capitalism). The central issues here were self-control and moderation, the rational use of time and the

<sup>65</sup> Salomon Plessner, *Belehrungen und Erbauungen in religiösen Vorträgen zunächst für Israeliten*, Berlin 1836, vol. 1, p. XIII.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. XI.

positive evaluation of labour and vocation. Here, too, there were only gradual differences within the various tendencies of German Judaism by the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, Salomon Plessner also regarded “the contented life ... to be connected to religion and vocational work”.<sup>67</sup> Plessner clearly had greater respect for religiously pious individuals who actively engaged in vocational work than for individuals whose Judaism consisted in a traditional detachment from the world, in Talmudic learning and religious observance. Yet what is perhaps most remarkable about these statements is that they represent an enlightened critique of traditional Talmudic study by an apparently Orthodox popular teacher. Plessner, opting for action rather than contemplation, regarded such study as a waste of productive powers, as idleness and an anachronistic form of religiosity. To be sure, his critique was clearly more moderate than those of the reformers who – like Gotthold Salomon – appealed directly to “the lethargic and the work-shy”: “Your prayer for your daily bread is not just, if you are not decent enough to go to work. I say to you: whoever works many hours, and works in a way that is pleasing to God, performs a splendid prayer ... The prayers of the lethargic, however, are an abomination to God.”<sup>68</sup> Salomon charged all of his listeners, regardless of their gender, social status or vocation, with the task of “engaging fully and living entirely in” their respective vocations. “The sweetest joys, the greatest pleasures must not tempt us to leave our vocation for an hour here or an hour there ... for we should find the sweetest enjoyment, the greatest pleasure in our vocation, which God has given to human beings as a mission, according to Moses, a daily religious service.”<sup>69</sup>

Religious action should be expressed through the daily fulfillment of one’s duty. Almost half of the prayers at this time were passionate pleas for a markedly middle-class (seemingly Puritanical) work ethic, one that was virtually raised to the level of a religious commandment. “Whatever vocation you choose, science, art, trade or commerce,” Ludwig Philippson urged in 1834, “immerse yourself in it completely! Do not content yourself with half-knowledge, do not content yourself with foolishness ... Idleness is fatal; half-deeds and negligence are fatal.”<sup>70</sup> With

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<sup>67</sup> Zacharias Frankel, *Rede bei Gelegenheit der Feyer des Dankfestes*, Teplitz 1832, p. 22; Plessner, *Belehrungen*; see also *idem*, “Der Tag ist kurz, die Arbeit viel”, Breslau 1821.

<sup>68</sup> Gotthold Salomon, *Festpredigten für alle Feiertage des Herrn, gehalten im neuen Israelitischen Tempel zu Hamburg*, Hamburg 1829, p. 155f.

<sup>69</sup> Kayserling (ed.), *Bibliothek*, p. 244.

<sup>70</sup> *Israelitisches Predigt- und Schulmagazin* (1834), p. 40.

this topos the intra-Jewish discourse followed, to a great extent, the general approach of leading middle-class intellectuals. At the same time, however, a specifically Jewish accent is also evident here, one that was highly significant as a driving force for individual and collective strategies of embourgeoisement. Many preachers stressed the permeability of social boundaries and the transience of property as a motivation for the poor and as a warning about lack of self-discipline for the wealthy. Already in 1818, Gotthold Salomon asked provocatively: “Have you built a fortified castle from your wealth, built it with your own hands or with those of your ancestors? Oh! In the coming hours it could collapse! Don’t sit around here carefree, you reckless man!” Most importantly, however, the poor should not be idle: “Don’t you see that everything changes and is altered ... Don’t you see that one person falls while another rises – you, too, can alter your character and your situation in only a brief period of time.”<sup>71</sup>

If we investigate the ethico-religious foundation of lifestyles during this era, we find a marked awareness of and a remarkable sensitivity to the social dynamics of the time. The poor should not accept their destiny fatalistically, but rather should act, not least through the acquisition of *Bildung*. This fundamentally positive evaluation of social mobility, which clearly diverged from the static social model of Catholicism,<sup>72</sup> prepared the ground for a middle-class ethic of achievement and intensified the generation and perpetuation of interpretive and behavioural models that largely accorded with the needs of capitalist society. With this, however, German Judaism now no longer appeared to be withdrawn from the world and remote from everyday life. Rather, it had become an active worldly religion, for which human action pleasing to God was realised in vocational work, in the daily fulfilment of one’s duties, in the struggle for education or *Bildung* and in the responsible rearing of children. “The law should be fulfilled, that is what God desires,” Eduard Kley urged in 1823, “but it cannot be fulfilled here in the temple, but rather outside of it, in life. In the house of God, you receive instructions about this; prayer should consecrate you and make you skilful. But it is outside that the real religious service begins in earnest.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Salomon, *Predigten in dem neuen israelitischen Tempel zu Hamburg gehalten*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>72</sup> Groethusen, *Entstehung*.

<sup>73</sup> Kayserling (ed.), *Bibliothek*, p. 81. Zacharias Frankel concurred with this. In 1835, he commented that Judaism exerts a “direct influence on the conditions of life”; see Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Ministerium für Volksbildung, No. 11131.



Like Kley, Salomon or Plessner, most of the reformers also integrated middle-class orientations into their religious discourse of values. Since this religious dimension suggested that the new values were binding in character, and since these preachers themselves also practiced the aesthetic and linguistic models that they sought to instil, we can conclude that these German-language sermons were a particularly important lever in the embourgeoisement process. Three aspects strengthened this effect. First, despite some conflicts, the German-language sermon was established faster and more easily than other innovations in Jewish religious services. Second, due to the small size of most congregations and to the pressures exerted by the state, all social groups, including the Jewish lower classes, were measured according to the middle-class social model. And third, modernisation in religious space remained most closely tied to Jewish tradition, at least symbolically. As a result, from the perspective of the religious discourse of norms it appeared that middle-class culture was compatible with Jewishness, so that developing the one did not require renouncing the other. From this perspective, assimilation need not be an issue. On the contrary, the Jewish and middle-class models were mutually integrated and reworked into new behavioural patterns. For this reason, we can speak of “adaptation” only with caution, and if we do use the term then we should do so primarily in regard to the middle-class way of life and middle-class culture. This is evident in the behaviour of leading Orthodox intellectuals, who themselves urged that religious practice be embedded in middle-class moral values. These included dignified religious services and a rabbi with a Ph.D., an impeccable mastery of the German language, a modern education and the appropriate external appearance.<sup>74</sup> These norms did indeed provoke conflicts and were by no means accepted unanimously in the few Reform centres and the many liberal congregations. This is not surprising, since discourses are never identical with those mentalities and world-images that they attempt to produce.<sup>75</sup> Hence, although I have focused my analysis expressly on those elements that promoted the process of German Jewish embourgeoisement, we must be careful not to overestimate the speed of the Jewish modernisation process or to underestimate regional divergences.

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<sup>74</sup> Mordechai Breuer, *Jüdische Orthodoxie im Deutschen Reich 1871-1918. Sozialgeschichte einer religiösen Minderheit*, Frankfurt am Main 1986; Liberles, *Religious Conflict*.

<sup>75</sup> See also, with a Jewish focus, Gotzmann, *Recht, passim*; Lowenstein, *Mechanics*.



I offer two examples here. As a child, Clara Geissmar (1844-1911) occasionally accompanied her aunts to the synagogue in Bretten. In the women's section of the synagogue, occupied primarily by elderly Jewish women, she was given sweets, "while the cantor sang the prescribed prayers". Later, she was also permitted to use the prayer book of an elderly woman, which was printed in Hebrew and contained brief instructions in German on how one was to behave during individual prayers. According to Geissmar, the majority of women in the synagogue understood very little Hebrew. For this reason, she always waited with particular "excitement, until they reached a certain point in the prayers. There was a note written on this page of Frau H.'s prayer book: 'everyone weeps here'. As soon as the cantor spoke the first word of this section, her [Frau H.'s] face, which until then had been so friendly and peaceful, assumed a pained expression, and she began to shed tears and, to my great pleasure, cried passionately for about 6 or 7 minutes."<sup>76</sup>

By this point in time, religious services in the Dresden congregation had already assumed a different, more modern format. And yet here, too, the development of middle-class religious practices represented a permanent process of negotiation with existing Jewish norms. This is demonstrated by a letter written in 1871 by Salomon Wolf Levy, a pious and religious man who nevertheless – and this was not necessarily a contradiction – fought actively on the side of the moderate Dresden reformers in all internal conflicts.<sup>77</sup> In the aforementioned letter to his daughter Rosalie, Levy pointed proudly to the fact that he had ensured – to the particular applause of the fair sex – that at religious services the organ played gently, while "the *Shemoneh Esray* is prayed softly. For the educated person, this served to promote contemplation; and ill-bred people could no longer mutter a Sabbath or *Yontef Nigun* (holiday melody) during the prayer." In spite of this progress, Levi himself admitted openly that there was no dearth of further annoyances and loutish behavior, because some people simply could not get used to the new routine "and would not give up their old Jewish ill manners".<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Clara Geissmar, ME 181.

<sup>77</sup> Levy, for example, gave an enthusiastic account of the recent *seder* nights and the old tunes sung on those occasions, asked his son-in-law for texts of sermons and used the salutation "*gut yontef*" (happy holiday), addressing it in particular – in good bourgeois fashion – to the "diligent and talented high school students" among his grandchildren. Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Salomon Wolf Levy, AR 4407.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* These statements refer to Itzig Behrend from Rodenberg, who appears in the memoirs as pious but open to modernisation. After the first service with a choir had

It is clear, therefore, that traditional and modern elements, non-middle-class and middle-class elements overlapped for decades and that the process of becoming middle-class took place more slowly than the new leading Jewish intellectuals had hoped. One cause for this lay in the efforts of many participants to maintain or to establish unity within the congregation, despite the sharpness of the disputes. Separate Reform services, which were established in several larger congregations, remained the exception. It was typical of most innovations promoting the development of middle-class culture that they hardly touched *Halakhah* itself and this, in turn, made it possible to include the majority of German Jews within the new model of a contemporary Judaism. It was the intensity with which these conflicts were played out which first gave the processes of making German Judaism a middle-class religion the particular dynamic that ultimately proved irresistible even for tradition-conscious Jews. The invention of a modern neo-Orthodoxy in Germany, which (as Mordechai Breuer has shown) was middle-class in almost every respect, is a particularly good example of this. Precisely because this new Judaism, regardless of whether in liberal, conservative or neo-Orthodox form, represented a bridge between tradition and modernity and fulfilled an integrative function for the entire group, it was able to function as an effective agent of embourgeoisement. This does not mean, however, that all Jews had become middle-class by the end of the emancipation period. In socio-economic terms, at best only half of the Jewish population was middle-class by this time, and in all probability no more than one-third of all Jewish families.<sup>79</sup> This was a greater percentage, however, than the German population as a whole. Yet the greatest accomplishment lay in the fact that in the modern era the majority of German Jews had come to regard embourgeoisement as self-understood or normal, as a standard according to which every individual Jew was to be measured. One of the most enduring results of the discourse of emancipation in Germany was that the path to normality for the majority of even the poorest Jews was assumed to lead to the middle class. The non-Jewish population in Germany, on the contrary, accepted for the most part a normality that remained tied to its own social status and did not point clearly beyond it.

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been conducted in the Rodenberg synagogue in 1841, the seventy-six year old Behrend remarked that “never in [his life had he] prayed with such piety and joy as I did this night”. Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Itzig Behrend, ME 38.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, the recent research on Breslau: Till van Rahden: *Juden und andere Breslauer. Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt 1860-1925*, Göttingen 2000, pp. 51–94.

This commitment to genuinely middle-class values, for oneself and others, did not inevitably lead to an erosion of Jewish values and identities. Rather, embourgeoisement implied a readiness continuously to re-evaluate the fundamental coordinates of one's own Jewishness, in reference to the challenges posed by middle-class society. In doing so, the interactive process of embourgeoisement, even with the conservation of tradition that accompanied this, promoted the emergence of a Jewishness that was just as open to secular and German elements as to religious and Jewish elements. And both these components of identity could lead in individual ways to a third element – a middle-class self-conception. Thus, the German path to Jewish emancipation allowed space for the development of hybrid identities, identities that are rarely perceived when researchers limit themselves to a crude assimilationist approach or to a simplified concept of acculturation. And it is such hybrid identities that most likely represent what is characterised as “normality”. In this regard, embourgeoisement is a relatively open category that describes social ascent into the middle class, acceptance as national citizens with equal rights, and the habitualisation of cultural practices and elements that were not Jewish in origin but that could be utilised in the conservation and reconstruction of Jewish identities under altered conditions.

In conclusion, we should bear in mind that the social and cultural influence exerted by religious ideas and norms has long been underestimated in Jewish historiography, where scholars have focused more narrowly on religious subjects than in many other fields of history. This is perhaps especially true for the period investigated here, a period which has all too often been labelled as one of “secularisation” but which was in fact probably more a period of the pluralisation, privatisation and familiarisation of Judaism, as well as a period in which religiosity and the attachment to the synagogue as an institution began to loosen. Even before the establishment of the German Reich, German Jews were able to develop a “middle-class religion” – in reaction to pressures connected to the German model of emancipation, but by no means as an uncritical implementation of external expectations – and this middle-class religion functioned as a coordinating point in the social transformation of German Judaism. In the domain of religion, German Jews constructively used the challenges that arose from official educational policy as well as the chal-

lenges that arose within the domain of *Bildung*.<sup>80</sup> Even in the religious sphere, the figure of the educated middle-class citizen became the model for German Jews. In this way, German Jews as a social collective acquired a specific cultural capital that also facilitated the socio-economic process of embourgeoisement for poorer Jewish families. This is not only demonstrated by numerous biographical documents of the time, but also by recent studies with a broader cultural outlook, such as those by Todd Endelmann or Maria Baader focusing on poorer German-Jewish immigrants in England or the United States.<sup>81</sup>

Only through international comparisons can we determine the degree to which the accumulation of cultural capital enabled German Jews to attain a better starting position for socio-economic embourgeoisement. It is clear, however, that the concept of cultural capital possesses its greatest explanatory power for societies in the process of upheaval, in which new social groups and new mechanisms of access emerge and a redistribution of particular kinds of capital takes place, i.e., for eras such as the emancipation period in Germany.

A single article can only briefly touch upon many of the issues that I raised in the introduction. Within this framework I have not been able to resolve or even address a number of important aspects, including the interaction between production and reception, the discursive character of the religious process of embourgeoisement, as well as the transformation of religiosity and piety within individual congregations and families. I was also hardly able to investigate the question of which domains proved particularly resistant to transformation, thereby setting limits to the process of modernisation, or perhaps even functioning as a particularly effective “shock absorber” to that process.<sup>82</sup> It would certainly be worthwhile for scholars to investigate whether the preservation of elements from traditional Judaism – perhaps because they already contained the potential for embourgeoisement, potential that could now be realised – were able to

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<sup>80</sup> Simone Lässig, ‘Bildung als “kulturelles Kapital”? Jüdische Schulprojekte in der Frühphase der Emanzipation’, in Gotzmann, Liedtke and van Rahden (eds.), pp. 263–298.

<sup>81</sup> Baader, ‘From the “Priestess of the Home” ’; Todd Endelman, ‘German Jews in Victorian England: A Study in Drift and Defection’, in Frankel and Zipperstein (eds.), pp. 57–87.

<sup>82</sup> See Steven M. Lowenstein, ‘The Pace of Modernisation in the Nineteenth Century’, in *LBI Year Book XXI* (1976), pp. 41–56; Michael Brenner, Steffi Jersch-Wenzel and Michael A. Meyer, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, vol. 2, Munich 1996, pp. 96ff.; Feiner, ‘Eine traumatische Begegnung’; Volkov, *Deutsche Juden*, pp. 113–117.

function dynamically and, in combination with new elements, exert a modernising influence. I conclude with a note on limitations. In this article I have isolated one cultural dimension – religion – in order to determine more precisely its position within the process of modernisation. One consequence of this approach is that I was not able to place sufficient emphasis on non-religious cultural influences. I am fully aware that in Jewish society and in the interaction between Jews and non-Jews – for example, in the first modern schools or in the German-Jewish public sphere – there were important non-religious developments, without which the social and cultural process of Jewish embourgeoisement could not have been realised.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Sorkin, *Transformation*; Lässig, *Ursachen*.

GREGORY A. CAPLAN

## Germanising the Jewish Male: Military Masculinity as the Last Stage of Acculturation

After briefly treating the history of militarism and masculinity in German and German Jewish culture before the First World War, this essay attempts to answer the question: if the values and symbols of the military exerted a substantial influence on the German middle classes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what was their impact on the quintessential middle-class community - German Jewry? Recent research on German Jewish history has tended to emphasise the degree of Jewish integration in Imperial Germany and the reversal of that trend in the Weimar period.<sup>1</sup> The enthusiastic Jewish embrace of German militarism between the wars undermines both ends of this equation. Military masculinity constituted a central aspect of German national culture in the nineteenth century, and the relative absence of this manly ideal in the German Jewish community of the same period suggests that the Jewish quest for middle-class “normality” in the era of Emancipation did not extend to all realms of German culture. The currency of militarism among German Jews during and after the First World War, by contrast, highlights the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Andreas Gotzman, Rainer Liedtke and Till van Rahden (eds.), *Juden, Bürger, Deutsche: Zur Geschichte von Vielfalt und Differenz 1800-1933*, Tübingen 2001 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, 63); Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Grossstadt von 1860 bis 1925*, Göttingen 2000; Michael Brenner and Derek J. Penslar (eds.), *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria 1918-1933*, Bloomington 1998; Wolfgang Benz, Arnold Paucker and Peter Pulzer (eds.), *Jews in the Weimar Republic*, Tübingen 1998 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, 57); and Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, New Haven 1996.



significance of the war experience as a turning point in the Jewish accommodation to this German manly ideal.

Writing in the 1880s, the sociologist Herbert Spencer classified Prussia, the largest and most powerful German state, as a “militant type of society” in which all individuals “are all either warriors or those who supply the needs of warriors”. According to Spencer, military glory, the subordination of individual interests to the needs of the social whole, and the popular cultivation of bravery, steadfastness, and physical strength acted as unifying elements in this kind of warrior-society. He set this culture of militarism against the individualism that purportedly informed the cultures of industrial societies like England and France.<sup>2</sup>

A century later, Norbert Elias evoked this distinction between individualism and militarism in characterising the bourgeois German reaction to the Wars of Unification:

All of our beautiful ideals have brought us nothing. What led us from the depths to the zenith, the goal for which we had been striving for so long, was military power, the violence of war. Apparently, that is what ultimately counts in human affairs. The beautiful . . . words of Schiller, Goethe and the others, their appeal to humanity – all of that helped us little. Only war, the will to power, and the severity of execution helped us in the end.<sup>3</sup>

Spencer and Elias were not alone in noting that aristocratic military values like caste honour, hierarchy and obedience to authority framed the political culture of Imperial Germany. In his survey of the myriad scholarly debates on militarism, Volker Berghahn described the type of society most conducive to the culture of militarism described by Spencer. Societies in the midst of the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society, Berghahn writes, channel social conflict into forms of aggression associated with militarism – nationalism, imperialism and military might.<sup>4</sup> The German Empire represented precisely such a society in transition. Within two generations, political unification, the second industrial revolution and

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<sup>2</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, New York 1886, as cited in Volker Berghahn, *Militarism: The History of an International Debate 1861-1979*, New York 1982, pp. 11–13.

<sup>3</sup> Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen. Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 3rd edn., Frankfurt am Main 1998, p 236, as cited in Ursula Breymayer, ‘“Mein Kampf”: Das Phantom des Offiziers’, in Ursula Breymayer, Bernd Ulrich and Karin Wieland (eds.), *Willensmenschen. Über deutsche Offiziere*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, pp. 87–88.

<sup>4</sup> Berghahn, *Militarism*, pp. 107–108.

rapid urbanisation caused dramatic social transformations. The middle classes channeled their frustrations into demands for imperial expansion and aggressive military build-up.<sup>5</sup> The culture of militarism in Imperial Germany vested the uniform of the Prussian army officer with enormous social capital. In schoolbooks, military training and public festivals, Germans learned of the glorious military traditions of their nation. At the center of this political religion stood Emperor William II.<sup>6</sup>

During the First World War, the basis for political legitimacy in Germany shifted from the Emperor to the German *Volk*. The outbreak of war in the summer of 1914, together with the collective process of myth-construction that accompanied it, transformed German political culture. On 1st August, the Emperor declared to a crowd of over 40,000 Germans in front of the royal palace in Berlin that he would no longer recognise classes, parties or religions, but only Germans. With these words, he sought to appease his parliamentary foes, the Social Democrats, and win their support for the war effort. In a broader sense, this conciliatory gesture helped to create the “spirit of 1914”. Based on the proposition that the war had moved all Germans to transcend individual concerns and parochial self-interest in the name of a mystical national unity, this myth coalesced almost overnight in state propaganda and the bourgeois press. The militarism of romantic German nationalists and the dominance of the military in German society provided the framework within which German nationalists lodged their claim to supremacy on the world stage. Spencer's model of militant and industrial societies became the terrain upon which propagandists waged a war of words. While politicians and intellectuals in France and England called for the demolition of Prussian militarism, their German counterparts ridiculed the individualism and rationalism of the enemy democracies.

Speaking in Weimar at the National Assembly charged with establishing the first German democracy in 1919, Friedrich Ebert championed the humanistic “spirit of Weimar” as a corrective to the militaristic “spirit of Potsdam”, which had dominated political life in Prussia and Imperial

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914*, Boston 1984.

<sup>6</sup> Jakob Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt: der Kult der “Nation im Waffen” in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1871-1914*, Göttingen 1997; Thomas Rohrkrämer, *Der Militarismus der ‘kleinen Leute’. Die Kriegervereine im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1871-1914*, Munich 1990; Breymayer, Ulrich and Wieland, *Willensmenschen*. On the construction of militaristic national myths, see the forthcoming dissertation of Andrea Meissner, Humboldt University, Berlin.

Germany. To right-wing soldiers and veterans of the First World War, the “community of the front [*Frontgemeinschaft*]” represented the incarnation of this “spirit of Potsdam”. To their minds, the war had produced the organic national community of which the German Romantics had written and the model upon which a harmonious postwar social order should be based. German national veterans’ organisations committed themselves to keeping the memory of the First World War at the center of German political culture.<sup>7</sup> Claiming that the war experience had forever changed their members, they cast themselves as the vanguard of a militaristic postwar political culture.<sup>8</sup> Much of the younger generation emulated them, participating in a paramilitary culture marked by uniforms, drills and parades.<sup>9</sup> As Ebert’s speech suggested, however, the German nation could lay claim to both militaristic and humanistic historical legacies.

Historians of German Jewish acculturation tend to focus exclusively upon the second of these German traditions as the cultural compass with which Jews navigated the waters of gentile society in the nineteenth century. The “ideology of emancipation”, as David Sorkin has dubbed it, placed the onus upon Jews to earn German citizenship by redressing the “moral degeneration” that allegedly plagued their communities. In addition to the liberal values of education and self-cultivation, this programme of Jewish modernisers included profession of loyalty to King and Fatherland, the adoption of religious reform, the German language and standards of decorum and civility, as well as the encouragement of Jewish participation in agriculture and handicrafts.<sup>10</sup> These goals all remained priorities of Jewish reformers until the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Members of Jewish duelling fraternities, as well as Jewish soldiers and veterans of the First World War, carried on this advocacy of Jewish self-improvement for the sake of internal renewal and external acceptance. Their programme for Jewish renewal, however, also incorporated the transmission of military masculinity to the German Jewish public.

Military masculinity set the standard for men of honour in Imperial Germany, and accordingly, Jewish men of honour fashioned a German

<sup>7</sup> James Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, Bloomington 1977.

<sup>8</sup> Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939*, Berkeley 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Bessel, ‘The “Front Generation” and the Politics of Weimar Germany’, in Mark Roseman (ed.), *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1968*, New York 1995, pp. 121-136.

<sup>10</sup> David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840*, New York 1987, pp. 79-99.

Jewish identity that conformed to this masculine ideal.<sup>11</sup> Eugen Strauss, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, described the Jewish community of the Wilhelmine era as “more assimilated than it realised”. At the same time, he drew a clear distinction between the politics of his Jewish home and the political culture into which the Jews of Imperial Germany had allegedly assimilated. He learned about democratic principles and the German classics at home, “but in the schools at that time, we were taught about the ‘arch enemy’, and 2nd September was always Sedan Day. The military fell out with flags, and we boys with our banners.”<sup>12</sup> This dissociation of an otherwise assimilated Jewish community from the militarism that dominated the German public sphere also characterises much of the historiography on German Jewry. Nevertheless, as a member of a Jewish fraternity, a veteran of World War One and an activist of the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, Strauss helped to create a Jewish identity stamped more by German militarism than he realised.

#### *The Jew as Rational Actor and Citizen-Soldier*

Until well into the nineteenth century, Jewish principles and Christian stereotypes cast Jewish men as a foil for romantic imagery of male bravery, valour and heroism. In traditional Jewish culture, rabbinic authorities rejected war-making and duelling, as well as romantic love, as *goyim naches*, or that which brings pleasure to the gentiles.<sup>13</sup> Barred from military service and dependent on Christian territorial rulers for protection from an often-hostile majority, Jewish men made a virtue of necessity by seeing power in submission.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the male ideal embodied in

<sup>11</sup> On German men of honour, see Ute Frevert, *Ehrenmänner: Das Duell in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Munich 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Eugen Strauss, ‘Erinnerungen und Geschichte’, Leo Baeck Institute New York (hereafter LBINY), ME 204, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> I am speaking here of a common Jewish culture based on a set of teachings, rituals and social practices that united Ashkenaz communities. For a social historical analysis of early modern Jewish communities, see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the end of the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn., Syracuse 2000. For approaches that emphasise the heterogeneity of Jewish life in early modern Europe, see Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, Oxford, 1985; M. J. Rosman, *The Lord's Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1990; Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, Princeton 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob Neusner, ‘The Virtues of the Inner Life in Formative Judaism’, *Tikkun*, vol. 1 (1986), p. 81.

the valiant knight of Christian Europe, rabbinical writings prescribed a masculinity based upon humility, piety and a preference for non-violent conflict resolution.<sup>15</sup> Jewish men were to devote themselves to Torah study, and Jewish girls were to desire gentle, studious husbands. Glückel of Hameln, a Jewish wife, mother and businesswoman writing at the turn of the eighteenth century, believed her husband to be the model companion. Meek, sickly, long-suffering, yet committed to Torah study and family above all else, “he was the perfect pattern of a pious Jew, as were his father and brothers”.<sup>16</sup>

More than one hundred years after Glückel’s death, *The Rabbi of Bacherach*, Heinrich Heine’s only work to take Jewish life as its theme, featured the same masculine ideal embodied by Glückel’s husband. The title character and his wife narrowly escape a wave of antisemitic violence that ultimately destroys their community in the Rhineland. Each of the characters in the unfinished novel, which is set some time before the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, reflects the gendered behaviour still current among German Jews of the nineteenth century. The rabbi saves himself and his wife by relying on his wisdom, insight and faith. The prospect of physically confronting the murderers in his midst does not occur to him. The only character who might have reacted aggressively in such a situation is a Spaniard who no longer associates himself with his Jewish background, but has instead chosen the chivalrous life of the knight. In the Europe of Heine’s day, this character would have found his counterpart in the baptised Jewish officer of the Prussian army.<sup>17</sup>

By placing the concept of *Bildung* at the center of the “ideology of emancipation”, Jewish reformers secularised the passive masculine ideal embodied by Glückel’s husband and the Rabbi of Bacherach. *Bildung* fostered the universalist humanism upon which the integration of Jews into German society depended.<sup>18</sup> This secularised Jewish masculinity conformed to the “soft”, domesticated masculinity of the urban German bourgeoisie, which placed priority on the role of the father within the family and attached no value to physical prowess, heroism or bravery.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Breitman, ‘Lifting up the Shadow of Antisemitism: Jewish Masculinity in a New Light’, in Harry Brod (ed.), *A Mensch among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity*, Freedom, CA 1989, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*, transl. by Marvin Lowenthal, New York 1977, p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Der Rabbi von Bacherach, ein Fragment*, Berlin 1937.

<sup>18</sup> Sorkin, *Transformation*.

<sup>19</sup> On genteel conceptions of bourgeois masculinity in the nineteenth century, see Anne Charlott-Trepp, *Sanfte Männlichkeit und selbstständige Weiblichkeit*, Göttingen



Furthermore, Jewish modernisers claimed that the religious reforms they were introducing would transform Judaism from an irrational, hence effeminate, faith into a rational, and thus masculine, confession.<sup>20</sup>

The Romantic Movement constituted a fundamental threat to this vision of German Jewish modernity. Visions of an ethnically defined *Volk* threatened the Jewish goal of earning citizenship through the demonstration of loyalty and the fulfilment of rationally delineated duties. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Jewish intellectuals noted with disquiet the diminished sway of enlightenment thought among the Prussian elite.<sup>21</sup> Heinrich Heine was as suspicious of Romanticism as he was ambivalent about his own Jewish identity, and the most prominent Jewish author of German romantic literature, Berthold Auerbach, distinguished himself from his non-Jewish peers by portraying the German *Volk* in a universalist light.<sup>22</sup> To the extent that romanticism did appeal to German Jews, it imperilled the gender order of the traditionally patriarchal Jewish community. A decades-long rise in divorce, interfaith love affairs, and out-of-wedlock births created much consternation about the future of the Jewish family. Sexual experimentation and the emotional appeal of Christianity, each a manifestation of the romantic mindset, exacerbated the sense of crisis.

Whereas the Romantic Movement captivated some Jewish women, their husbands, brothers and fathers rarely showed interest in or understanding for ideas and art that they deemed somehow threatening. Jewish men interested in integration into German society occupied themselves outside the home with business matters and the attainment of political and social acceptance among non-Jews. The salons run by Jewish women in Berlin, meanwhile, offered a socially diverse, interfaith forum for the discussion of literature, poetry and art. These salons operated outside of Jewish communal structures, but they nonetheless granted women the opportunity to play an active role in the public sphere, a contradiction of the trend in German Jewish life toward the confinement of the Jewish wife to the domestic sphere. Whether out of sincere religious conviction or for

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1996; and John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, New Haven 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Susannah Heschel, 'Sind Juden Männer? Können Frauen jüdisch sein? Die gesellschaftliche Definition des männlichen/weiblichen Körpers', in Sander Gilman, Robert Jütte and Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz (eds.), *"Der schejne Jid": Das Bild des "jüdischen Körpers" in Mythos und Ritual*, Vienna 1998, p. 91.

<sup>21</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830*, New York 1994, pp. 70-71, 102-103.

<sup>22</sup> Sorkin, *Transformation*, pp. 140-156.



the sake of romantic love, many of these women, such as Dorothea von Schlegel and Rahel von Varnhagen, converted to Christianity.<sup>23</sup> The ideologists of emancipation were thus fighting, as Steven Lowenstein puts it, “a two-front battle – against Jewish traditional religious practice and theory and against the ‘self-indulgent’ who had ‘misinterpreted’ the liberation of new thinking to mean personal license.”<sup>24</sup> They placed as much value on romantic love as they did on bravery and adventure.<sup>25</sup>

The image of the physically fit and manly German, meanwhile, first emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. Worried by a seeming lack of strength and vitality in the nobility and educated bourgeoisie, educators and medical specialists warned that “our distinguished men could soon turn completely into distinguished women”.<sup>26</sup> Their lamentations about the effeminacy of upper-class men combined a belief in the interdependence of mind and body with a conception of male beauty based upon classical Greek models. This new masculine ideal set such traits as strength, willpower, determination, bravery and a readiness to resort to violence against the putatively feminine characteristics of weakness, humility, dependency, compliance and emotionalism.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lowenstein, *Berlin*, pp. 104–134, 191. See also Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*, New Haven 1988, and Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik*, Munich 1981. On gender roles and the family in German Jewish history, see Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*, New York 1991. On the same theme at the European level, see Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*, Seattle and London 1995, and idem, ‘The Modern Jewish Family: Image and Reality’, in David Kraemer (ed.), *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*, New York 1989, pp. 179–196.

<sup>24</sup> Lowenstein, *Berlin*, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> On romantic love in German Jewish history, see Kaplan, *Making*, pp. 85–107. On adventurousness in Jewish history, see Martin Green, *The Adventurous Male: Chapters in the History of the White Male Mind*, University Park, PA 1993, pp. 101–114.

<sup>26</sup> Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths, *Gymnastik für die Jugend. Enthaltend eine praktische Anweisung zu Leibesübungen. Ein Beytrag zur nöthigsten Verbesserung der körperlichen Erziehung*, Schnepfenthal 1793, p.17, as cited in Ute Frevert, ‘Das Militär als Schule der Männlichkeit’, in idem (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1997, p. 150.

<sup>27</sup> George L. Mosse, *Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, New York 1996, pp. 29–34. See also idem, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, 2nd edn., Madison, 1988, and Thomas Kühne, ‘Männergeschichte als Geschlechtergeschichte’, in idem (ed.), *Männergeschichte - Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, Frankfurt - New York 1996), pp. 7–30.

In response to the military collapse of Prussia in 1806, a vocal, largely Protestant minority of early German nationalists insisted that this physically assertive, heroic masculinity be cultivated as a vital element in the revival of Teutonic grandeur.<sup>28</sup> Heroic masculinity incorporated the conviction that a healthy mind required a physically fit body into the language of romantic nationalism. After the defeat of Napoleon and the restoration of the *ancien régime*, independent associations devoted to the cultivation of physical vigor, strength and readiness to use violence among German men therefore attracted the suspicion of anti-revolutionary governments.

The nationalist writer Friedrich Ludwig Jahn nevertheless continued to preach the primacy of manliness in pursuit of the political unification of the German nation. Advocating the transformation of German boys into German men, he coined the German term *Turnen* as a nationally authentic substitute for the Greek word “gymnastic”. In his writings and in the programmes of the hundreds of gymnastics clubs that *Turnvater* Jahn and his followers established in the German states, physical exercise was celebrated as the guarantor of healthy and beautiful bodies, disciplined and moral individuals, and a loyal nation of patriotic Germans. This “masculinist” ideology held that material luxuries and apathy had resulted in a dearth of natural power and health in the population. The resulting symptoms of a feminised society, including physical weakness, sickness, cowardice, passivity, dependence on others and uncontrolled tempers, could only be countered by a masculine elite of the German nation. The *Turner* believed themselves to represent just this elite.<sup>29</sup>

Their reform-minded Jewish contemporaries preferred to turn their fellow Jews into German citizens, rather than manly men. Jewish men participated in the gymnastics movement on occasion, but Jewish public figures did not promote heroism and physical strength as values in and of themselves. Instead, they emphasised the rational connection between military service and citizenship. All participants in the debate over emancipation agreed that Jews could stake no claim to citizenship unless they

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<sup>28</sup> For an excellent discussion of the variety of religious and political issues at play in the early stages of the debate over how to define the German nation, see Wolfgang Altgeld, *Katholizismus, Protestantismus, Judentum. Über religiös begründete Gegensätze und nationalreligiöse Ideen in der Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus*, Mainz 1992.

<sup>29</sup> Frevert, ‘Militär als Schule’, p. 150; Daniel A. McMillan, ‘“die höchste und heiligste Pflicht . . .”: Das Männlichkeitsideal der deutschen Turnbewegung 1811-1871’, in Kühne (ed.), *Männerggeschichte - Geschlechtergeschichte*, pp. 88-90.

contributed as soldiers to the defence of the state. This consensus held that military service demonstrated loyalty to the state and fulfilled the duty of all who could justifiably claim its protection. Proponents of emancipation saw legal exclusions as the only obstacles to Jewish military service.

The question of whether Jews had the capacity to perform military service remained at the center of discussions of emancipation from their inception.<sup>30</sup> Detractors claimed that Jewish religious observance was incompatible with the daily life of a soldier. Neither the Sabbath nor kosher dietary requirements, they argued, could be observed in the army. The theologian Johann David Michaelis added to these religious objections to Jewish military service the “physical argument” that “very few Jews of the necessary height will be found who will be eligible for the army”. Both the commandment to observe the Sabbath and their small stature, Michaelis claimed, would prevent them from fulfilling the duties of a soldier.<sup>31</sup> The ideologists of emancipation simply ignored this criticism, as well as the opposition of conservative religious leaders, petitioning the Prussian King for the right to serve as early as 1787.<sup>32</sup>

In their belief that military service conferred upon soldiers the rights of the citizen, Jewish reformers stood virtually alone among the subjects of the Prussian monarchy. While no one questioned the connection between Jewish emancipation and military service, other estates in Prussia remained exempt from such an obligation. Townspeople and merchants did not have to become soldiers to enjoy the protection of the Prussian state. Peasants were also reluctant to send their sons to the army, “not only because they would thereby lose vitally important labor, but also because they feared the coarsening influence of the military”.<sup>33</sup> Bourgeois nationalists associated heroic and military masculinity with German national identity, but they did not yet tie masculinity to military service *per se*. Participants in the emancipation debate, by contrast, recognised the con-

<sup>30</sup> Horst Fischer, *Judentum, Staat und Heer in Preussen im frühen 19. Jahrhundert: Zur Geschichte der staatlichen Judenpolitik*, Tübingen 1968 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, 20), p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Johann David Michaelis, ‘Arguments against Dohm’, in Jehuda Reinharz and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, New York 1980, p. 38; Leon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, Volume Three: From Voltaire to Wagner, New York 1975, p. 177.

<sup>32</sup> Felix Theilhaber, ‘Militärdienst der Juden’, *Jüdisches Lexikon*, Berlin 1927, vol. 4, p. 182.

<sup>33</sup> Ute Frevert, ‘Das jakobinische Modell: Allgemeine Wehrpflicht und Nationsbildung in Preussen-Deutschland’, in idem (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft*, p. 22.

nection between military service and citizenship, but neither side showed the slightest interest in the manly German identity advocated by Jahn and others.

Within the narrow elite of Prussian civil servants, however, the “spirit of Potsdam” and romantic German nationalism comingled during the “Wars of Liberation” and their immediate aftermath. In order to defeat Napoleon, Prussian army reformers Gneisenau and Scharnhorst recognised that their soldiers must believe themselves to have a personal stake in the fate of their army. They therefore sought to change the relationship between the army and the general population through the adoption of general conscription. Beyond the reformers themselves, the idea of general conscription inspired little enthusiasm. Frederick William III did not fancy the notion of arming his subjects; the nobility felt that such a reform threatened their privileges and, as we have seen, the army did not enjoy the best reputation among those estates formerly exempted from military service. Nevertheless, at the urging of his advisers, the king instituted general conscription in 1813, promising his subjects the rights of citizenship in exchange for their contribution to the defence of the Fatherland.<sup>34</sup>

Mobilising a “German nation” for the first time, Prussian officials attempted to inspire their recruits by casting the “*Volk* family” in gendered terms. Working as a government propagandist in the Napoleonic era, Ernst Moritz Arndt wove together the themes of masculinity, militarism and patriotism. If German men were to be true patriots and true men, he insisted, citizens had to be soldiers, and soldiers citizens. Battle hymns and the German-language press during the Wars of Liberation echoed these gendered motifs and celebrated the idea of heroic death “at the altar of the Fatherland”, thereby democratising and nationalising the feats of the military hero. The manliness of the citizen soldier found its complement in the morality and femininity of the German woman.<sup>35</sup>

Prussia first allowed Jews to fight in its armies in 1812, as a consequence of the Edict of Emancipation. Grateful for the chance to prove themselves worthy of the citizenship that the King had granted them,

<sup>34</sup> Karen Hagemann, ‘“Heran, heran, zu Sieg oder Tod!” Entwürfe patriotisch-wehrhafter Männlichkeit in der Zeit der Befreiungskriege’, in Kühne (ed.), *Männergeschichte - Geschlechtergeschichte*, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Karen Hagemann, ‘A Valorous Volk Family: the Nation, the Military, and the Gender Order in Prussia in the Time of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars, 1806-1815’, in Ida Bloom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall (eds.), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, New York 2000, pp. 179-206.

hundreds of Jewish men responded to the royal call to arms. Pamphlet literature published by Jewish university students called on the “youth of the Jewish nation” to rally to the defence of the Fatherland.<sup>36</sup> Such exhortations spoke of the fulfilment of duty and the growing self-confidence and patriotism of Jews, as well as the desire to refute antisemitic stereotypes that Jews could not make good soldiers.<sup>37</sup> Given the largely rural, traditional make-up of the Jewish communities in the German states at the time, these voices cannot be viewed as representative. Nevertheless, within the first year of the war against Napoleon, Jews in every province of the monarchy had volunteered for service. In the province of Mecklenburg, 1.2 per cent of the Jewish community volunteered to fight the French, while only 0.4 per cent of the general population took to the field.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, some Jewish communities in Prussia expressed reservations about military service. Several of them elected to contribute money and goods to the war effort rather than send their sons away to fight.<sup>39</sup> The community of Zempelburg bemoaned “the greatness of the evil that has come upon us” and requested that Jews in Berlin intervene with the royal government to reverse the conscription orders. Jewish leaders in Krojanke, another small town in West Prussia, complained that military service contradicted the “true purpose of our existence”. The Hebrew script, in which both of these communities expressed their concern, reflected their hesitation to integrate themselves into German society. The secular leadership of the Berlin community responded in German to each of the communities and showed no sympathy for their concerns. Ideological, as well as linguistic, imperatives superseded whatever Jewish loyalties might otherwise have united these co-religionists.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Heinrich Steinman, *An die Jünglinge juedischer Nation in der Gefahr des Vaterlandes*, Breslau 1813.

<sup>37</sup> Erik Lindner, *Patriotismus deutscher Juden von der napoleonischen Ära bis zum Kaiserreich: Zwischen korporativem Loyalismus und individueller deutsch-jüdischer Identität*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Fischer, *Judentum, Staat und Heer*, p. 52.

<sup>39</sup> Lindner, *Patriotismus*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>40</sup> Lowenstein, *Berlin*, p. 227, n. 34.



*The Imperial Era*

In the German Empire, a period in which German Jewish acculturation reached new heights, the civil understanding of military service stood in stark contrast to the military values that underlay civil conceptions of manliness. Contradicting official sources that called into question the physical strength and character of Jews, Jewish soldiers contributed with distinction to the military campaigns that culminated in the political unification of Germany in January 1871. More than one thousand Jewish soldiers fought on the side of Prussia against Austria in 1866. The novelist Theodor Fontane lauded their accomplishments in his chronicle, *The German War of 1866*: "It was as if they had vowed to themselves to put an end to the old notion of their aversion to and incompetence at war."<sup>41</sup> Another six thousand Jewish soldiers fought in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the liberal principles enshrined in the constitution of the German Empire, institutional antisemitism made it virtually impossible for Jews to pursue a military career. The increasing importance of the reserve officer's role in the Prussian military also contributed to what Gerhard Ritter has dubbed the "militarisation of the German middle class". In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, military reforms compelled the regular officer corps to work more closely with reserve officers. Prussian officers responded to this potential threat to their status by screening the social background of candidates very carefully, consistently denying the applications of Jews, supposed leftists, peasants, artisans and workers. The pre-eminence of the Prussian military in German society, meanwhile, moved bourgeois Germans with aspirations to a higher social status to seek a reserve commission. The prestige accorded the officer's uniform extended well beyond the military itself.<sup>43</sup> Even as Bismarck's diplomacy reassured foreign observers that they had nothing to fear from the young German empire, middle-class Germans emulated the heroes whose aggressive military campaigns had created that empire.

German Jews greeted news of the military victories and the creation of the German Empire with the same patriotic fervour as their non-Jewish

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<sup>41</sup> Theodor Fontane, *Der deutsche Krieg von 1866*, Bd. 1, Der Feldzug in Böhmen und Mähren, Berlin 1870, p. 413, as cited in Ernst Schaeffer, 'Die Juden als Soldaten', *Nathanael* 13 (1897), p. 99. See also Lindner, *Patriotismus*, p. 311.

<sup>42</sup> Felix Theilhaber, 'Militärdienst', pp. 183-184.

<sup>43</sup> Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany*, Coral Gables, FL, 1969, p. 102.



compatriots. Alfred Philippson, whose father had foundeded the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* to propagate the ideology of emancipation, was only seven years old when he heard that the Prussians had marched triumphant into Paris. "Swinging sabres and singing 'Die Wacht am Rhein', my comrades and I wandered through the streets; we thought ourselves unbelievably important, as though we were the actual saviours of the Fatherland", he later reminisced.<sup>44</sup> As an eleven-year-old boy living in Berlin at the time, Martin Lövinson shared the optimism of German Jewry with regard to the guarantee of complete equality that was written into the imperial constitution. "The awareness of a fundamental deprivation of rights", Lövinson recalled, "seemed to have been lifted from us, which enhanced the meaning of and encouraged achievements in the service of the Fatherland."<sup>45</sup> Jews in Germany no longer had to earn emancipation, but it would fall to the generation of Lövinson and Philippson to protect it.

Discrimination notwithstanding, Jewish men were by no means immune to the attraction of military values. Walther Rathenau is the most oft-cited case in this regard. The son of a wealthy Jewish industrialist, he rejected the materialism of his father and aspired instead to the honour and status of an officer's commission in the Prussian army. He suffered a devastating blow to his sense of honour and belonging when the officers' corps would not forgive him his Jewishness. Rathenau's second cousin, Willy Ritter Liebermann von Wahlendorf, responded to his own frustrated military ambitions by spending most of his adult life in search of the next duel in which he might defend his own honour and that of German Jewry. Because both Rathenau and Liebermann belonged to the German Jewish economic elite, they considered themselves uniquely entitled to recognition as German men of honour.<sup>46</sup>

Jews of more modest backgrounds also admired and emulated Prussian military ideals. To less affluent Jews, discriminatory practices in the civil service and officers' corps were a fact of life that neither interfered with their personal ambitions nor diminished the esteem for the military that schoolteachers, public festivals and obligatory military service ingrained in them from an early age. Fritz Goldberg was born in Stettin in 1898 to the daughter of a merchant family and the son of a cantor. In his memoirs,

<sup>44</sup> Monika Richarz (ed.), *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland. Selbstzeugnisse zur Sozialgeschichte*, Stuttgart 1979, vol. 2, p. 464.

<sup>45</sup> Richarz (ed.), *Jüdisches Leben*, p. 256.

<sup>46</sup> See Breymayer, ' "Mein Kampf" ', pp. 89-91.

he traced his earliest childhood memory to Colmar, a town in Alsace, where his father directed the local theatre:

The entire life of the town, and this strikes me as emblematic of all of Germany at the time, was subordinated to one factor – the military. The high point of the season, the shining moment of the entire year was the Kaiser’s birthday. The giant military parade in the morning became the topic of conversation for weeks, and participation in the festive celebrations in the evening was a matter of course. This monarchical spirit, which was drilled into us in school, gripped every one of us.<sup>47</sup>

The heroic feats of the German military came more and more to capture the imagination of German Jews, yet stereotypes of Jewish physical inferiority persisted among Jews and non-Jews alike.

Zionists and antisemites were not the only ones to discuss the degeneration of the Jewish body in the ghettos of early modern Europe. Social scientists also deemed virtually every physical characteristic ascribed to Jews to be inferior and unhealthy. Not least because Jews were disproportionately active in science and scholarship, the “truth” of Jewish physical inferiority became common currency within the Jewish community itself.<sup>48</sup> Jewish men at universities and in cosmopolitan urban settings could not remain ignorant of this seeming consensus. Rathenau, for one, derided his co-religionists for their alleged deviation from a German masculine ideal that, to his mind, reflected spiritual as well as physical dignity. In 1897, he vented his frustrations in an article provocatively entitled “Hear, O Israel!” in reference to the Shemah, a prayer recited daily by observant Jews:

You must ensure that amid a race that is bred and educated to strict military discipline you do not make yourself a laughing-stock by your slovenly, shambling appearance. Once you have recognised your ill-constructed build, your high shoulders, your clumsy feet, the soft roundness of your forms, as signs of physical decay, you will have to spend a couple of generations working on your external rebirth.<sup>49</sup>

Although there were few heroic Jewish role models in the public life of Imperial Germany, some Jewish boys found such a model in their fathers. Oswald Freund remembered his father as a strong man with “muscles of

<sup>47</sup> Fritz Goldberg, ‘Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach dem 30. Januar 1933’, LBINY, ME 190, pp. 2–3.

<sup>48</sup> Klaus Hödl, *Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers: Antisemitismus, Geschlecht und Medizin im Fin de Siècle*, Vienna 1997.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Rathenau, published under the pseudonym W. Hartenau, ‘Höre Israel!’, *Die Zukunft* 18 (16 March 1897), p. 458.

steel”, who joined the military in the 1850s, a time when Jews were allegedly doing their utmost to avoid military service. To Freund, his father was a tough Jew and a good soldier whose discipline, bravery and willingness to stand up to those who would besmirch his Jewish honour earned him the respect of his comrades and protected him from the worst excesses of German antisemitism. Taking these lessons to heart, the younger Freund stood up to antisemites at his university, facing off with one foe in a duel – another story that he recounts with pride in his memoirs.<sup>50</sup>

Many Jews of Freund’s generation shared his desire to defend Jewish honour as only a German man of honour would. Beyond the small minority of Orthodox Jews and the shrinking communities in rural areas, German-Jewish children were growing up with little notion of what it meant to be Jewish. They went to synagogue on the high holidays and if they pursued a religious education it was merely in order to develop the skills necessary for their *Bar Mitzvah*. Nevertheless, their parents were sufficiently Jewish to refuse to convert, and they passed on this stubborn ethnic loyalty to their children. Friedrich Solon, a member of the first cohort of Jewish fraternity brothers, claimed in his memoirs to have learned “as good as nothing about religious things at home”. He remained sceptical of all religious dogma his entire life. If not for his decision to join the *Kartell-Convent der Verbindungen deutscher Studenten jüdischen Glaubens* (KC), he might have been lost to Judaism entirely: “The fact is, however, that from that point on I have always seen clearly where I come from and where I belong, and I’ve never had even a moment of vacillation about whether I should . . . deny my Judaism.”<sup>51</sup>

Whatever religious background fraternity members brought to the KC, they came together at the university to foster and share a sense of themselves as men of honour and as members of a community of fate. Appropriating an aristocratic cum bourgeois conception of manliness, they created a new form of Jewish masculinity. Declaring their *Satisfaktionsfähigkeit*, they breathed new life into the mission of German Jewish men. As defenders of Jewish honour, they demonstrated their German manliness. In doing so, they instilled meaning into what they sensed to be the purely materialistic world of their parents while remaining true to their ethnic heritage.

<sup>50</sup> Oswald Freund, ‘Die Geschichte des Schlossmeisters Freund und seiner acht Kinder’, LBINY ME 155, pp. 2–6 and 28.

<sup>51</sup> Friedrich Solon, ‘Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach dem 30. Januar 1933’, LBINY ME 607, pp. 59–61.

As Rathenau's infamous reproach of German Jewry indicates, the infusion of romantic notions of honour, antimaterialism and manliness into Jewish identity also brought with it a readiness to view Jewish life with a more critical German eye. To a certain extent, advocates of Jewish acculturation had echoed German critiques of Jewish life since the age of Moses Mendelssohn, for they all believed that the adoption of German culture would improve the lives of their co-religionists. The veterans of the Jewish fraternity movement merely took these critiques a step further than their forebears, urging their fellow Jews to adhere to the values of militarism and eschew materialism. In this respect, they revived the legacy of the Maccabees, the successful second-century BCE Jewish rebels against Hellenism, whose heroic example they never tired of conjuring.

Whether they considered themselves Zionist, religious or German-national Jews, they embraced the values of self-assertion, discipline, vigilance and the subordination of egotistical interests to the German-Jewish collective. An entire generation of communal leaders emerged from their university years as German Jewish men of honour: Benno Jacob, the Liberal rabbi and tireless activist in the fight against antisemitism; Ludwig Hollaender, the director of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* in the Weimar era; Alfred Klee, who later applied what he learned in the KC to the German Zionist movement; and Friedrich Solon, who was the chairman of the youth organisation of the National Liberals before joining the right-wing *Verband national-deutscher Juden* after the war, to name just a few of the German Jewish activists trained in the Jewish fraternities of the Imperial period.

Such self-assertion initially met with scepticism within the Jewish community. Many Jews agreed that they had not yet overcome the physical damage done by centuries of life in the ghetto, yet they generally felt that Jewish youth should enter German sports and gymnastic clubs to redress this infirmity.<sup>52</sup> Some feared that the impression of Jewish exclusivity that Jewish clubs might foster would provoke the resentment of their non-Jewish compatriots, a view one member of the KC dismissed as "misguided liberalism".<sup>53</sup> Other observers simply considered it un-Jewish to adopt German rituals of manliness. As a Jewish intellectual, pacifist and member of the Social Democratic Party, Philipp Loewenfeld ridiculed the antics of Jewish student fraternities in *fin-de-siècle* Munich.

<sup>52</sup> Eli Samgar, 'Jüdische Turnerschaft', *Die Welt* (December 1898), pp. 8–10, as cited in George Eisen, 'Zionism, Nationalism and the Emergence of the Jüdische Turnerschaft', *LBI Year Book XXVIII* (1983), p. 247.

<sup>53</sup> Max Oppenheimer, 'Wie die Badenia zustande kam', *LBINY AR 966 2/2*, p. 4.

“When I gained some insight into their spirit and activities,” he recounted in his memoirs, “I quickly convinced myself that they were an exact copy of the drinking and fighting . . . traditions of the ‘Christian’ fraternities, except all the more ridiculous for being Jewish.”<sup>54</sup>

### *The First World War*

The First World War transformed the struggle for a robust, manly Jewry from the agenda of a small group of university students into a daily necessity for tens of thousands of German Jewish soldiers. Between 1914 and 1918, more than one third of the male German Jewish population donned a military uniform, and some 2000 Jewish soldiers became officers. Ever conscious of stereotypes of Jewish cowardice and physical inferiority, many of these men believed the trenches to be the crucible in which a new German-Jewish man would be produced.

The consensus among historians of German Jewry holds that after an initial phase of patriotic zeal, German Jews were devastated by the “Jew count” (*Judenzählung*) of 1916, in which commanding officers on the front were ordered to determine the number of Jews serving in their units. According to this view, the “Jew count” turned many Jews into Zionists and disabused Liberal Jews of their naive faith in integration into German society.<sup>55</sup> As for life in the trenches, scholars have accepted George Mosse’s contention that Jewish soldiers stood outside the Christian “world of myth” that characterised the German war experience in general. Absorbing these myths into a Jewish understanding of the war would have meant abandoning the cosmopolitan liberalism that purportedly de-

<sup>54</sup> Richarz (ed.), *Jüdisches Leben*, p. 316.

<sup>55</sup> For a few of the most recent examples of this interpretation of the Jewish war experience, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, ‘The Kriegserlebnis and Jewish Consciousness’, in Benz et al. (eds.), *Jews in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 225–238; Christhard Hoffmann, ‘Between Integration and Rejection: the Jewish Community in Germany, 1914–1918’, in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 89–104; Michael Brenner, ‘The German army orders a census of Jewish soldiers, and Jews defend German Culture’, in Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (eds.), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996*, New Haven 1996, pp. 348–354. Setting himself apart from this consensus, Jürgen Matthäus argues that the “Jew count” was not a major turning point for the majority of Jewish soldiers, in his M.A. thesis, ‘Das Verhältnis zwischen dem CV und der ZVfD im Ersten Weltkrieg’, Bochum 1986, pp. 81–82.



fined a Jewish community committed to rational self-cultivation and other enlightenment ideals.<sup>56</sup>

This narrative distorts more than it elucidates. Jewish soldiers had long been aware that the struggle for Jewish equality inhered in their duty to fight for Germany. Their renewed interest in Judaism did not originate with the “Jew count”. Nor did their sense of solidarity with their non-Jewish comrades end with it. Rather, Jewish soldiers and chaplains evoked romantic imagery, as did their non-Jewish comrades, in their efforts to give meaning to the mass death, constant danger and primitive conditions of life in the trenches. In letters and diaries, they spoke of “heroic death”, the camaraderie that united soldiers in a “community of the trenches” and the sacrifice of the self to “the whole” (*das Ganze*). To be sure, the “Jew count” represented a significant turning point in the history of German antisemitism. With regard to German Jewish culture, however, the metaphysical significance that Jewish soldiers read into their combat experiences and their manly feats at war had more fateful consequences than did the “Jew count”.<sup>57</sup>

Wartime sources do not document the degree of Jewish and Christian camaraderie at the front. Among the small minority of soldiers who emerged from the war as convinced Zionists, antisemitism in the trenches and in the military chain of command made it impossible for Jews to feel a part of the German nation.<sup>58</sup> From the perspective of other Jewish soldiers, a common sense of mission and sacrifice, the unifying effect of mourning fallen comrades and a gap between the “community of the trenches” and the home front marked the war experiences of Jew and non-Jew alike. Eugen Neter, a pediatrician from Mannheim who served as a medic in the trenches, remembered the war in this vein. “True camaraderie united Jewish soldiers with [their] non-Jewish partners in fate (*Schicksalsgenossen*), not only during the first months of the war, but also later, when the high spirits that equalised all differences had begun to cool off”, he wrote.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> George Mosse, *Jews and the German War Experience*, New York 1977, p. 274.

<sup>57</sup> For more on the statistical dispute over the Jewish contribution to the war effort, see Gregory A. Caplan, ‘Wicked Sons, German Heroes: Jewish Soldiers, Veterans, and Memories of World War I in Germany’ (Georgetown University, 2001), pp. 104–108. On antisemitism in the German military during the war, see the forthcoming dissertation by Brian Crim of Rutgers University.

<sup>58</sup> Ernst Simon, ‘Unser Kriegserlebnis (1919)’, in idem, *Brücken: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Heidelberg 1965, pp. 17–23.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Der jüdische Frontsoldat (1936)’, in Eugen Neter Collection, LBI NY AR 1619, B 28/2, p. 11. In a memoir written in Breslau in 1941, the Zionist historian Willy Cohn

These contradictory memories of the war experience derive from the subjective nature of such judgments, as well as the inconsistent treatment of Jewish soldiers by their comrades and superior officers. In May 1917, Erich Schlesinger complained that he had not yet been promoted in spite of eighteen straight months of service on the front. "Antisemitism is stronger than ever", he lamented.<sup>60</sup> Three months later, Martin Meyer reported that he was in great spirits and that he had not suffered in the least from antisemitism.<sup>61</sup> Walter Moritz Lewinsohn, a member of the KC who had not served as a soldier, found similarly conflicting evidence when he tried in 1917 to assess the experiences of his KC brothers in the field. Surmising that the majority of Jewish soldiers did not suffer directly from antisemitism, Lewinsohn also acknowledged the many letters he had received that were filled with bitterness and disappointment.<sup>62</sup>

Whatever hostility Jewish soldiers faced in their immediate surroundings, antisemitism constituted just one hardship among many. Upon hearing of the "Jew count" at the front, Dr. Georg Meyer felt as if he had received an "awful slap on the face". In the same diary entry, however, he alluded to an important distinction between the reactions it had provoked in the trenches and on the home front. The government measure, he remarked, had not occasioned a crisis "in the army, but back home, where there is time to torment oneself with such grumbling".<sup>63</sup> The morale of the German army as a whole deteriorated steadily in the last years of the war. Historians have established that the spread of war fatigue, as manifest in complaints about abrasive officers, uncomfortable conditions and the unfair distribution of war decorations among German troops originated as early as the winter of 1915-1916. In response to this general sagging of spirits, chaplains, officers and front-line newspapers encouraged the

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waxed nostalgic about the time he learned "what true camaraderie means" in the trenches of World War One. See Willy Cohn, *Verwehte Spuren. Erinnerungen an das Breslauer Judentum vor seinem Untergang*, Cologne 1995, p. 244.

<sup>60</sup> *K.C.-Blätter: Monatsschrift der im Kartell-Convent vereinigten Korporationen, Kriegsausgaben* (1914-1918), pp. 875-876.

<sup>61</sup> *K.C.-Blätter, Kriegsausgaben* (1914-1918), p. 912.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Moritz Lewinsohn, 'Was lehrt die Tendenz des K.C.? Wie übt er sie? – Die Probe!', *K.C.-Blätter, Kriegsausgaben* (1914-1918), p. 812. For an analysis of non-Jewish German fraternities at war, see Ute Wiedenhoff, ' "dass wir auch diese grösste Mensur unseres Lebens in Ehren bestehen werden": Kontinuitäten korporierter Mentalität im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Gerhard Hirschfeld (ed.), *Kriegserfahrungen: Studien zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Essen 1997, pp. 189-207.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Angress, 'Das deutsche Militär und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg', *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 19 (1976), p. 99.

troops to persevere.<sup>64</sup> Soldiers of all confessions expressed the same disillusionment, fatigue and homesickness, as well as the will to endure these hardships for the sake of the Fatherland. "It is good that soldiers forget unpleasantness easily", observed the Jewish army chaplain Martin Salomonski. "If all of the adversity of these long and difficult war years regularly pricked at us anew . . . it would [drive us] to despair."<sup>65</sup>

German soldiers of all confessions also attached great value to the bonds they shared with their comrades. Fundamental to this camaraderie was a commitment to *dem Ganzen*. Whether orthodox Jews from rural Bavaria, members of the *Blau-Weiss* youth group from the Rhineland or the most assimilated German patriots from Berlin, Jewish soldiers acclaimed their commitment to the collective as they volunteered for combat duty by the thousands.<sup>66</sup> Just as young men from different social classes fought alongside one another, Jews and non-Jews came into closer social contact in the trenches than ever before. Jewish soldiers appreciated this chance to disabuse their non-Jewish comrades of naive or even antisemitic perceptions about their community.<sup>67</sup> They also realised how insulated their own lives had been before the war. "During my service as a rabbi in the field, I did not meet a single [soldier] who hesitated to acknowledge what a surprise had befallen him", Reinhold Lewin reflected in 1919. "For the first time it became clear to him how he had lived in a Ghetto until then."<sup>68</sup>

Fighting for a cause larger than themselves, Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers romanticised the prospect of "falling for the Fatherland".<sup>69</sup> Salomonski made no reference to confession when he observed,

<sup>64</sup> Anne Lipp, 'Friedenssehnsucht und Durchhaltebereitschaft: Wahrnehmungen und Erfahrungen deutscher Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 36 (1996), pp. 279–292; Bernd Ulrich, 'Die Desillusionierung des Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914', in Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes: eine Militärgeschichte von unten*, Munich 1992, pp. 110–126.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Salomonski, *Ein Jahr an der Somme*, Frankfurt an der Oder 1917.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, 'An die deutschen Juden!', *Im deutschen Reich* (September 1914), p. 339; M. Spanier (ed.), *Leutnant Sender: Blätter der Erinnerung für seine Freunde*, Hamburg 1915, pp. 8, 24, 36, 70; Eugen Tannenbaum (ed.), *Kriegsbriefe deutscher und österreichischer Juden*, Berlin 1915, pp. 1, 3, 100, 115, 122, 127; *Kriegsbriefe gefallener deutscher Juden*, Stuttgart 1961, pp. 48, 59, 74–75, 91.

<sup>67</sup> *Kriegsbriefe*, pp. 66, 101, 130; see also Tannenbaum, *Kriegsbriefe*, pp. 138, 143, 119; Spanier (ed.), *Leutnant Sender*, pp. 34, 52, 64.

<sup>68</sup> Reinhold Lewin, 'Der Krieg als jüdisches Erlebnis', *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 63 (1919), p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York 1990. This cultural-historical analysis of the relationships between masculinity,

Thinking soldiers often dispute that death is an evil. There are men enough in the German army to whom nothing is more attractive than the command of war to sacrifice their body for the protection of the Fatherland, who would rather die than wither away with infirm bodies or in an enslaved homeland.<sup>70</sup>

Before dying in battle, the German-Jewish poet Walter Heymann captured in verse the resolution and self-assurance with which he would greet death as a military hero:

Eine grosse Mutter ist unser Land.  
Heldentod hat eine sanfte Hand.  
Kind – werdet wie er,  
macht ihm nicht Schand.<sup>71</sup>

Soldiers with no literary pretensions also waxed poetic, alluding in letters and diaries to their readiness to die a heroic death in Germany's name.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to emphasising national solidarity and self-sacrifice, Jewish soldiers occasionally glorified the violence of war in their accounts from the battlefield. Lieutenant Gottfried Sender was intoxicated by the violence of war. He compared being caught in crossfire to a religious service. Claiming to have “defied death” in his subjection to “iron, absolute necessity”, he testified that he had never felt better than “when the bullets hiss by . . . and the cannons thunder”.<sup>73</sup> On the Eastern Front, meanwhile, a German Jewish soldier proclaimed triumphantly that “Cossacks fell like

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militarism, mass death and nationalism does not address the experience of Jewish soldiers at war.

<sup>70</sup> Salomonski, *Somme*, p. 33.

<sup>71</sup> “Our country is a great mother. / Heroic death has a soft hand. / Children, emulate it; / Do not bring shame upon it,” reprinted in Geiger, *Die deutschen Juden und der Krieg*, 75. See also Walter Heymann, *Kriegsgedichte und Feldpostbriefe*, Munich, 1915; and *Kriegsbriefe*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>72</sup> Spanier (ed.), *Leutnant Sender*, p. 27; Tannenbaum, *Kriegsbriefe*, p. 39; *Kriegsbriefe*, pp. 32–33, 87–90, 129.

<sup>73</sup> Spanier (ed.), *Leutnant Sender*, pp. 19, 22, 26, 27. On the home front, two Jewish publishing houses released collections of this fallen German hero's letters. In addition to Spanier's volume, *Die Heldentaten Gottfried Senders und wie er das Eiserne Kreuz I. und II. Klasse erwarb* appeared as Volume III of Adolf Plessner's series *Jüdische Feldpostbriefe aus dem grossen Weltkrieg*, Berlin, 1915.

flies from a horse” amidst the “murderous fire” unleashed by his regiment.<sup>74</sup>

Rarely, however, did German Jews revel in violence for its own sake. Rather, they viewed accomplishments – even death – on the battlefield as proof of their manliness, which, in turn, demonstrated their worth as Germans. Violence and loss of life were means to the end of unifying military masculinity, Jewish identity and German citizenship. Fritz Mayer, a soldier and a member of the KC, did not want “to cast this awful war as a stroke of luck, but [he was] gratified that, as a consequence of this world-historical necessity, the opportunity has arisen for [German Jews] to have a blood baptism to Germanness”.<sup>75</sup> Acts of bravery, perseverance in the field and the heroic deaths of their co-religionists were to reward Jewish soldiers with the irrevocable status of German men.

#### *German-Jewish Veterans and the Legacy of The First World War*

Not surprisingly, the memoirs of German Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany do not feature the same romantic imagery evoked in wartime sources. Their authors do, however, wax nostalgic in remembering their camaraderie with non-Jews and their sense of Jewish duty and honour. With disarming honesty, they also remember the degree to which German militarism and the spirit of war had affected them in their youth.

Jewish veterans emerged from the war more acculturated than any previous generation of German Jews. They had proven to themselves and their comrades that Jews could be German heroes. Jewish veterans had returned from their service at the front eager to participate in the reconstruction of a Germany devastated by military collapse after four years of war. They trusted that the “true Germany” would reject the antisemitic lies emanating from the *völkisch* extremes about Jewish shirking of military duty during the war.

Founded in 1919, the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* (RjF) set itself the task of educating the German public about the Jewish contribution to the war effort. The veterans of the RjF did not, however, target their efforts exclusively at the non-Jewish public. Contrasting themselves with long-standing images of the Jew as feminine and cowardly, they at-

<sup>74</sup> Adolf Plessner, *Wie es Josef Kraft in der “feindlichen” Synagoge erging*, Berlin 1915, pp. 13–14.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Aus unserer Feldpostbrief-Mappe’, *K.C.-Blätter, Kriegsausgaben* (1914–1918), p. 326.



tempted to spread the purported virtues born of the war experience across the entire German Jewish population. The bravery and heroism demanded of soldiers at war, the veterans believed, offered all German Jews – particularly the young – an example for the discipline, physical fitness, decisiveness and toughness necessary to live simultaneously as Germans and Jews. To share the fruits of their military masculinity with their co-religionists, members of the RjF participated in armed security patrols in front of Jewish assemblies, organised sports and gymnastics programmes for adults and youth, and encouraged Jewish farmers to cultivate German soil. The veterans' emphasis on the values fostered through military service, physical fitness and productive labour resonated with the German Jewish public. Shaken by German antisemitism, economic crises and political instability, German Jewish institutions gave their support to the RjF's programme to refashion German Jewry.

The RjF's national leadership denied the distinction that Eugen Strauss later made between the politics of the German Jewish home and the militarism of German political culture. In the last years of the Weimar Republic, the group set its membership apart from the rest of the Jewish community. Criticising "un-German" Jews and seeking privileges based on their status as veterans, they preferred German Jewish militarism to Jewish loyalty. Before Hitler came to power, the RjF pursued a politics of German Jewish militarism that bordered on fascism. In the Third Reich, the group sought and received exemptions from antisemitic legislation and denounced leftist and Zionist Jews, moving one historian to remark that the members of the RjF would have supported Hitler if not for Nazi antisemitism.<sup>76</sup> Declaring that their military service distinguished them from their fellow Jews, the RjF petitioned the Nazi state for exemptions from antisemitic legislation and requested Hitler's permission to oversee the *Gleichschaltung* of Jewish life in the Third Reich.<sup>77</sup>

In 1941, while in exile in Santiago, Chile, the former chairman of the RjF in Worms, Karl Guggenheim, felt compelled to contradict claims that German Jews did not resist their Nazi persecutors. In an essay entitled 'The Jewish Resistance', he recalled that during the Weimar era the veterans' organisation had dispatched speakers to defend Jewish honour at antisemitic rallies and organised patrols to keep the streets clean of antisemitic propaganda. He then recounted two anecdotes to contrast the

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<sup>76</sup> Paula Hyman, 'The History of European Jewry: Recent Trends in the Literature', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 54 (1982), p. 309.

<sup>77</sup> For an extended discussion of German Jewish fascism, see Caplan, *Wicked Sons, German Heroes*, pp. 251–305.

putative weakness and futility of traditional Jewish modes of manliness with the honour and dignity that he associated with Jewish military men.

In December 1938, Hermann Goering ordered that all Jewish veterans arrested in the aftermath of the *'Reichskristallnacht'* be released. Accordingly, all of the Jewish inmates in Buchenwald who had been issued a memorial cross by the Nazi state for their service in World War One were called to the middle of the camp, inspected for visible signs of brutality and commanded to march out of the camp. Guggenheim writes,

Suddenly a command issues from the middle of the crowd: 'March in formation!' – and a battle-ready Jewish company of veterans marches in impeccable parade cadence through the gates of the concentration camp – leaving behind them the shocked and dumbfounded faces of the camp guards and the barely concealed smirks of the camp inmates. Even the noble knight Goetz von Berlichingen could not have bid a more suitable farewell.<sup>78</sup>

For Guggenheim, there was only one manner in which Jewish men of honour might respond to adversity – in the manner of the battle-ready Jewish veteran. He therefore concluded his report on Jewish resistance with what he considered a contemptible example of Jewish cowardice. In November 1938, he tells us, thousands of Jewish men were rounded up in front of the administration building in the Buchenwald concentration camp. SS officers surrounded them, carrying revolvers and whips and screaming obscenities. Guggenheim writes, "And one sickly and slight little man on the right flank of the column cries to the heavens: 'Good God! Have you completely abandoned us?? !!'" Beside himself in anguish, the man recited the Shemah and then, according to Guggenheim, "paid for the cry of desperation with his life". Evoking Rathenau's critique of a supposedly unmanly German Jewry, Guggenheim signed off with a question that was simultaneously a reproach: "DO YOU HEAR ISRAEL??!!"<sup>79</sup>

Walther Rathenau believed himself to be more German than his fellow Jews, and Karl Guggenheim felt the same way. Regardless of what their antisemitic detractors thought, these two men, together with thousands of other German Jews of their generation, proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that military masculinity is no more a Christian trait than a Jewish one. This last stage in the acculturation process helped the veterans of the RjF and their followers cope with Nazi antisemitism and maintain faith in

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<sup>78</sup> Karl Guggenheim, 'Der jüdische Widerstand', LBINY AR 1441 A 11/5, pp. 2–3.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4. Emphasis in original.

their Fatherland in its darkest hour. Their story and the history of the RjF remind us that in Imperial and Weimar Germany, progressive liberalism defined Jewish “normality” no more so than “eliminationist antisemitism” defined the ordinary German.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York 1996.

LISA SWARTOUT

## Segregation or Integration?

### Honour and Manliness in Jewish Duelling Fraternities

I cannot know how my relationship to Judaism would have developed if I had not joined a Jewish fraternity. The fact is, however, that from this time I have always known where I come from and to whom I belong and never have been swayed even a moment to deny my Judaism as it always was. To be sure I was always of the unshakeable conviction through and through that I am a German man, not because I wish it or wanted it, but because it was a fact that seemed undeniable to me.<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Solon, member of the Sprevia KC, Berlin 1900.

It was at universities that German Jews of the Empire saw some of their greatest successes and greatest disappointments. Universities opened the doors to upper-middle-class respectability, as the institutions through which many rose into positions of wealth and responsibility as doctors, scientists and lawyers. Together with the expanding German economy, universities played a central role in the spectacular socio-economic improvement of German Jewry between 1870 and 1918. Admiration of academic excellence and judgement (at least in part) on the basis of merit created ideal conditions for rapid advancement of the hard-working and determined. The particular importance of *Bildung* and the centrality of culture in German identity meant that universities also became institutions through which Jews could affirm their own German national cre-

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Solon, 'Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach dem 30. Januar 1933', Leo Baeck Institute, New York, Memoir Collection (LBINY) ME 607, p. 60.

dentials. Together with their colleagues, Jewish students could see themselves as the “intellectual aristocracy” of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, Jews were confronted with strong antisemitism at German universities. In no other institution of the German Imperial period does one find such organised, radical and openly racist antisemites. One of the first acts of the student antisemitic movement that began in earnest in 1880 was a petition that called for the exclusion of Jews from positions in the civil service and professions in addition to limits on immigration. Around 20-25 percent of all students signed the petition. In Berlin, the Association of German Students (*Verein Deutscher Studenten*) emerged, an organisation which aimed to realise the goals of the petition and spread antisemitism within the student body.<sup>3</sup> Antisemitism, furthermore, had also penetrated into the wider student culture. By 1900 some fraternities excluded Jews and as many as forty percent of German students joined Christian-only student organisations.<sup>4</sup> These groups, together with the numerous officially Catholic or Protestant organisations, closed Jewish students off from much of student life.

How did Jewish students respond to this climate of opportunity and exclusion? To what extent were Jewish students able to achieve a position of status and respect within student society, a position approximating “normality”? Some ignored organised student life, focusing on their academic work or developing close friendships outside of fraternity ties. Others joined some of the few groups which accepted both Christians and Jews. And, finally, some students chose to embrace fraternity culture at

<sup>2</sup> Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*, Oxford 1991. Werner E. Mosse, *Juden im Wilhelminischen Deutschland, 1890-1914*, Tübingen 1976 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, 33). Monika Richarz, *Der Eintritt der Juden in die akademischen Berufe: Jüdische Studenten und Akademiker in Deutschland, 1778-1848*, Tübingen (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, 28) 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Hedwig Roos-Schumacher, ‘Der Kyffhäusserverband der Vereine Deutscher Studenten, 1880-1914’, Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1986; Norbert Kampe, *Studenten und “Judenfrage” im Deutschen Kaiserreich: Die Entstehung einer akademischen Trägerschicht*, Göttingen 1988.

<sup>4</sup> This figure is likely to be higher. According to Konrad Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Imperial Politics: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism*, Princeton 1982, in the last decade before the First World War approximately fifty percent of students joined student organisations with national federations, seventy-five percent of which were either officially Catholic or Protestant or excluded Jewish students. These numbers do not include local and informal clubs that often also excluded Jews. See *ibid.*, table 5-4, pp. 306-307.



the same time as emphasising their own Jewish background. It is this last group – the German-Jewish fraternities – that I examine here.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to providing a forum in which students could practice duelling and defend their honour, these fraternities also offered instruction in sports and the more subtle arts of carriage, speech and behaviour. One rabbinical student among the founders recalled: “[W]hat is the idea of the Jewish fraternity? The education of the German-Jewish student to be a man and that he assert and protect himself throughout his life as a man, as a Jew and as a German.”<sup>6</sup> Duelling fraternities, so their members believed, created men. George Mosse, a pioneer in the history of German Jewry, has argued that the division of students into Christian and Jewish fraternities represented “segregation”, that “it signified the ‘clean separation’ between Jews and Germans which had long been a *völkisch* ideal. It was by no means an acceptance of a German Jewish symbiosis.”<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the Jewish members of these duelling fraternities were confident of their own place within student society, itself a form of integration. The tensions between these poles of segregation and integration make up the focus of this article.

Jewish fraternities provide us with some of the clearest examples of the public union of German national and Jewish identities. While groups of Jewish students had formed organisations in the past, this was the first time that they defined their organisation specifically as Jewish, accepting only Jewish members. Despite the small size of these groups, with a membership of probably no more than several thousand throughout Germany, they played an important role in student life, serving as notable defenders against antisemitism who were especially visible in moments of intense conflict. Leaders such as Benno Jacob, Leo Löwenstein, and Ludwig Holländer went on to play important roles in Jewish defence organisations both during the *Kaiserreich* and in the Weimar Republic. An examination of these organisations, and of the experiences of their members, also allows the historian to access the elusive question of the depth and breadth of antisemitism within student culture.

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<sup>5</sup> The best work to date on Jewish student life is Keith H. Pickus, *Constructing Modern Identities: Jewish University Students in Germany, 1815-1914*, Detroit, 1999. See also Adolph Asch and Johanna Philippson, ‘Self-Defence in the Second Half of the 19th Century: The Emergence of the K.C.’, in *LBI Year Book III* (1958), pp. 122–139.

<sup>6</sup> Benno Jakob, ‘Aus der Rede zur Fahnenweihe der Rheno-Bavaria’, *K.C.-Blätter Festschrift*, New York 1946, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> George W. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York 1981, p. 198.

These fraternities, which according to their statutes accepted only Jewish students, nevertheless adopted an organisational structure closely associated with German nationalism. Fraternities celebrated both their historic role as pioneers in the unification of the German nation in the early nineteenth century and the myth of the decisive role of students in the Napoleonic Wars. The romance of student life connected directly to the mysteries of the fraternities, which in bringing together men from different walks of life and different parts of Germany sworn to life-long brotherhood symbolically embodied the German nation. Fraternity speech and fraternity codes filled entire dictionaries and cemented the bonds of intimacy between members, making it a complex world unto itself. At university celebrations or in the fraternity “stroll”, students wore an elaborate costume with thigh-high boots, flowing tunic and colourful sash and cap, setting them apart as a distinct group. Most important for the story of Jewish fraternities, these organisations dominated student life. On the Sunday stroll, when fraternities walked in groups in full costume, in the university celebrations with fraternities front and centre, and in student nightlife, drinking copiously and singing boisterously, fraternities symbolically acted out their privileged and honoured place at the university.<sup>8</sup>

As organisations closely associated with nationalism and honour, fraternities created social status. Membership with twenty students in a union of lifelong friendship was in itself seen as a form of assurance of good character. Students believed that values such as character, discipline and honour were intimately entwined with the activities of their organisation and, in particular, with the duel. Many Germans of the nineteenth century held that through the duel the student could publicly prove his honour, courage and ability to defend himself. Proving their German and Jewish allegiance was the goal of Jewish duelling fraternities. I will now turn to a discussion of these organisations, in particular the first Jewish fraternity, the Viadrina in Breslau.

### *Jewish Duelling Fraternities*

On the 23rd of October 1886, twelve students decided to band together in a fraternity, the Viadrina, in order to defend their honour. The creation of

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<sup>8</sup> Manfred Studier, *Der Corpsstudent als idealbild der Wilhelminischen Ära: Untersuchungen zum Zeitgeist 1888-1914*, Schernfeld 1990.

Jewish fraternities caused considerable controversy among Jewish townsmen in Breslau. Some believed that the appearance of Jewish students in traditional fraternity garb, proclaiming themselves German patriots, would only create more antisemitism.<sup>9</sup> The original members fought vigorously over the question of whether they should organise as a social club or fraternity. Should they “carry colours” – wear a three-colour sash and cap – signalling their membership in a fraternity and ability to give satisfaction in a duel? Ultimately, they decided to choose the fraternity form, thus emphatically proclaiming both their German nationalism and Jewish identity. In the next ten years Jewish duelling fraternities spread throughout Germany. In 1896 they formed a league, the Kartell-Convent (KC), with fraternities at six universities (Breslau, Bonn, Darmstadt, Heidelberg, Munich, Berlin) and by 1914 the KC could count seventeen affiliated chapters. Based in the United States, the KC’s meetings continue today, with the organisation now catering to the widows, children and grandchildren of members.

The symbols of Jewish duelling fraternities represented both their Jewish identity and their German nationalism. The shield of the Viadrina, for example, showed a female figure, Germania; the three rings of Lessing's Nathan the Wise, a symbol of religious tolerance; crossed swords for the “duelling spirit of the new fraternity”; and clasped hands, symbolising the fellowship of the group. Further highlighting a secular German-Jewish identity, the shield displayed no specifically religious symbol.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the shield’s motto demonstrated aggressive intent: “Nemo me impune lacessit” (no one injures me with impunity). Finally, the choice of black-yellow-red – the colours of German nationalism and the Frankfurt Parliament – was notable, as other fraternities had refrained from choosing them because of their symbolic importance. The name of the new Jewish fraternity was derived from the university’s Latin name. One Jewish critic of the Viadrina wrote that its members had chosen a name and colours to irritate the other fraternities, an observation which seems consistent with

<sup>9</sup> Sylvius Pick, ‘Vor 60 Jahren - Ein Rückblick auf die Viadrina-Breslau’, *K.C.-Blätter: Festschrift*, p. 3. Although they did receive some support: see *Viadrina suspensa! Vivat Thuringia! 40 Jahre im Kampf für Recht und Ehre*, Breslau 1926, p. 24. Nathan Stein also remembered that his father opposed his membership in a fraternity, although he does not mention if his father was equally opposed to Jewish fraternities. See his ‘Lebenserinnerungen’, LBINY, ME 618, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> Adolf Asch, *Geschichte des K.C. (Kartellverband jüdischer Studenten) im Lichte der deutschen kulturellen und politischen Entwicklung*, London 1964, p. 42.

their public pronouncements.<sup>11</sup> Their manifesto made clear their anger concerning the situation of Jewish students in the 1880s: “This organisation through its very existence will bring back to life the almost disappearing consciousness that we are Jews, which is for us no grounds for shame.”<sup>12</sup>

While nurturing the German national and Jewish identity of fraternity members constituted an important part of the activity of Jewish duelling fraternities, the building of a strongly masculine – even aggressive – frame of mind also played a significant role. After achieving equal rights and protection from the state through full Jewish emancipation, it was the everyday indignities which symbolised Jewish second-class status. Rather than the (rare) act of violence, it was the more common insult or verbal abuse which caused the most concern for German Jews. Addressing these indignities, members of Jewish fraternities believed, was essential in moving towards ‘normality’. The following recollection of Fritz Goldschmidt, whose father belonged to a Jewish fraternity, shows how one member reacted to such insults:

From my early childhood, I can vividly recall the following episode: my father was taking a walk with my brother and me in the hills of south Breslau, where we met a crowd of 15 half-grown boys. Their leader called out an antisemitic remark and before I could even turn around my father was in the middle of the crowd, caught the trouble-maker and boxed both his ears. The boy was so surprised and shocked that only after we had calmly walked a good distance did he yell something about ‘dirty attack’ after us.<sup>13</sup>

Goldschmidt allowed no injury to his status as a German citizen, even by a gang of children. With this anecdote, the son invites the readers to see themselves as men always ready to defend their rights. That this anecdote is relayed through the eyes of the young son gives it added emotional weight. The intervention of the father symbolises here the defence of the family and of the larger Jewish community.

This improvement in status depended on displaying certain values: courage, determination and honour, all of which related closely to masculinity and physical strength. In accordance with their rhetoric, members of

<sup>11</sup> Paul Posener, ‘The Young Maccabees’, n.d., unpublished memoir in LBINY, ME 83, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Manifest der Viadrina, in Schindler, *Jüdische Studentenverbindungen*, 1988, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> Fritz Goldschmidt, ‘Erinnerungen an alte Viadrinen’, *K.C.-Blätter: Festschrift*, p. 14. Similar incident: Rahel Straus, *Wir lebten in Deutschland. Erinnerungen einer deutschen Jüdin 1880-1933*, Stuttgart 1961, p. 77.

Jewish fraternities focused intensively on sport. Sylvius Pick, a member of the Viadrina from 1889-1891, explained that they had

Duelling practice daily from 2-3, Monday evening general meeting, Tuesdays and Fridays callisthenics... Saturday afternoon swimming in the Oder, Saturday evening party, before which pledge meeting, Sundays brunch. Wednesday evening was completely free. Sunday afternoon was taken advantage of for small excursions to coffee gardens or for visiting each other.<sup>14</sup>

Daily fencing practice was not untypical for German fraternity members.<sup>15</sup> In fact, for fraternity students the duel served as their most important group event.

It was the duel which enforced the student honour code and allowed German students to act in a drama, playing a role of bravery, independence and courage. Historically, the duel had developed as a means for German aristocrats and military officers to defend their honour against slights. By end of the nineteenth century, students had created their own form of the duel as a sport, the so-called "Regulation Duels" (*Bestimmungsmensuren*), which were duels without a specific cause or challenge, usually involving members of two different (but friendly) fraternities. Students even had "duelling parties", in which two fraternities would meet and fight several duels. Consistent with the hierarchical nature of student life, the establishment of relationships in duelling parties was an important sign of status in student life. Although "Regulation Duels" were technically illegal, many within the academic community believed that they were little different from other forms of sport.<sup>16</sup>

Students continued, however, to also fight duels of honour in which, after an injury or slight, a student's honour could be reestablished through the duel. Before a duel could occur, however, it first needed to be established if both students were worthy of participation. The distinction between those able and unable to "give satisfaction" divided students into two groups, those who after an injury could re-establish their honour and those who could not. Whole fraternities could also be declared unable to give satisfaction, as was often the case in the founding years of Jewish fraternities (between 1886 and about 1900). As proof of their ability to

<sup>14</sup> 'Vor 60 Jahren - Ein Rückblick auf die Viadrina-Breslau', *K.C.-Blätter: Festschrift*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> 'Fechtboden-Ordnung der Verbindung im K.C. Thuringia', (former Viadrina) n.p. 1906, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Kurt Graeser, *Für den Zweikampf: Eine Studie*, Berlin 1902.



give satisfaction, students proudly displayed a facial scar earned through duelling, testament to their honour, manliness and courage. In the often bloody and violent Regulation Duels, the student saw himself as a soldier, warrior and hero. A lavishly illustrated contemporary publication, *O alte Burschenherrlichkeit!*, emphasised that the “pledge” must learn “to hit hard, above all to see accurately and quickly, and as quick as a flash to exploit the weaknesses of his opponent and strike him forcefully where he is unprotected”.<sup>17</sup> In a period in which the Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest was increasingly considered applicable to the study of society, this description of the duel also served as a description of the qualities required to survive in a harsh environment – to see the weaknesses of opponents quick as a flash and to hit those weaknesses hard.

For fraternity students, the duel served as their most important group event. Fraternities held daily practice and the rite of the first duel was of central importance to the pledge. In books celebrating fraternity life the duel itself, the drinking and camaraderie before and after, and even the duel-doctor – usually a medical student who cleaned up facial wounds – claim a place of primary importance. The euphoric mix of combat, alcohol, group solidarity and blood made it a central event for fraternity members.<sup>18</sup> The duel, along with the courage, honour and independence it symbolised, was explicitly connected with masculinity.<sup>19</sup> One Berlin Professor wrote:

[In honour] courage is the first element...It is the man, the man-to-be, that challenges and is challenged to stand up for himself and for all that he values. A man without courage, a man who is not ready to fight in the field for something that matters to him does not deserve the name of man.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Paul Grabein, *O alte Burschenherrlichkeit! Bilder aus dem deutschen Studentenleben*, Stuttgart 1900, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Hirsch, a student at Tübingen in the 1870s, remembered the frequent student duels as an exciting event for the whole town. See his ‘Erinnerungen’, LBINY, ME 312. In addition to this form of duelling as sport, which primarily took place among students, German society glorified the pistol duels, deadly contests which were confined primarily to the officer corps and aristocracy. See Ute Frevert, *Ehrenmänner: Das Duell in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Munich 1991; Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-Siècle Germany*, Princeton 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, for example, wrote that his friend Louis Erhardt possessed “a manly courage based on his own conscience and thought, [a man] who would not acknowledge any outward authority in life and scholarship but would recognise with reverence and generosity everything real that comes from within.” Friedrich Meinecke, *Erlebtes 1862-1901*, Leipzig 1941, p. 205.

<sup>20</sup>Friedrich Paulsen, *German Universities and University Study*, Princeton 1906. See also *Deutsches Studententum und deutsche Freistudentenschaft*, Graz 1912, p. 1.



The phallic weaponry of this masculine ritual would seem to imply that it was an exclusively male prerogative. The importance of the duel within student culture – an importance enhanced by its links with honour and German nationalism – created added barriers to women's study. The idea of women duelling in their long skirts, or of women with duelling scars, was so improbable that it became the subject of student humour.<sup>21</sup>

Since much of fraternity life focused on these duels, they provided a forum for Jewish students to respond to antisemitic insults and to prove their courage, masculinity and strength. The particular manifestations of German nationalism at universities and the symbolic importance of the duel may also have aided in Jewish students' identification as members of the German nation. The mixture of elitism and openness represented in the duel created opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to declare themselves part of the national elite. For if they were challenged and duelled, who then could deny their honour? Once allowed to participate in the duel, the student could directly and strongly respond to an insult, antisemitic or otherwise. Assuming that friction between groups will always exist, the duel, especially with the re-establishment of honour as a result of *participation* rather than victory or defeat, served as an efficient mechanism of regulating conflict.

This mechanism, though, was imperfect. Fraternities could and did decide that some students were unworthy of satisfaction (*nicht satisfaktionsfähig*), something which happened rather more frequently to Jewish than to other fraternities, especially in the first years after their founding.<sup>22</sup> The declaration that some individual or group was unworthy of satisfaction meant that no duel could take place. In the early years of the Viadrina, Breslau's Jewish fraternity, members boxed opposing fraternity students on the ears if they refused to duel. As students in general saw physical fighting as beneath them, this could goad opposing fraternity students into action. Not all Jewish students, though, would necessarily have had the confidence to use such force to win their right to participate in a duel.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Patricia Mazon, 'Academic Citizenship and the Admission of Women to German Universities, 1865-1914', Ph.D. diss, Stanford University, 1995.

<sup>22</sup> And this was so even later. Julius Frank, active in 1908/09, reported that his fraternity, the Salia at Würzburg was considered *satisfaktionsfähig*, while two other Jewish fraternities were not. Julius Frank, 'Rückblick auf meine Fuchszeit 1908/09', in *Salia Centennial 1884-1984*, Collection of the Institut für Hochschulkunde, 1984 n.p.

<sup>23</sup> In his account, Keith Pickus puts greater emphasis than here on the difficulties Jewish student organisations faced in creating relationships for duels with other fraternities. See Pickus, especially chap. 4.

Ideally, the duel re-established the honour of both participants, even erasing the incident from memory. In the case of antisemitic insults, however, this was not always possible. For some Jewish students, the duel could not heal the wounds created from the initial remark. Leopold Kessler, a student at the mining academy in Freiberg, decided to resign his membership in a fraternity following a duel between two fellow members over an antisemitic slur: “[I]ndifferent or even opposed to all religious dogma, like a great many other students of that time, I felt myself entirely German, but the Polini incident [an antisemitic insult and resulting duel] called forth some doubts regarding the correctness of my *a priori* assumed status.”<sup>24</sup>

Jewish fraternities played an important role in creating conditions which made Jewish students’ participation in duels possible. They allowed students access to fencing teachers, swords and practice space, in addition to emotional support as the student mastered the duel. While some fraternities might refuse to duel with Jewish fraternities or Jewish students, this outside hostility did not necessarily injure these students’ belief in themselves and their own courage, honour and independence. At the same time, Jewish fraternities’ special talent in duelling bestowed upon them new status and respect within student society at some universities. Members of the Sprevia, a Jewish fraternity in Berlin, were “admired, even feared” by fellow students at Berlin because of their duelling prowess.<sup>25</sup>

Student sociability in bars also played an important role in fraternity life. In 1911 one Jewish alumnus described his fraternity’s weekly *Stammtisch* (reserved table in a local bar) that took place together with other fraternities in the city hall:

Our splendid Gothic city hall, whose founding stone was laid in 1382, holds in its cellar the most splendid pub, the old *Schweidnitzer Keller*. Authentic cosy Silesian *Volk* life develops here: burgher and farmer, merchant and scholar fortify one another in a familiar circle united by the burden of their work. In the old prince’s hall ... you can find the reserved tables of the *Burschenschaften*, the Singing clubs and the [Jewish fraternity] Thuringia. Pitchers are happily passed and merry student songs ring out. Franz

<sup>24</sup> Leopold Kessler, ‘An Unfinished Autobiographical Memoir’, LBINY, ME 1265, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Solon, pp. 8–9. Solon furthermore argues that this experience in the Sprevia prepared him for trench warfare in WWI. See p. 8. “[S]poiled since childhood and not particularly sturdy ... I am grateful for everything I have learned and absorbed from it. Without it I would have never mastered the great test of the years 1914-1918.”

IV, the waiter, knows the [drinking] habits of each and his birthday is a holiday for the fraternities.<sup>26</sup>

Together with the other students, this Jewish fraternity was an integral part of the “authentic cosy Silesian *Volk* life”. Their peculiarities did not stand out among the burghers and farmers, merchants and scholars. Here we see that this Jewish fraternity possessed its own legitimate place alongside the other fraternities – they had their reserved table, they sang their songs and they celebrated the birthday of the waiter along with the others.

These social occasions also had their serious side, for fraternity members saw them, along with sports and duelling, as important for building character. These fraternities socialised the young student to academic norms. He learned not only how to handle a sword, but how to speak, drink beer and dress. In 1911 one member of a Jewish fraternity described the effect of these organisations:

The young student received social polish; he learned to master manners, and learned to pay attention to the way he held himself ... The German Jew appears exactly as any of his fellow citizens from other faiths.<sup>27</sup>

For this author at least, the essential importance of the fraternities was that through their work the German Jew had achieved this position within student society. In other words, he had achieved a degree of “normality”, and was “exactly as his fellow citizens from other faiths”.

What, then, was the specifically *Jewish* content of these organisations? With few exceptions the founders did not have strong ties to their faith.<sup>28</sup> One member recalled that his fellow fraternity brothers did not attend synagogue and knew little about their religion.<sup>29</sup> Thus their links to Judaism – the founding identity of the group – rested primarily on their Jewish heritage and culture. The KC’s newspaper placed particular stress on demonstrating the Jewish role in German history, thereby cementing their German and Jewish identities. It also pointed out the importance of Jewish friends and patrons of German luminaries like Richard Wagner and Immanuel Kant. In articles such as “German Intellectual Life and the Jews”, “Ferdinand Lassalle as a Jew, Intellectual, and Advocate”, and

<sup>26</sup> *K.C.-Blätter* 1/II (1911), p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> *K.C.-Blätter* 1/II (1911), p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Goldschmidt, ‘Erinnerungen an alte Viadrinen’, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Posener, ‘The Young Maccabees’, p. 43.

“Bismarck as a Model for Jews in the Struggle for Emancipation”, the Jewish role in German history was emphasised, a history which some contemporaries saw as the history of Christian Germans.<sup>30</sup>

If the socialisation processes of Jewish fraternities resembled those of other organisations in teaching the pledge how to dress or carry himself, these activities were, nevertheless, carried out in the context of Jewish social and communal life. Fraternities captured the young upwardly mobile student and embedded him within the Jewish community, providing numerous opportunities for social interaction and professional development. In Julius Kleeberg’s fraternity, the KC Bavaria in Heidelberg, Saturday evening was the *Hauptkneipe*, with beer paid for by the alumni. These evenings were also likely to provide opportunities for the student to discuss his future prospects with the often well-connected alumni. Julius Frank reported that he was first drawn to the Salia at Würzburg when three elegantly dressed members, with cape and sash, appeared at his high school graduation ceremony and recruited him.<sup>31</sup> Members also found wives through their fraternity contacts. The import of Jewish fraternities to the larger communities appeared in the 1914 celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the federation of Jewish fraternities in Frankfurt. Jewish communal leaders appeared, as did rabbis representing the diversity of Jewish religious life and many economic leaders and politicians, such as the *Reichstag* representative Dr. Ludwig Haas.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps, then, these fraternities can be considered as analogous to the numerous organisations of the Catholic Church or the Social Democratic party – the singing, charity or athletic groups which maintained little direct relationship with the mother institution but nevertheless helped promote a sense of identity.<sup>33</sup> In this case Jewish fraternities, even if they had little connection to Judaism as such, helped to develop Jewish consciousness, in particular a

<sup>30</sup> Julius Goldstein, ‘Das deutsche Geistesleben und die Juden’, *K.C.-Blätter* 9/II (1912) pp. 169–175; Heinz Frank, ‘Ferdinand Lassalle als Jude, Denker und Kaempfer’, 9/II (1912) pp. 177–179; Moritz de Jonge, ‘Bismarck als Vorbild der Juden im Emanzipationskampfe’, 10/II (1912) pp. 190–195.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Salia Centennial 1884–1984’, Collection of the Institut für Hochschulkunde, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Rabbiner Dr. A. Lazarus, Frankfurt, ‘K.C. Feier in Frankfurt a. M. am 1. März 1914’, in *Im Deutschen Reich: Zeitschrift des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, (April 1914) II/4.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth Century Germany*, Princeton 1981; Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany*, New York 1985.

deeper understanding of Jewish history and heritage, and feelings of loyalty to the Jewish community.

### *Jewish Fraternities and the Jewish Community*

The first Jewish fraternity, the Viadrina in Breslau, did not receive a warm welcome from Breslau's Jewish community.<sup>34</sup> Benno Jacob, possibly the first rabbinical student who fought a duel, kept his membership in the organisation secret from his teachers at the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary. He feared that a duelling scar, because of its association with fraternity life, might injure his career.<sup>35</sup> The Viadrina also experienced problems with the university's rector and senate, which regularly dissolved it after conflicts with other student organisations. The students persisted, however, and refounded their organisation under a new name. They were frequently declared to be troublemakers who disturbed the peace at the university – and perhaps this was true.

The well-known "battle" in the zoological garden, in which a numerically far superior number of the Markomania fraternity ambushed the Viadrina in the dark alleys of the garden, but despite their superior numbers soon realised that Jewish students too knew how to fight, was only one episode in the "war history" of the Viadrina.<sup>36</sup> The Viadrina initially needed to take part in these "street battles" because soon after its founding, other fraternities declared that they would not duel with its members. In their first fifteen years, Jewish fraternities experienced many similar disappointments.

In the next fifteen years, however, the situation for Jewish fraternities improved significantly and in the decade prior to the First World War they experienced their greatest success. By 1905 seventeen Jewish fraternities existed at universities, with three each at Munich, Breslau and Berlin. They had thus established a strong foundation, and many members believed that antisemitism had receded. One wrote: "In academic circles it has become a matter of course that the Jewish student with a weapon in his hand reacts to challenges [to a duel] exactly as any other."<sup>37</sup> In 1905 the Catholic newspaper *Kölnische Volkszeitung* commented "As most of

<sup>34</sup> 'Vor 60 Jahren - Ein Rückblick auf die Viadrina-Breslau', *K.C.-Blätter: Festschrift*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Goldschmidt, 'Erinnerungen an alte Viadrinen', p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Fraenkel, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> 'Semester-Bericht Winter 1905/06' in Fraenkel, p. 42.



these fraternities were founded very quickly and some of them have more than thirty members, it is clear that these young fraternities are still quite capable of development...[T]he Jewish fraternities do not suffer from such systematic attacks as the Catholics and, despite their brief existence they play a considerable role."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, a Jewish fraternity member in Würzburg served several times as chair of the student council. Some Jewish fraternities also had good relationships with other fraternities for the settlement of duels – itself a form of acceptance.<sup>39</sup>

An analysis of general student society seems to support this picture of an improvement in the position of Jewish students within student life. Despite the existence of a small group of radical antisemites and the exclusion of Jews from certain areas of student life, discussions of the Jewish community or of antisemitism appear only rarely, if at all, in student newspapers or pamphlets. Even the *Verein deutscher Studenten* – founded on antisemitism – suppressed some of its antisemitic propaganda in later years. For example, between 1906 and 1909 not a single lead article in their newspaper focused on the Jewish community, Jewish students or antisemitism. While antisemitism was clearly an important element in the outlook of the members of this organisation, they chose not to write about it at length in their primary public organ. Moreover, the *Verein deutscher Studenten* was itself rather small, and its ideological affiliation with conservative politics would have led many to see it as partisan – as one form of conservative nationalism rather than as the vanguard of German nationalism influencing the wider university environment.

An analysis of the memoirs of Jewish students similarly shows that antisemitism often did not play a large role in the lives of Jewish students. Like their Christian fellow students they described their studies, professors, extracurricular activities and classmates. In fact, for some the divisions within the Jewish community seemed of greater import than con-

<sup>38</sup> *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 15 December 1905. Paul Posener reported that in 1896 the Breslau Viadrina counted thirty members for their Sunday stroll, Posener, 'The Young Maccabees', p. 45. The Jewish Union of Fraternities, the KC, counted twenty-four Jewish fraternities in 1912: nine in the Bund jüdischer Corps – Berlin, Leipzig, Breslau, Munich, Charlottenburg, Strassburg, Freiburg, Königsberg, Marburg; two Zionist fraternities in the Kartell zionistischer Verbindungen Hasmonaea – Berlin (Jordania), Munich; three in the Bund jüdischer Akademiker – Berlin, Munich, Strassburg; and seven in KC Thuringia – Breslau, Bavaria-Heidelberg, Sprevia-Berlin, Licaria-Munich, Rheno-Silesia-Bonn, Ghibellinia-Freiburg, Viadrina-Darmstadt; and three affiliates ("KC Tendenz") – Badenia-Karlsruhe, Friburgia-Königsberg and Saxo-Bavaria-Leipzig (*K.C.-Blätter* 10/II (July 1912), p. 204).

<sup>39</sup> Asch, *Geschichte des K.C.*, 12.



cerns about antisemitism. As universities dramatically increased in size, the student body reproduced the divisions and hierarchies within society at large. Within these complex and diverse communities Jewish students formed their own close friendships, which served as cocoons protecting them from antisemitism in university life.<sup>40</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In light of the above, neither “segregation” nor “integration” fully describe the experience of Jewish students in duelling fraternities. Jewish students emphasised their own frustration at their segregation from much of organised student life. The story of Jewish duelling fraternities is also the story of considerable difficulty and hardship in their long battles with university authorities and fellow students. The strength of antisemitic sentiment at universities was the principal barrier to their establishment; the lower-middle-class status of many members, however, also likely played a role in their difficulties.

On the other hand, the socialising function of the university itself aided integration – and the fraternities accelerated this process. We have seen how Jewish duelling fraternities occupied what they saw as a legitimate place within student life – their reserved table in the local bar, their role in university celebrations and in participation in student councils. As opposed to their early years of hardship, in which many other fraternities refused to duel with them, by the early twentieth century they generally enjoyed good relationships with other fraternities for the settlement of duels.

The creation of Jewish fraternities must also be understood in the specific student subculture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Catholics, too, had their own fraternities and these Jewish and Catholic student organisations participated in student councils and represented their members at university celebrations. In the academic imagination, these Catholic and Jewish organisations stood alongside other fraternities in full support of the German academic mission, German culture and the German nation. The creation of these groups – Catholic, Protestant and Jewish – represented, one might argue, a positive sign of increasing flexibility regarding the idea of the German nation.

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<sup>40</sup> Pickus, p. 238.

Without student dormitories, fraternities functioned as new homes for students. In the KC, like most other fraternities, members spent time together each day and for some alumni fellow members were as important as their families. These central institutions at universities reproduced the hierarchies and diversity of student life. As universities increased in size and student organisations proliferated, the founding of Jewish fraternities and their flourishing strength between 1900 and 1914 also represented the desire of students in large and anonymous universities to band together with fellows who reminded them of home and family.

The members of Jewish fraternities identified with Judaism not on the basis of religion but of heritage, and constructed for themselves a secular, Jewish and national identity. They argued that this identity was fully compatible with German nationalism, and attempted to provide proof with, for example, their articles and lecture nights on German-Jewish history. Through the duel, sport and sociability, they could dramatise what they believed to be the ideals of honour, character and courage. With new self-assurance and the ability to give satisfaction, they could confront their opponents with confidence. Even when these opponents did not fully accept them, the cocoon of the fraternity allowed for the nurturing of a new self-confidence and self-respect.

ULRICH SIEG

“Nothing more German than the German Jews”?  
On the Integration of a Minority in a Society at War\*

Toni Cassirer, wife of the philosopher Ernst Cassirer, employed a language saturated with metaphors in writing her recollections of the First World War towards the end of the 1940s. In haunting words she described the propaganda and the general willingness to trust in the political leadership: “We were surrounded ... by rampant blind nationalism. Any traces of objectivity had vanished. There was nothing more ‘German’ than the German Jews at that time – nobody who could match them with regard to political shortsightedness.”<sup>1</sup> With this seemingly stark indictment, Cassirer paid homage to conventional wisdom. After the Second World War and the Holocaust, negative assessments abounded about the political illusions of German Jewry. Their normative world was painted as naively optimistic and antiquated, and thus Gershom Scholem’s critique of even the possibility of a German-Jewish symbiosis gained widespread currency.<sup>2</sup> By now Scholem’s assessment has itself become historicised, and has been supplanted by a methodologically more nuanced approach which takes into account broader perspectives of German Jewish history.<sup>3</sup> Histo-

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<sup>1</sup> Toni Cassirer, *Mein Leben mit Ernst Cassirer*, Hildesheim 1981, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> See Gershom Scholem, ‘Zur Sozialpsychologie der Juden in Deutschland 1900-1930’, in Rudolf Thadden (ed.), *Die Krise des Liberalismus zwischen den Weltkriegen*, Göttingen 1978, pp. 256–277.

<sup>3</sup> A good example is the vast amount of research into the Jewish middle class, which underscores both the topic’s uniqueness and its close embeddedness in German society as a whole. A good introduction is provided by Andreas Gotzmann, Rainer Liedtke and Till van Rahden (eds.), *Bürger, Juden, Deutsche. Zur Geschichte von Vielfalt und Differenz, 1780-1933*, Tübingen 2001 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 63). Good case studies are Elisabeth Kraus, *Die Familie Mosse*.

riography on German Jewry in the First World War, however, mostly follows well-trodden paths, maintaining that the *Burgfrieden* (a truce in Germany's internal conflicts) sparked Jewish hopes for complete integration and then brought in its wake a great wave of Jewish war euphoria. German Jews supposedly flocked enthusiastically and in droves to enlist in August 1914. Even later, they continued to cling fervently to their "overwhelming patriotism". According to this view, it was only the *Juden-zählung* in the autumn of 1916 that shattered their trust in their political leadership and initiated a long-term process of disillusionment, which in turn helps us understand the Jewish "cultural blossoming" of the 1920s.<sup>4</sup>

It is my purpose here to question this conventional wisdom, which relies heavily on memoirs written after 1933 and is heavily indebted to the views of veterans of the Zionist and the liberal Jewish movements. In the light of recent research on the First World War, in particular cultural history and work that deals with the history of mentalités, the behaviour of German Jewry appears to be quite "normal" indeed. Like most German Catholics and Protestants they were not longing to die for the Fatherland. The great "war enthusiasm" proved to be primarily propaganda and was certainly not consistent with the diversity of Jewish responses to the disillusioning reality of war. The dominant narrative supposes an anachronistic teleology to the war's events and an underlying meaning to the "war experience", both of which are dubious. At the very least, it does not square with the results of recent scholarship of the sort just mentioned. The works of the historian and publicist Volker Ullrich are a case in point. By and large he subscribes to a variegated understanding of the "war experience", but he strays when he turns his attention to the unique "Jewish war enthusiasm".<sup>5</sup> I will approach this in five steps. First, I will

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*Deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1999; Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer. Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925*, Göttingen 2000.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent overviews are Christhard Hoffmann, 'Between Integration and Rejection: The Jewish Community in Germany, 1914-1918', in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 89-104, 256-260; Clemens Picht, 'Zwischen Vaterland und Volk. Das deutsche Judentum im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung. Wahrnehmung. Analyse*, München 1994, pp. 736-757; Peter Pulzer, 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', in Michael A. Meyer (series ed.), *Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, vol. 3: Umstrittene Integration 1871-1918, by Steven M. Lowenstein *et al.* Munich 1997, pp. 355-380, 397-399.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Volker Ullrich, 'Dazu hält man für sein Land den Schädel hin!', in *Die Zeit* No. 42 (11 October 1996), p. 46, which proclaims apodictically and in an

look at the Jewish position in August 1914, which can be described as exhibiting more a quiet feeling of duty than enthusiasm for the war. I will then turn to the phenomenon of Jewish patriotism, the specifics of which shall be inspected but not, as is often the case, uncritically praised. Following this, I examine antisemitism, which is of crucial importance for the assessment of Jewish integration into wartime society. Fourthly, the Jewish reactions to the collapse of the *Kaiserreich* will be discussed and interpreted, while in conclusion I will consider the meaning of the First World War for our general view of German Jewish history.

### *The Jewish "Augusterlebnis"*

Time and again, August 1914 has inspired historians to indulge themselves in literary excess. The usual version runs thus: after a period of unbearable tension, news of the mobilisation was generally greeted as a form of redemption; the jubilant metropolitan masses, along with the recruits crowned with flowers on their way to the front, are the most telling expressions of war enthusiasm, and the "rush to the enlistment agencies", much praised by the contemporary press, is regarded as an expression of overwhelming love for the Fatherland even decades after the event.<sup>6</sup> This view, however, does not stand up to closer scrutiny. By now, we know that official propaganda massively inflated war enthusiasm and that this directly influenced the press of its day.<sup>7</sup> New research emphasises the major differences with regard to acceptance of the war between urban and rural areas, and between classes. If the leitmotif of "war enthusiasm" is still used, it has been reduced to denoting the attitudes of the urban middle class in the first weeks of the war.<sup>8</sup> By the autumn of 1914, when

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undifferentiated fashion: "Among German Jews in particular the patriotic exuberance of early August was enthusiastically received."

<sup>6</sup> Recent examples of this narrative are presented by Modris Eksteins, *Tanz über Gräben. Die Geburt der Moderne und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1990, pp. 93–149, and Gunther Mai, *Das Ende des Kaiserreichs. Politik und Kriegführung im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 2nd edn., Munich 1993, pp. 9–30.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Christian Geinitz, *Kriegsfurcht und Kampfbereitschaft. Das Augusterlebnis in Freiburg. Eine Studie zum Kriegsbeginn 1914*, Essen 1998; Thomas Raithel, *Das Wunder der inneren Einheit. Studien zur deutschen und französischen Öffentlichkeit bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Bonn 1996; Jeffrey Verhey, *Der "Geist von 1914" und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft*, Hamburg 2000.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Berlin 2000.

hopes for a short war proved false, the profession of war enthusiasm had become the almost exclusive property of the extreme right wing. For the general population, it had been replaced by a feeling of grave determination and by the conviction that one must not abandon the Fatherland in its hour of need.

The reactions of German Jewry mirror its position in society. Where it is possible to quantify these reactions, they hardly support the thesis of overwhelming war enthusiasm. Among the 280 Jewish soldiers from the Rhön region of Lower Franconia, a meagre two volunteered.<sup>9</sup> The urban Jewish middle class was more willing to go to war, but even here many a critical voice was heard. Prominent Jewish intellectuals, from Walter Benjamin to Gershom Scholem and Stefan Zweig, unanimously interpreted the outbreak of the war as a catastrophe for diplomacy and a disaster for humanity.<sup>10</sup> To be sure, large Jewish organisations emphasised their patriotic worldview in official publications. The joint declaration of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Central Organisation of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, or CV) and of the *Verband der Deutschen Juden* (Union of German Jews, or VDJ) on 1 August 1914 is a famous example. In elevated prose they appealed to their fellow Jews: “We implore you to dedicate your powers to the Fatherland above and beyond the call of duty!”<sup>11</sup> It would be wrong, however, to interpret this proclamation urging an extraordinary fulfilment of duty as just another manifestation of patriotism. Its very demonstrative language shows that the leaders of German Jewry were clearly aware of the continuing reservation and distrust with which society at large viewed any Jewish political engagement.

Some recently discovered VDJ documents highlight both the discursive pressure during the first days of the war and the marked politicisation of the Verband’s officers, who agreed that the war presented a chance to entrench the Jewish position in society. In order demonstratively to achieve denominational equality, the VDJ insisted on the creation of the office of military rabbi, which had not existed during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. The importance attached to this demand is demonstrated by the willingness of the VDJ to cover the costs, and it was only in September 1915 that the Prussian Ministry of War contributed a monthly re-

<sup>9</sup> The numbers can be found in Richard Mehler, *Juden in der bayerischen Rhön im 19. Jahrhundert*, Ph.D. Diss., University of Würzburg 2002, pp. 350ff.

<sup>10</sup> See the succinct article by Rivka Horwitz, ‘Voices of Opposition to the First World War among Jewish Thinkers’, in *LBI Year Book XXXIII* (1988), pp. 233-259.

<sup>11</sup> *Im deutschen Reich*, vol. 20 (1914), p. 339.



muneration.<sup>12</sup> The fight for the institutionalisation of military rabbis proved successful and no less than thirty rabbis were finally commissioned, providing – in spite of many hindrances – a visible Jewish presence at the front. While the institutionalisation of the military rabbis can be regarded as a successful Jewish effort at integration, it also reflected the problematic implementation of the *Burgfrieden* programme.

### *Patriotism under Suspicion*

On 4 August 1914 Wilhelm II declared an end to social division when he uttered the words “I know nothing of parties any more, I know only Germans” in the Reichstag (German parliament). German Jews were inclined to believe that these words were applicable also to them, although they were of course aware that complete integration would be achieved only in the face of serious political resistance. Walther Rathenau, for instance, helped to fund the “Bureau for Jewish Statistics” – which conducted scholarly investigation into Jewish society – because of his conviction that the antisemites would stubbornly cling to their views.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it did not take long to realise that the *Burgfrieden* was merely a “fair-weather construction”.<sup>14</sup> With the prolongation of the war, domestic political quarrels resumed and the idea of a social unity that transcended class boundaries proved illusory. Yet the notion remained important for German Jewry, as the Kaiser’s words could serve to mark the antisemites’ position as unpatriotic.<sup>15</sup> This implies at the same time, however, that the declarations issued by Jewish organisations, proclaiming unwavering loyalty to the Fatherland, should not be taken at face value. Rather, they must be deconstructed against the backdrop of the political situation. The patriotic

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<sup>12</sup> For the documents, see Neue Synagoge Berlin-Centrum Judaicum, Archiv, 75 C Ra 1, No. 1. For the historical context see Arnold Vogt, *Religion im Militär. Seelsorge zwischen Kriegsverherrlichung und Humanität. Eine militärgeschichtliche Studie*, Frankfurt/Main, Berne, New York 1984, pp. 578–614.

<sup>13</sup> Clemens Picht, “‘Er will der Messias der Juden werden.’ Walther Rathenau zwischen Antisemitismus und jüdischer Prophetie”, in Hans Wilderotter (ed.), *Die Extreme berühren sich. Walther Rathenau 1867-1922*, New York and Berlin 1994, pp. 117–128. On the Bureau, see Mitchell B. Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity*, Stanford 2000, chap. 2.

<sup>14</sup> This is the fitting term used by Pulzer, ‘Erster Weltkrieg’, p. 366.

<sup>15</sup> See the convincing argument in David Engel, ‘Patriotism as a Shield. The Liberal Jewish Defence against Antisemitism in Germany during the First World War’, in *LBI Year Book XXXI* (1986), pp. 147–171.

literature of German Jews was less militaristic than is often asserted. Julius Bab's best-selling *Der Deutsche Krieg im Deutschen Gedicht*, for example, contains many elegiac poems but few if any texts that actually glorify war.<sup>16</sup> A common tactic was to rely on assumptions of cultural superiority, which led to the prediction that Germany would prevail due to the quality of its poets and philosophers. This was of course preposterous, but it remained within the constraints of prevailing notions of civilisation, though these constraints were by no means a given in the "War of the Intellectuals". To give just one example: Ludwig Geiger, editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, thought it inappropriate for German scholars to return honorary degrees awarded by foreign universities and he regarded attempts to rid the German language of all foreign loanwords as a provincial manifestation of jingoism.<sup>17</sup>

German Jewry's most prevalent enemy image was the autocratic Czarist regime, whose injustice was stressed time and again. Historical analogies compared the Czarist Empire with Pharaoh's Egypt before Israel's Exodus, or with tyrannical Assyria, and its imminent demise was deemed inevitable.<sup>18</sup> The superiority of German *Kultur* to "half-Asian despotism" was regarded as indisputable and the humanitarian mission of the German army in Eastern Europe was held to be self-evident by all factions within German Jewry. It was not uncommon to combine these sentiments with an affirmative juxtaposition of Germany's newly won "inner unity". In order to build bridges to the Social Democrats, for example, one could quote the patriarch August Bebel, who had stated that he himself would pick up a gun if it meant fighting against Russia. (In the main, it was liberal Jews who pursued this particular relationship).<sup>19</sup> With the exception of the Czar, who had long since acquired the aura of the arch-enemy of the Jews, Jewish intellectuals regarded any slighting of Germany's enemies as misguided. This reflected a chivalrous code of honour, which did not square easily with the horrendous reality of mass death, but which paid tribute to the Home Front's surpassing need for "meaning". Charac-

<sup>16</sup> 1914. *Der Deutsche Krieg im Deutschen Gedicht*, 12 booklets selected by Julius Bab, Berlin n. d. [1914-1919]. The melancholic character of this compilation is overlooked by Sylvia Rogge-Gau in her insightful biography *Die doppelte Wurzel des Daseins. Julius Bab und der Jüdische Kulturbund Berlin*, Berlin 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Ludwig Geiger, *Krieg und Kultur*, Berlin 1915, pp. 6, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Exemplary in this regard is Benjamin Segel, *Der Weltkrieg und das Schicksal der Juden. Stimme eines galizischen Juden an seine Glaubensgenossen in den neutralen Ländern insbesondere in Amerika*, 3rd. edn., Berlin 1915.

<sup>19</sup> This is noted by the Zionist Sammy Gronemann in his *Erinnerungen 1875-1918*, Leo Baeck Institute New York, ME 203.

teristically, the publicist Theodor Wolff agreed in his diary, on 9 February 1915, with the words of a cavalry captain in Flanders: "We know no hate. We respect the enemy, who fulfils his duty just as we do."<sup>20</sup> While national loyalty was the highest priority, nobody forgot the fact that there were Jews to be found on both sides of the trenches. Accordingly, charitable contributions for the Jews of Eastern Europe were of equal priority to Orthodox, Liberal, and Zionist organisations.<sup>21</sup>

Polemical literature, often amounting to little more than wishful thinking, was to some degree a "Jewish speciality" during the war. The longtime chess world champion and philosopher Emanuel Lasker, for example, made good use of his chess column in the *Vossische Zeitung* to analyse the war situation, underscoring the well-developed German "opening" of the first months of the war. His 1916 brochure *Die Selbsttäuschungen unserer Feinde (The Self-Deceptions of our Enemies)* was a pure fantasy, in which he advised the Entente to give up their hopeless game of war. This was not in accordance with his own philosophy of struggle, since he advocated the utilisation of even the most insignificant of defensive resources.<sup>22</sup> Similarly bold was his argument that the war would end well for Germany because the "German cause" was just. Jewish intellectuals regularly employed historical analogies in order to stress the peace-loving nature of Wilhelm II. The capricious Kaiser was compared to King Solomon, while it was asserted that even in Solomon's time the people of Israel were surrounded by envious enemies.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the most notorious of polemicists was Ernst Lissauer, commonly cited as the prime example of Jewish war fanaticism. He was, in

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<sup>20</sup> Bernd Sösemann (ed.), *Theodor Wolff, Tagebücher 1914-1919. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Entstehung der Weimarer Republik in Tagebüchern, Leitartikeln und Briefen*, vol. 1, Boppard am Rhein 1984, pp. 153-164, quote on p. 158.

<sup>21</sup> This is extensively treated in Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*, Madison, WI 1982, pp. 139-184, 283-291. See also, with its stronger emphasis on cultural history, Aviel Roshwald, 'Jewish Cultural Identity in Eastern and Central Europe during the Great War', in *idem* and Richard Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 89-127, 369-377.

<sup>22</sup> See Michael Dreyer, 'Zwischen Pragmatismus und Prinzip: Emanuel Laskers politisches Denken', in *idem* and Ulrich Sieg (eds.), *Emanuel Lasker — Schach, Philosophie, Wissenschaft*, Berlin and Vienna 2001, pp. 187-231, in particular pp. 207-212.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see Heinrich Margulies, 'Eine historische Parallele. König Salomon und Wilhelm II', in *Jüdische Presse*, vol. 47 (1916), pp. 13-15.

fact, a complex case.<sup>24</sup> It was due to his disappointment at England's entry into the war that he wrote his *Haßgesang gegen England* (Song of Hate against England), which struck such a chord with the military and the general population alike. By the autumn of 1914 the greeting *Gott strafe England* (May God punish England), followed by the answer *Er strafe es* (May He punish it) had become widespread.<sup>25</sup> This was partly a consequence of the general assumption that the author of the *Haßgesang*, who remained anonymous for quite some time, belonged to the racist right-wing of politics. German Jews took a rather dim view of Lissauer's poem, which by 1915 had been roundly criticised. Considering the stylisation of war as a chivalrous affair, Lissauer's hateful lines breached a taboo. When the Zionist publicist Benjamin Segel questioned prominent German Jews, no less than sixty dubbed the *Haßgesang* as "un-Jewish".<sup>26</sup> Even when Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the son-in-law of Richard Wagner and a fanatical antisemite, attacked Lissauer in 1915, he remained isolated within Jewish society. Only one voice was raised in Lissauer's defence, refuting Chamberlain's insinuation that the frequent mention of the *Haßgesang* was a sure sign of Jewish influence in the Entente press.<sup>27</sup> There were no other intimations of solidarity. Given the force of antisemitic slander by this point, this was a rather timid reaction, which looks – admittedly with the benefit of hindsight – politically half-hearted.

### *Antisemitism and the "Judenzählung"*

Xenophobic patterns of behavior quickly began to permeate people's everyday experience in August 1914. In spite of strict censorship, antisemitic hate literature developed rapidly and numerous pamphlets questioned the patriotism and bravery of German Jews.<sup>28</sup> As early as December 1914,

<sup>24</sup> For the following, see the detailed and sensible article by Elisabeth Albanis, 'Ostracised for Loyalty: Ernst Lissauer's Propaganda Writing and its Reception', in *LBI Year Book XLIII* (1998), pp. 195–224.

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Lissauer, 'Haßgesang gegen England', in *idem, Worte in die Zeit. Flugblätter 1914*, 1. Blatt; Verhey, p. 204.

<sup>26</sup> Segel, p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> See Erik Lindner, 'Houston Stewart Chamberlain: The Abwehrverein and the "Praeceptor germaniae", 1914-1918', in *LBI Year Book XXXVII* (1992), pp. 213–236, in particular pp. 222–223.

<sup>28</sup> See Werner Jochmann, 'Die Ausbreitung des Antisemitismus', in Werner E. Mosse and Arnold Paucker (eds.), *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-*

such an astute observer as Erich Koch-Weser, mayor of Kassel and later party chairman of the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (German Democratic Party), noted that Jewish soldiers were the victims of discrimination.<sup>29</sup> A chasm existed between the nominal Jewish integration into the army and the harsh reality. Jews could now become officers, but it was an open secret that there were severe obstacles blocking their path. The Prussian officers corps, in particular, harboured significant anti-Jewish prejudices. Since one single “black ball” was enough to reject an unwelcome aspirant, the exclusivity of officer ranks was preserved. A number of careers which were proudly publicised by Jewish organisations remained little more than exceptions that proved the rule.<sup>30</sup>

Antisemitism culminated in 1916 – a year of massive battles on the Western front and of heated domestic discussion about war aims. In October of that year, in response to antisemitic pressure, the Prussian Ministry of War ordered a census of Jewish participation in the military. Given the lack of documentary evidence, we do not know the entire story of the deliberations which led to the *Judenählung*. But even if Adolf Wild von Hohenborn, the Prussian Minister of War, was not animated by anti-Jewish sentiment, there can be no doubt that a survey which treated Jews exclusively as members of a minority, and a potentially untrustworthy one at that, was discriminatory in effect.<sup>31</sup> Various irregularities were apparent in the conduct of the survey. For example, Jewish soldiers were transferred to the hinterland in order to diminish their number in the

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1923. *Ein Sammelband*, Tübingen 1971 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 33), pp. 409–510. Jochmann’s article has a great deal of material, but is rather descriptive. See also the equally not entirely satisfactory Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Göttingen 1969, pp. 516–547.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Mühlhausen and Gerhard Papke (eds.), *Kommunalpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die Tagebücher Erich Koch-Wesers 1914-1918*, Munich 1999, p. 145; notice of Erich Koch-Weser on 16 December 1914.

<sup>30</sup> See the numbers in Jacob Segall, *Die deutschen Juden als Soldaten im Kriege 1914-1918. Eine statistische Studie*, Berlin 1921. An evocative description of the mechanism of co-optation among Prussian officers is provided by Julius Marx, *Kriegs-Tagebuch eines Juden*, Zurich 1939, pp. 138–40.; diary entry of 3 November 1916.

<sup>31</sup> See the concise article by Werner T. Angress, ‘The German Army’s “Judenählung” of 1916. Genesis – Consequences – Significance’, in *LBI Year Book XXXIII* (1980), pp. 117–135. A careful edition of key documents can be found in *idem*, ‘Das deutsche Militär und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg’, in *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, vol. 19 (1976), pp. 77–146. The significance of the year 1916 is emphasised by Roger Chickering, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Munich 2002, pp. 82–102.



trenches. While the victims thus singled out were offended by such treatment, there were at the same time energetic protests by both individuals and groups. The CV, by far the largest and politically most influential German Jewish organisation, pointed out the infamy of “denominational statistics” as well as their dismal political consequences. The CV clearly recognised that the *Judenzählung* called into question the very concept of Jewish integration, but the quasi-official statement in their journal *Im deutschen Reich* did not shift at all from the usual apologetic patterns of argument. Their only demand was for a careful administration of the census, in which case it was fully expected to be able to counter all incriminating accusations.<sup>32</sup> This position, however, might have been a tactic to let the antisemites carry the burden of breaching the *Burgfrieden*. Less prominent Jewish liberal journals were as openly critical of the *Judenzählung* as the Zionist and Orthodox press.<sup>33</sup>

In the Reichstag, deputies of the Social Democrats and the left-of-centre *Fortschrittliche Volkspartei* (Progressive People’s Party or FVP), registered their protest about the discrimination against Jewish soldiers. At the same time the *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* (Association for Defence against Antisemitism, or VAA), which drew its support primarily from centre-left liberals, was up in arms against the injustice of the *Judenzählung*. The foremost activist in this struggle was Oscar Cassel, who chaired the VDJ and was a member of the board of directors of the FVP. At the annual meeting of the CV in February 1917 he coined the (later oft-repeated) phrase that one should “not count, but weigh”<sup>34</sup> the patriotism of German Jews. Cassel was pointing not just to the urgency of the problem but also to the symbolic capital that a society at war offered in exchange for patriotic engagement – even if it did not always deliver on that promise.

Yet one should be careful not to overemphasise the watershed nature of the *Judenzählung*. It is the very reaction of prominent Jewish intellectuals which demonstrates that already before the autumn of 1916 they had

<sup>32</sup> ‘Die Glaubens-Statistik im Heer’, in *Im deutschen Reich*, vol. 22 (1916), pp. 242–245.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Magill, *Defense and Introspection; the First World War as a Pivotal Crisis in the German Jewish Experience*, Ph.D. Diss., University of California (Los Angeles) 1977, pp. 265–268.

<sup>34</sup> For extensive discussion of the historical context, see Halpersohn, ‘Nicht zählen, sondern wiegen! Ein Nachw[ort] zur Hauptversammlung des Zentralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Berlin am 4. Februar 1917’, in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* No. 18 (30 March 1917), pp. 145–147.



become disillusioned with the image of the *Kaiserreich*. Even Hermann Cohen, who upheld the banner of German-Jewish *Kultur* throughout his life, did not feel obliged to revise his world view. Granted, on 6 November 1916 he wrote to his friend, the philosopher Paul Natorp, that the “current Jewish Census” had visited “a deep feeling of distress upon the German Jews”.<sup>35</sup> And in an article for the *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte* he did not mince words with regard to the painful character of the confessional statistics. But the influential intellectual Cohen also managed to transfer the politically charged topic into the realm of the philosophy of religion, in which trust in God helped to insulate against any substantial diminution of patriotism.<sup>36</sup> Martin Buber, who by April 1916 had his own public forum in the journal *Der Jude*, devoted just one column to the *Juden-zählung*, arguing passionately that any apologetic counterattack would be futile, given the lack of substance in the attacks and the lack of good faith on the part of political opponents of the Jews. But his advice to desist from any form of protest lacked a concrete political dimension.<sup>37</sup>

As much as the Jewish middle class was outraged at the denominational statistics, their response gave no hint that their concept of an independent German Jewish culture had substantially changed. This is further demonstrated by contemporary memoirs. Only those memoirs written after 1933 give special weight to the events of the autumn of 1916, whereas in autobiographical works written prior to the Nazi period the *Juden-zählung* plays a marginal role.<sup>38</sup> A much greater weight is placed in these earlier works on the collapse of the political order in 1918, indicating that the end of the war and the subsequent revolution were registered and evaluated in the most intense fashion by German Jewry.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Helmut Holzhey, *Cohen und Natorp*, vol. 2: *Der Marburger Neukantianismus in Quellen. Zeugnisse kritischer Lektüre. Briefe der Marburger. Dokumente zur Philosophiepolitik der Schule*, Basle and Stuttgart 1986, pp. 455–457, here p. 456.

<sup>36</sup> Hermann Cohen, ‘Gottvertrauen’, in Bruno Strauß (ed.), *Jüdische Schriften*, vol. 2, Berlin 1924, pp. 100–104 [first published in *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, vol. 1 (1916/17), pp. 79–82].

<sup>37</sup> M[artin] B[uber], ‘Juden-zählung’, in *Der Jude*, vol. 1 (1916/17), p. 564.

<sup>38</sup> See Miriam Gebhardt, *Das Familiengedächtnis. Erinnerung im deutsch-jüdischen Bürgertum 1890 bis 1932*, Stuttgart 1999, p. 103.

*Collapse of the Kaiserreich*

German Jewry kept a close watch on their surroundings, notwithstanding their emphasis on the defence of the Fatherland. When defeat appeared imminent, disappointment in the war and its unfulfilled promises grew apace. In particular, the well-integrated Jewish middle class, who had fully believed in a German victory, grew depressed and embittered. The Breslau high school teacher Willy Cohn, for example, wrote in his diary on 9 August 1918: "This war will end in chaos! In Jerusalem the English will found a Jewish University, but in Germany the Jew will remain a second-class human being! Filth, everywhere filth."<sup>39</sup> At the same time, one can observe a decline in patriotic sentiment during the last months of the war. Philipp Flesch, an acculturated Viennese Jew who fought on the Italian front, described in detail the rapid collapse of military order in Bolzano. The sacrifices of the war, he wrote, were utterly devoid of meaning: "I saw the ghosts of the dead rise and look sadly at me. I returned to Vienna with a sick body and a sick soul."<sup>40</sup> To experience deprivation and death without the hope of victory or, at the very least, an "honourable peace", was hard to stomach.

The "elevated spirit of the front", emphasised time and again in war propaganda, had now almost entirely vanished, even among the well-educated Jewish middle class. The joy accompanying the end of the war lasted only briefly, to be superseded by substantial scepticism regarding the future. This was partly due to the manifold problems of everyday life, from demobilisation to food shortages. On the other hand, the growing intensity of antisemitism during the last months of the war was frightening for Jews. The small *Deutsche Erneuerungsgemeinde* (German Renewal Community), for example, led by the virulent antisemite Theodor Fritsch, distributed roughly two million pamphlets between November 1918 and March 1919.<sup>41</sup> The brochures of the *Abwehrverein*, aimed at enlightenment and persuasion, were no match for this antisemitic mass propaganda. Moreover, antisemitism had considerably increased since the Russian Revolution. The merging of anticommunist and antisemitic im-

<sup>39</sup> The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, P 88 [Private Collection Willy Cohn], No. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Houghton Library Harvard BMS Ger 91 (64), Philipp Flesch, pp. 2–3. For an impressive account of the presence of the dead during the First World War, see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 71–76.

<sup>41</sup> Jochmann, 'Ausbreitung', p. 451, n. 146.

ages proved popular at a time of rapid change and profound dissatisfaction, and among the German middle class the fear of “Jewish bolshevism” took hold (witness, for example, the success of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*).<sup>42</sup>

Those Jewish intellectuals who had glorified the war in apocalyptic tones were particularly hard hit by the bleakness of post-war reality. This was the case, for instance, for members of the Prague Jewish fraternity Bar Kochba, who as disciples of Martin Buber had clung stubbornly to an idealised image of the war. As one of their number, Hans Kohn, wrote in Buber’s journal *Der Jude*: “Sobriety has grasped the world. Now one begins to understand that no new dawn has broken. The old ways continue to exist, and all the years of madness and blood in between have not made them less revered.”<sup>43</sup> As suggestive as this interpretation of the present in the light of a philosophical view of the past might have been, it obscured the all-important fact that the predominant evaluation of the war in Germany and Austria was as an immediate consequence of defeat. Antisemitism played a major role, especially with regard to the discussion of the “war guilt” question. The political right-wing was careful to combine its nurturing of the *Dolchstoßlegende* (stab-in-the-back myth) with antisemitic insinuations. One of the prime targets of right-wing nationalist hostility was Bavarian Prime Minister Kurt Eisner, a member of the Independent Social Democratic Party and a journalist by profession. Eisner published a series of documents on the war’s origins, naming some of the politicians, industrialists and military figures whom he regarded as bearing responsibility for it. An antisemitic slander campaign subsequently pilloried Eisner as a tool of the victorious allies and blamed him for preparing the ground for the “dishonourable Versailles settlement”.<sup>44</sup> Antisemitic outbursts of violence were by no means rare in the restless days following the end of the war.

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<sup>42</sup> See Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933-1939*, Munich 1998, pp. 108–111.

<sup>43</sup> Hans Kohn, ‘Der Augenblick’, in *Der Jude*, vol. 5 (1920/21), pp. 437–439, quote on p. 437. The theoretical connections are characterised by Philipp Blom, *Martin Buber and the Spiritual Revolution of the Prague Bar Kochba. Nationalist Rhetoric and the Politics of Beauty*, Ph.D. Diss., University of Oxford 1997, pp. 175–176.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Dreyer and Oliver Lembcke, *Die deutsche Diskussion um die Kriegsschuldfrage 1918/19*, Berlin 1993, pp. 63–77; Peter Krüger, *Deutschland und die Reparationen 1918/19. Die Genesis des Reparationsproblems in Deutschland zwischen Waffenstillstand und Versailler Friedensschluß*, Stuttgart 1973, pp. 66–75. For a well-informed view of Eisner, see Bernhard Grau, *Kurt Eisner 1867-1919. Eine Biographie*, Munich 2001.

Considering this serious threat, it is entirely understandable that German Jewry quickly developed an identification with the Weimar Republic. The two essentials of German Jewry's political world view had been trust in the idea of progress and trust in the state. The war fundamentally challenged only the first of these. The crisis of faith in the state remained a rather limited affair and was directed primarily against the now defunct authoritarian Prussian state.<sup>45</sup> A case in point is Leo Baeck, who already at the outset of the 1920s was regarded as one of the most distinguished representatives of German Jewry. Baeck vehemently criticised the "subject mentality" of the old Prussia, objecting not only to the dominance of military values in civil society but also to the alacrity with which the ruling elites lent their support to all forms of state power. Nonetheless, he made it quite clear that he still considered the state to be the guardian of morals and ethics.<sup>46</sup> The Zionist Nahum Goldmann delivered a similar judgement after the stabilisation of the political order: "If the revolution has changed anything in a radical way, it is the Prussian definition of the state. ... The new Germany will be more humane, more orientated to liberty, more tolerant".<sup>47</sup> One should be careful, however, not to idealise the trust in the state exhibited by German Jews, since there was a distinct strategic element to it, resulting from careful observation of societal moods and realistic assessment of the political balance of power. Even during the Weimar Republic Jews only rarely uttered their political views in a straightforward manner.<sup>48</sup> It is for this reason that we need a careful critique of sources and greater hermeneutic awareness if we are to draw a differentiated and realistic picture of the German Jewish past.

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<sup>45</sup> See Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle und die Krise der bürgerlichen Welt im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart 2000.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, 'Empathie und Pflichterfüllung. Leo Baeck als Feldrabbiner im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Georg Heuberger and Fritz Backhaus (eds.), *Leo Baeck 1873-1956. Aus dem Stamme von Rabbinern*, Frankfurt/Main 2001, pp. 44–59, here p. 56.

<sup>47</sup> Nahum Goldmann, *Die drei Forderungen des jüdischen Volkes*, Berlin 1919, p. 25. For the historical context, see Moshe Zimmermann, 'Zukunftserwartungen deutscher Juden im ersten Jahr der Weimarer Republik', in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 37 (1997), pp. 55–72.

<sup>48</sup> This is rightly emphasised in Martin Liepach, 'Das Krisenbewußtsein des jüdischen Bürgertums in den *Goldenen Zwanzigern*', in Gotzmann, Liedtke and van Rahden (eds.), pp. 395–417.

*The Meaning of the First World War for German Jewish History*

My intent here has been to demonstrate that the polished phrases usually employed to describe the “Jewish enthusiasm for the war” are unhelpful in the extreme. German Jewry was highly integrated even before 1914, which makes its national engagement quite comprehensible. It was neither “total assimilation” nor “hyper-patriotism”. From the very outset of the war German Jews took careful note of antisemitism, which grew to alarming proportions as early as the autumn of 1914. It is hardly plausible, therefore, that it was the *Judenzählung* which first confronted them with xenophobic war nationalism. Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, the responses of Jewish intellectuals to the infamous denominational statistics reveal very little doomsday sentiment. The end of the war deeply disappointed them and clearly shook their belief in the inevitability of progress, and yet there were also strong elements of philosophical continuity. For liberal Jews, the normative imperative of the middle class remained intact and an affirmation of the state was characteristic of their assessment of both the *Kaiserreich* and the Weimar Republic.

The First World War was not the high point of German Jewish coexistence; it was, rather, a danger to it from the very beginning. The numerous patriotic declarations of Jewish organisations can be understood only against the backdrop of a society that thought itself surrounded by a “world of enemies” and which accordingly demanded conformity and loyalty. Only when one juxtaposes the public utterances of an author with his private musings does the contrast become evident. Contemporary sources such as diaries and letters show the multidimensional and fragile character of Jewish war experiences, which can not be pressed into an undifferentiated model. It is thus less than convincing to choose a single narrative, as is the case with most memoirs. The loss of faith in a “grand narrative” (Jean-François Lyotard) has opened the path to a multitude of perspectives for understanding history, which ought also to be put to good use for German Jewish history.<sup>49</sup> The history of German Jewry in the First World War has been narrated almost exclusively as a story of unrequited love for the Fatherland. Although there are undoubtedly numerous sources which uphold such a reading, it is still a *logificatio post festum*<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See Peter Engelmann (ed.), *Jean Francois Lyotard. Das postmoderne Wissen. Ein Bericht*, Graz and Vienna 1986, pp. 96–111.

<sup>50</sup> This is the instructive term used in Theodor Lessing’s *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen*, which was published in Munich 1919 and which in itself is a result of the Jewish war experience.



that falls well short of doing justice to the variety of Jewish war experiences.

It is difficult to make the case that the First World War exerted a positive influence on Jewish integration. The war enhanced social fragmentation and provided an enormous boost to racist and *Völkisch* thought in Germany. From the outbreak of the war, prescient German Jewish thinkers feared its negative consequences, but nobody was prepared for the degree of ideological breakdown caused by a war that encompassed nearly all walks of life. The success of the “stab-in-the-back myth” after the collapse of the Western Front did its part too in poisoning the German-Jewish symbiosis. As Peter Pulzer succinctly put it: “If there was a golden age for the Jews of modern Germany, it came to an end in 1914.”<sup>51</sup> The recent cultural history that focuses on the protagonists’ collective construction of meaning seems only to confirm these words.

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Pulzer, *The Jews and the German State. The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933*, Oxford 1992, p. 207.

ELISABETH ALBANIS

A “West-östlicher Divan” from the Front:  
Moritz Goldstein Beyond the *Kunstwart* Debate

That integration into German society was the aim of the Jewish minority is little disputed. The pattern of this integration, however, as well as the mechanisms by which it took place and the very degree to which it was sought continue to be the focus of much research. There was no single, clearly delineated path to normality; rather, Jews pursued a state of normality, a means of living in Germany as an integral part of society, and not in isolation from it, in diverse ways. If these consisted primarily of assimilation and acculturation, that still says little about the degree, the “success” and the limits of these forces. While it is true that certain ingredients such as the embrace of *Bildung* and participation in cultural activities facilitated this success, it would be misleading to assume that those ingredients were present in equal measure in every aspiring family or individual, or that they were embraced with equal ease or led to the same degree of integration, or indeed happiness. Rather, there were differing paths towards assimilation and acculturation, some of which were experienced by the individual in terms of a sense of loss rather than in terms of completing a process. These routes consequently led in the opposite direction, back to the heritage or perceived heritage of his or her ancestors.

For the 1880s generation, with which I am concerned here, the term acculturation does not apply to the same degree as to their parents’ generation. Whereas the generation born around the middle of the nineteenth century might still have sought consciously to acquire German culture in order to replace or overcome a predominantly traditional Jewish culture, their sons and daughters were born into households that could be described for the most part as already acculturated. The decision in middle-class German Jewish families to undergo the stages of a standard *cursus honorum* in German educational institutions was largely taken for granted.

Their dedication to German literature, music and the theatre was a public pursuit, whereas learning Hebrew with the aid of a hired tutor was reserved for the private sphere and was sometimes interpreted as a gesture to keep alive a tradition which found few other forms of expression. The disparity between the private and public spheres was similarly upheld where reflection on the individual's dual heritage was concerned. In private, families did not normally question that they wholly belonged to German society, but in the public domain they encountered a challenge to this sense of belonging. Hence, even if the notion of a dual heritage did not arise within the family, it crept up on most individuals sooner or later outside the home. Many individuals, therefore, felt the need to adjust their self-perception as Germans with a Jewish heritage to something which took account of this external perception. This "adjusted" identity needed to conform with their aspirations and expectations at the same time as accommodating an element in their identity which was anathema to others. The responses and consequent shaping of new identities were not fixed but in constant flux, reacting to external events as much as inner expectations.<sup>1</sup> Due to their fluid nature they can best be described in terms of trends and patterns. There were also, of course, varying degrees of awareness. While some individuals had recourse to seemingly static formulae to describe their positioning as Jews in German society, others located their lives along an axis between German and Jewish poles. They interpreted success, failure, happiness and unhappiness predominantly according to whether they believed that they had sufficiently assimilated to German society and culture or sufficiently distanced themselves from it.

Moritz Goldstein is one of the many possible individual biographies that might illustrate these processes of acculturation, assimilation and dissimilation. Born in 1880 in Berlin to a lower-middle-class family, Goldstein left a literary estate apparently fashioned as testimony to his efforts to attain recognition as a German writer while simultaneously adhering passionately to his Jewish identity. On the winding road to integration Goldstein's life was characterised by conscious efforts at assimilation and dissimilation, as well as by rejection of assimilation in others. His name is commonly associated with the 'Deutsch-Jüdischer Parnass' (German-Jewish Parnassus), an essay which most students of German Jewish history are likely to encounter in the course of their research. With its call for Jews to abandon their role in German literary culture it generated a lively debate

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London 1990, pp. 222-232, p. 225.

at the time of its publication in *Der Kunstwart* in 1912. Its repercussions for the discourse on German-Jewish culture continued long after the initial debate had ceased. Both the essay itself and the subsequent debate are frequently referred to for their “paradigmatic character”, as Hannah Arendt wrote in a letter to Goldstein in 1968 when both were living in New York.<sup>2</sup> As I have explained more fully elsewhere, Goldstein’s decision to write and publish the ‘Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß’ was far from a spontaneous reaction to the cultural antisemitism of his day.<sup>3</sup> As a Germanist by training, he would have been only too aware of the writings of the *völkisch* literary historian Adolf Bartels and quite possibly intended the choice of the word “Parnaß” in his title as an ironic riposte to Bartel’s phrase – when accusing Jews of having taken control of German culture – “olympische Überlegenheit” (Olympian superiority).<sup>4</sup> Goldstein’s views on German-Jewish relations in the cultural sphere had developed over a period of several years prior to 1912. Several of the statements expressed in the ‘Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß’ had been formulated earlier, often in a harsher tone, in his unpublished ‘Judenspiegel’. There he writes: “Is it not more manly to overcome unrequited love with a firm resolve and to tear it from one’s heart, even if a shred of flesh remains, rather than pining in vain after the aloof one? The relationship Jews have to Germany is that of an unhappy love.”<sup>5</sup> This was a sentiment echoed later in the ‘Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß’: “Our relationship to Germany is that of an unhappy love: we want to be finally man enough to tear the loved one with firm resolve out of our hearts instead of endlessly and pathetically pining after her – even if a piece of heart remains clinging.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt to Moritz Goldstein, 15 December 1968, II AK 85/104-1,4-, Nr. 003, Nachlaß Moritz Goldstein, Institut für Zeitungsforschung (IfZ). Arendt herself discusses the ‘Deutsch-Jüdischer Parnaß’ in her essay on Walter Benjamin. See Hannah Arendt, *Walter Benjamin. Bertolt Brecht. Zwei Essays*, Munich 1971, pp. 39–40, 43. For a discussion of the essay and the subsequent debate in the journal *Der Kunstwart*, see Elisabeth Albanis, *German-Jewish Cultural Identity from 1900 to the Aftermath of the First World War: A Comparative Study of Moritz Goldstein, Julius Bab and Ernst Lissauer* (Conditio Judaica, 37), Tübingen 2002, pp. 70–120.

<sup>3</sup> Albanis, *German-Jewish Cultural Identity*, pp. 43–76.

<sup>4</sup> Adolf Bartels, *Judentum und deutsche Literatur. Vortrag gehalten am 29. Juni 1910 im Deutschvölkischen Studentenverband Berlin*, Berlin 1912, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Judenspiegel’, in ‘Moritz Goldstein: Texte zur jüdischen Selbstwahrnehmung aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben von Elisabeth Albanis’, *Aschkenas: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 7 (1997), No. 1, pp. 79–135, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß’, *Der Kunstwart* 25, no. 11, March 1912, pp. 281–294, p. 292.

Earlier still, in 1906, one year before writing 'Der Judenspiegel', he had addressed a principally Jewish audience in two essays published in the journal *Ost und West*. In the first, entitled 'Über das Wesen des Judentums', he reflected on those characteristics which lent Jewry a cohesive bond, concluding that in the face of the decline of religion it was above all a conscious solidarity which unified Jewry, in other words simply an awareness of being Jewish. His next contribution to *Ost und West*, published in the same year, can be interpreted as the consequence of such an awareness for culturally productive members of German Jewry. Here, he called for the cultural potential of Jewish writers and artists to be collected and made publicly identifiable as cultural contributions by Jews.<sup>7</sup> Goldstein had, therefore, before the publication of the 'Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß', addressed the need for a Jewish consciousness in the arts and at the same time contemplated the difficulties in achieving consensus among German Jews about labelling their cultural products as Jewish. What was new about the 'Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß' was Goldstein's decision to publish his essay in a conservative, mainstream journal whose readership consisted in the main of non-Jewish *Bildungsbürger* with an interest in German cultural renewal. He openly criticised both non-Jews for their bigotry and, more severely, Jews for ignoring existing discrimination and for their refusal to label their cultural output as "made by Jews". In today's language Goldstein asked his contemporaries to 'dissimilate'. Seeing himself confronted with apparently insuperable obstacles to complete and uncontested integration into German society, he regarded resignation to the status quo as intolerable and considered the last, socio-cultural, phase of emancipation a failed experiment. He did, however, exclude himself from this call for dissimilation, thus showing that he was still hoping to make his aspiration to find recognition as a writer compatible with his need to solve the apparent contradiction of doing so as a Jewish German. While putting it in the bluntest terms that Jews must desist from unwanted intrusion into German society and culture, he considered this a solution that came too late for himself and most of his contemporaries, since the synthesis with German culture had already progressed too far.<sup>8</sup> That he essentially left the target audience of the dissimulatory process obscure reinforces the assumption that his call to turn one's back on German culture bore more a utopian than a practical character.

<sup>7</sup> Moritz Goldstein, 'Die geistige Organisation des Judentums', *Ost und West* 6 (1906), No. 8/9, pp. 513–526.

<sup>8</sup> Goldstein, 'Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß', p. 291.



Goldstein's self-definition was essentially shaped by two factors: first, his aspiration to become a writer, or more precisely a dramatist, and, second, the fact that he was Jewish. The apparent incompatibility between the two largely determined his thinking on Jewish issues. In his efforts to establish himself as a writer he frequently attributed lack of success to being Jewish. This manifested itself, for example, in his suspicion that he was discriminated against on the basis of his name.<sup>9</sup> From his memoirs *Berliner Jahre* it is evident that his isolation was quite often self-inflicted and motivated by fear of rejection, rather than being the direct result of antisemitism. This is not to say that in his case discrimination and rejection based on antisemitism did not exist; it does suggest, however, that before 1914 Goldstein suffered as much from the expectation of antisemitism as from the real thing. The fear of confronting his limits in terms of his writing talent and social skills led him to attribute many a failure, or more precisely lack of desired success, to his Jewish name and background. Tragical as this may have been for Goldstein's career as a writer, his acute sensitivity and self-observation offer many insights into two related processes: on the one hand, the way in which antisemitism forced an ambitious German Jew to acknowledge his Jewish heritage and, on the other, the way he chose to reclaim that identity as a result of the limits antisemitism imposed upon his assimilation. From this perspective, he is a case in point in relation to the in-built limits of assimilation analysed by Shulamit Volkov. Having reached these limits, Volkov concludes, "one could only retreat and turn inward in order to seek not only a new definition of one's own identity but often also a new self-respect."<sup>10</sup>

For Goldstein, 'normality' in Jewish life and German-Jewish relations would not be established until Jews were able to engage in all cultural activities, freely choosing their subject by inclination rather than as a function of their religious or cultural heritage, yet at the same time making it clear that they engaged in culture as Jews. 'Normality' for Goldstein, therefore, was invariably linked in part to ending the downplaying of one's origins. Consequently, the "Jew in disguise as a German" represented to him the very opposite of what was normal and desirable, and normality

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<sup>9</sup> Moritz Goldstein, *Berliner Jahre. Erinnerungen 1880-1933* (Dortmunder Beiträge zur Zeitungsforschung, 25), Munich 1977, p. 46. See also Dietz Bering, *Der Name als Stigma. Antisemitismus im deutschen Alltag 1812-1933*, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 395 and 350.

<sup>10</sup> Shulamit Volkov, 'Die Dynamik der Dissimilation: Deutsche Juden und die ost-jüdischen Einwanderer', in Dirk Blasius and Dan Diner (eds.), *Zerbrochene Geschichte. Leben und Selbstverständnis der Juden in Deutschland*, Frankfurt am Main 1993, pp. 64-78, 78.

was closely related to Volkov's notion of self-respect. Numerous entries in Goldstein's 'Judenspiegel', his most outspoken text on his experience as a Jew in German life, refer to the need to abandon "self-contempt" (*Selbstverachtung*) and instead adopt an attitude of confidence, of Jewish pride. "Well-known Christians as well as Jews protest against the assumption that Jews are different from Germans", he wrote; "they associate with the term 'other' the term 'inferior'. This quirk has to be driven out of Christians and Jews alike."<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere he asserted polemically: "When Jews are declared as inferior, every Jew agrees – in the hope that he himself will be excluded," adding that the embrace of "our south-eastern brethren" in particular will require considerable confidence.<sup>12</sup> Together, Goldstein's texts on Jewish subjects reflect the way in which he was torn between a passionate commitment to what he called the "Jewish cause" – "Die Sache der Juden", the title of his later utopian plea for Jews to establish an autonomous settlement – and, it must be said, his own self-interest.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to Theodor Herzl, who felt that "every line" he wrote should by right be for the benefit of his movement,<sup>14</sup> Goldstein feared that it was precisely his involvement in Jewish matters that compromised his integration into German culture.

Before 1933, when Goldstein was forced to leave Germany, one other event brought him into direct confrontation with his identity as a German Jew and led him to reflect anew on questions of loyalty and belonging. The First World War represented to most people a watershed in their social and political associations and expectations. The proclamation of the social, political and religious cohesion of Germany, a society riven by political rifts and social and religious tensions, heralded the dawn of an apparent era of unity. The promise of unity, proclaimed for pragmatic reasons, was interpreted by those who still stood in one way or another at the periphery of society as an opportunity to achieve final and complete integration by

<sup>11</sup> Goldstein, 'Judenspiegel', *Aschkenas*, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107–108.

<sup>13</sup> Moritz Goldstein, 'Die Sache der Juden' (1938), MS, II AK 85/192 – 10 -, IfZ. The text will be included in Elisabeth Albanis, Hans Otto Horch and Till Schicketanz (eds.), *Moritz Goldstein. Die Sache der Juden. Aphorismen, Essays, Erinnerungen* (Conditio Judaica), Tübingen (forthcoming). For an in-depth treatment of the reception of 'Die Sache der Juden', see Irmtraud Ubbens, ' "Aus meiner Sprache verbannt...": Moritz Goldstein, ein deutsch-jüdischer Journalist und Schriftsteller im Exil', MA thesis University of Bremen 2000, pp. 42–47 (forthcoming in the series *Dortmunder Beiträge zur Zeitungsforschung*). I am very grateful to Irmtraud Ubbens for letting me read a copy of her thesis prior to publication.

<sup>14</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von gestern*, Frankfurt am Main 1993, pp. 130–131.

merging into that unity at the expense of personal convictions and religious affiliations. This is not to say that the war itself was welcomed by all or even most. Recent scholars have tended to be sceptical about the extent of war “enthusiasm”. Ulrich Sieg and others have shown that there was no such phenomenon as a general affirmation of war among either Jews or non-Jews.<sup>15</sup> Differences between inhabitants in the country and the cities must be taken into account, as must the way in which the war tended to cause upheaval among the civilian population, particularly in rural regions. Moreover, it would be misleading to interpret every declaration made by Jewish organisations as reflecting the views of individual Jews. The call to rally to the flag was not followed by every man with blind fervour. We find among Jewish men both pacifists and those who enlisted from a sense of duty far removed from anything resembling “enthusiasm”.<sup>16</sup> Some, such as Gershom Scholem and Ludwig Meidner, were drafted against their will, while the war experience turned many more into pacifists, of whom Walter Hasenclever and Ernst Toller are only the best known. Wolfgang Kruse’s examination of censored field letters reveals disillusionment among civilians and soldiers from as early as September 1914.<sup>17</sup>

If reactions to the outbreak of the First World War were far from monolithic, during subsequent years the will to unity was further challenged and earlier conflicts resurfaced. Those Jews who had previously experienced limits to their integration, and who had welcomed the initial talk of “one nation”, now found themselves dealing with both anti-Jewish discrimination and their own Jewish loyalties. The war thus brought them face to face

<sup>15</sup> Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg. Kriegserfahrungen, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe*, Berlin 2001, pp. 54–69. On a local-historical level, see Christian Geinitz, *Kriegsfurcht und Kampfbereitschaft. Das Augusterlebnis in Freiburg. Eine Studie zum Kriegsbeginn 1914/15*, Essen 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Rivka Horwitz, ‘Voices of Opposition to the First World War among Jewish Thinkers’, *LBI Year Book XXXIII* (1988), pp. 233–259.

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang Kruse, *Krieg und nationale Integration. Eine Neuinterpretation des sozialdemokratischen Burgfriedensschlusses 1914/15*, Essen 1993. The diversity of reactions to the outbreak of the war has recently been highlighted by the historical project LeMo, coordinated jointly by the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the Haus der Geschichte. The project’s depiction on its website of the so-called *Augusterlebnis*, based on letters and diaries, takes account of these different responses. Thus, some experienced a mixture of fear and a sense of heightened intensity and expectation, while by contrast the *Bataillonsarzt* Arthur Bial, for example, filled with terror at the thought of being parted from his young son, referred to the war as a “horror-inducing madness”. See the letter by Arthur Bial to his family, 2 August 1914, in Collection of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, in *Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online (LeMo)*, edited by Deutsches Historisches Museum and Haus der Geschichte *et al.* See [www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives\\_gedaechtnis/088/index.html](http://www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives_gedaechtnis/088/index.html).

with questions of identity and loyalties. The manner in which the war acted as a dissimilatory force and the way in which Goldstein responded to it by fluctuating between conformity to the German cultural ideal and reorientation towards a Jewish consciousness will be the focus of the following discussion.

Just days before the outbreak of the war Goldstein wrote an essay entitled 'Weltkrieg', in which he described the mood as one of excitement at the impending catastrophe and readiness to plunge into the abyss with shrieks of joy.

While we imagine all the horrors of a world war ... we secretly harbour the hope that all help will be in vain. Something in us rejoices at the thought that the unprecedented could become reality and deep beneath the fear of the catastrophe lurks another fear: of the disappointment that in the end everything will turn out peacefully. The adventure lures us ...<sup>18</sup>

Yet this essay, describing the call to arms as the continuation of an already existing war with "quiet weapons", was intended as a warning. To Goldstein, Europe was a single cultural entity, which by declaring war amongst its states would be left in ruins, to the great advantage of its real adversary, Asia. "What reason would Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy have to strike Russia and France and even England to the ground? Is here the *Geist* and there the *Ungeist*?" he asked incredulously.<sup>19</sup> The war, he concluded, was an "unfathomable stupidity", a "childish affair", a "boyish prank" unworthy of Europe. In his memoirs Goldstein recounted that he had written the essay "with flying pen" twelve days prior to the war's outbreak and had sent it to the *Berliner Tageblatt* for publication, only to have it rejected as it had already been overtaken by events.<sup>20</sup> The essay demonstrates that although Goldstein apparently picked up on a mood of restrained excitement mixed with disbelief – "Europe fevers and waits that the splendid building will go up in flames. We will then run through the streets, wave our hats, embrace each other, we will sing patriotic songs and call hurrah"<sup>21</sup> – he did not himself welcome the prospect of a European war. "We will tell ourselves that it is evil which we are fighting and it is the noble for which we shed our blood. And it will show, to the gloating of

<sup>18</sup> Moritz Goldstein, 'Weltkrieg' [July 1914], MS, II AK 85/192-1-, IfZ.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Goldstein, *Berliner Jahre*, pp. 105–106.

<sup>21</sup> Goldstein, 'Weltkrieg'.

the rest of the world, that we are not yet Europeans and that Europe is not yet completed and will not be so for a long, long time.”<sup>22</sup>

Goldstein was called up in November 1915, only a few months after his younger brother Berthold had been killed near Laszki in Galicia.<sup>23</sup> Moritz recalled his brother's fate in his unpublished 'Gedankengänge', written in New York in 1961, noting how he had delivered the news to his parents: "Of all the things I had to do in my life, this errand was the hardest."<sup>24</sup> Declared by the army to be only "garnisons-verwendungsfähig" (able to work in a garrison), Moritz had been working since January 1915 in the administration of the Kriegskemikalien AG, a firm manufacturing chemicals for the war effort.<sup>25</sup> In December 1915 he was stationed at Pancy, south of Laon in Picardy, where his initial task was to guard a power cable. The location, as Goldstein reflects in his memoirs *Berliner Jahre*, was such that they could not shoot the French, but the French could shoot at them.<sup>26</sup> Despite such drawbacks, he felt, or rather thought he ought to feel, elevated by the experience: "This was life. I no longer stood to one side, I was finally part of it!"<sup>27</sup> He gave vent to similar feelings in 'Krieg als Erwecker', an article published in *Kunstwart* prior to his conscription. There he attributes to the war a quality of "exaltation" and "purification", common themes in war publications. The sense of fulfilment which the war brought about, he wrote, was due above all to the way in which it steered the individual away from isolation to become part of a wider social context.<sup>28</sup> Goldstein, whose sense of isolation had stemmed from his heightened sense of lack of integration into German culture and society, initially expected the war, or, more precisely, the proclamation of the *Burgfrieden* (a truce in Germany's internal conflicts), to ensure his full acceptance as a

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Moritz Goldstein, Journal I, 21 June 1915, IIAK/106 – 1 -, IfZ. Berthold Goldstein was born on 26 February 1882 [1892] in Charlottenburg and died on 13 June 1915. See Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten (ed.), *Die jüdischen Gefallenen des deutschen Heeres, der deutschen Marine und der deutschen Schutztruppe 1914-1918. Ein Gedenkbuch*, 2nd edn., Berlin 1932, p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> Moritz Goldstein, 'Gedankengänge', MS, [1961], M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, State University of New York, Albany, pp. 235–236. The manuscript is not dated, but a reference to Goldstein's age at the time of writing shows that it must have been written in 1961.

<sup>25</sup> Militärpaß des Gefreiten Einjährig Freiwilligen Moritz Goldstein. IIAK 85/169-2-, IfZ.

<sup>26</sup> Goldstein, *Berliner Jahre*, p. 82 and *idem*, 'Gedankengänge', p. 235.

<sup>27</sup> Goldstein, *Berliner Jahre*, p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> Moritz Goldstein, 'Krieg als Erwecker', *Der Kunstwart* 28 (1915), second August issue, pp. 102–105, here p. 104.



German citizen. In 1915 he wrote: “The Jewish problem to me consists in the fact that I must not belong wholeheartedly to a community to which I belong with my whole heart. Is there a sphere in which this contradiction is solved? Yes. First, on the human level, it has always been like this; and, second, on the civic plane, this is the consequence of this war.”<sup>29</sup>

Since his student days Goldstein had expressed a vague affinity with the Zionist movement. This affinity increased over time, but now he feared that any open involvement in Zionist activities would only harm the apparent full acceptance of Jews as equal citizens. In November 1915, he had therefore expressed the view that organised Zionism should be put on the back burner. In a letter to Hantke (probably the “leader of German Zionism”<sup>30</sup> Arthur Hantke), he wrote:

It is my final and actual conviction that the Zionist organisation as an international body is suspended by the war ... . By that I do not mean that Zionism is suspended; this is, of course, not the case. For the organisation, however, it seems to me that suspension is the only possible course to take; anything else would lead to most alarming consequences. It is hardly possible for anyone at this time ... to cleanly separate Zionist interest from civic duties. Zionists are ... Germans.<sup>31</sup>

The letter to Hantke illustrates Goldstein’s “brand” of Zionism, which consisted for the most part of taking the role of “provocateur, rouser, inquirer and whip”<sup>32</sup>, while avoiding being identified with the Zionist movement in any institutional form, both because of a dislike of organisational structures and for fear of compromising his integration into German society, a stance that Egmont Zechlin labelled “Zionist *in partibus*”.<sup>33</sup> Instead, he advocated (from 1906) a “geistige Organisation” that would not only create independent Jewish cultural interests but distinguish them as Jewish in origin.<sup>34</sup>

Far from resolving Goldstein’s dilemma of identity, however, the war seemed to heighten it. His writings during that time could hardly have been more diverse: on the one hand, a play intended to establish his reputation

<sup>29</sup> Goldstein, ‘Formulierungen’, *Aschkenas*, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany*, New York 1987, p. 106.

<sup>31</sup> Moritz Goldstein, Briefentwurf an [Arthur] Hantke, 2 November 1915, MS, II AK 85-192-2, IfZ.

<sup>32</sup> Goldstein, ‘Formulierungen’ [1908] *Aschkenas*, p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Göttingen 1969, p. 423.

<sup>34</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Die geistige Organisation des Judentums’.

as a German dramatist<sup>35</sup>; on the other, a play entitled ‘Die Jüdin von Passau’, which Goldstein referred to as a “Judendrama”.<sup>36</sup> The same diversity characterised his non-fiction: lectures to the troops on Germany’s cultural mission and a treatise on the future of Jewish nationalism. In a March 1916 lecture, ‘Deutschland in der Welt’, he proposed an “Anschluß” with Austria to secure a position of German dominance in Europe, presenting the notion - not unusual for the time - of Germany as the “Land der Mitte” that needed to complete a process started by Bismarck.<sup>37</sup> The lecture concluded: “If we ask about the meaning of this war, what is at stake is whether Germany must stand to one side in this new era of world history or whether she will have a say in determining the history of the globe as befits her cultural achievements.”<sup>38</sup> Goldstein recalled that he was soon prohibited from giving lectures and was also in other ways discriminated against for being Jewish: “Other than my being awarded a private’s button, there was no talk of promoting the Jewish man of the home guard. I was given no further training and was repeatedly delivering lectures to officers and troops until they were suppressed from above in deference to a ‘patriotic instruction’.”<sup>39</sup> By 1916 he was experiencing with greater intensity the dilemma that while he was “doing his civic duty” he was neglecting Jewish interests: “What concern do we as *Nationaljuden* have with the battle of Europe?” he asked, adding that “it has nothing to do with us and we only fight on the German side for German goals because coincidentally we are German Jews: this awareness is unbearable to us - it is simply unbearable to me.”<sup>40</sup>

Goldstein’s treatise ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’ seems to have represented a turning point. Frustrated with his suspension from lecturing and denied access to the military training appropriate to his rank, he realised that his earlier optimism regarding full integration was ill-founded. Consequently, he devoted himself in ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’ to other issues close to his heart: first, the pressing question of how the war affected those

<sup>35</sup> Moritz Goldstein, *Die Gabe Gottes. Komische Tragödie in drei Aufzügen*, Berlin 1919. This was first performed in the Berlin Schauspielhaus in 1920.

<sup>36</sup> Entries in his diary for 1916 and 1917 refer to the writing of a play entitled ‘Die Jüdin von Passau’.

<sup>37</sup> Moritz Goldstein, [Notes for] ‘Deutschland in der Welt’, MS [1916], II AK 85-192-19-, IfZ, pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Goldstein, *Berliner Jahre*, p. 82.

<sup>40</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, MS, II AK 85/194 - 3-, IfZ, p. 23 (page numbers relate to my transcription of the manuscript) to be published in Albanis, Horch and Schicketanz, *Moritz Goldstein. Die Sache der Juden*.

German Jews who experienced both elements of their identity with equal weight; and second, the opportunities and problems arising from the “discovery” of Eastern European Jewry as a cultural force. Already in his ‘Deutsch-jüdischer Parnaß’ he had endeavoured to show the impossibility of an “exzentrisches Dasein”, as he referred to the situation of German Jewry. That the essay had on the whole been misunderstood was due, he wrote, to the marginality of the example he chose to demonstrate his case, namely the German Jew who was productive in the field of literature. Now, however, he could write about a much more widespread and urgent phenomenon, the Jew as active soldier. “Does the great fire act as a melting-pot and transform our outlook or do we emerge more complex from this catastrophe?”, he asked. And: “Is the European brothers’ war a solution for us or does it tie new [Gordian] knots?”<sup>41</sup>

‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’ was written during Goldstein’s war service in France in 1916, exactly one hundred years after Goethe published his ‘West-östlicher Divan’.<sup>42</sup> Both the extensive corrections to the manuscript and its preface make it clear that Goldstein later modified the text.<sup>43</sup> “With regard to this experience”, Goldstein wrote of the war, “the question of a Jewish reality burns with a brightness as never before and hopefully never again”.<sup>44</sup> The war, he remarked, concerns the destiny of every nation except the Jewish nation, and every nation is fighting for its cause except the Jewish nation; nonetheless, Jews are forced to march out against each other in a “brothers’ war”. Such an experience, he believed, would be followed by a more passionate commitment to Jewish-national aims. If there had been no Zionism, now would be the time to invent it. What, he asked, would be left of *Nationaljudentum* if Jews took sides in the war without first asking what the interests of the Jewish people were?<sup>45</sup> “We stand on all fronts with arms, guns, bayonets and grenades, opposite our *Volksge-nossen*. In order to fight we must forget that Israel is a nation – for if we

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20. For ‘exzentrisches Dasein’, see *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> According to his diary Goldstein completed the essay on 12 November 1916. Goldstein, Journal I, II AK 85/106 - 1 - , IfZ.

<sup>43</sup> Although these changes cannot be dated with certainty, a note by Goldstein on a scrap of paper attached to the manuscript makes it likely that he made the revisions shortly after 1918. There he reveals that: “This work stems from the year 1916; its publication was prevented by external difficulties. In the author’s view the ideas here have lost none of their validity; where the war is mentioned, the idea of threat to and defence of the Fatherland should be replaced by collapse and rebuilding.” See Moritz Goldstein, ‘Vorbemerkung’ to ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, MS, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

were aware of this it would be impossible for us to fire a single shot. That we do nevertheless fight, wound and kill is because we fulfil our civic duty.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, the ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’ reveal that Goldstein’s commitment to what he saw as the Jewish cause intensified in the course of the war. It is telling, however, that even in the title of a Jewish programmatic treatise he chose to make reference to German culture. As mentioned above, it had long been Goldstein’s wish to become a German writer<sup>47</sup> and to this end he liked to style himself in the tradition of the characters of the great *Bildungsromane*. His memoirs, *Berliner Jahre*, bear elements both of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as well as Adalbert Stifter’s character Heinrich in *Der Nachsommer*. Even in a treatise intended to break with German cultural superiority he chose a reference from the canon of German literature, further evidence of his unwillingness to relinquish his aspirations for recognition in German culture. Moreover, it illustrates that acts of dissimulation can only take place when mediated through previous acculturation.

The title of the treatise, alluding to Goethe’s ‘West-östlicher Divan’, is intended not so much as a celebration of the cultural encounter between East and West as a reflection on the new “cult” of *Ostjudentum* among Western Jewry and its implications for a new Jewish identity. It does, though, share with Goethe’s epic the desire to synthesise East and West. Just as Goethe emphasised the originality and authenticity of the Old Testament as “Urgeschichte”, interpreting its protagonists as “patriarchs” and their lives as “original” and “natural”<sup>48</sup>, Goldstein acknowledged that the “Urgeschichte” of modern Jewry resided within Eastern European Jewry. Goethe portrayed the encounter of Western poets with Eastern culture as both a “spiritual departure” and a “flight” from the political “turmoil” of their own time. The following verse from Goethe’s epic, entitled ‘Hegire’, might have particularly appealed to Goldstein, with its suggestion of the East as a “place of healing” untouched by the collapse of empires elsewhere:

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Mit Fünfundachtzig’, MS, undated [March 1965], II AK85-194-2, IfZ., p. 1; *idem*, *Berliner Jahre*, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> Erich Trunz, ‘Anmerkungen des Herausgebers. West-Östlicher Divan’, *Goethes Werke*, vol. II, *Gedichte und Epen*, Munich 1976, p. 538. Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, *Goethes Werke*, vol. IX, p. 129.

Nord und West und Süd zersplittern  
 Throne bersten, Reiche zittern  
 Flüchte du, im reinen Osten  
 Patriarchenluft zu kosten.<sup>49</sup>

As already noted, Goldstein frequently modelled his life and his writings on Goethe – in his ‘Formulierungen’ he wrote: “No life is worth living if one knows Goethe’s life.”<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, he was simultaneously committed to Jewish culture. The titles he records as having read in 1915 and 1916 reflect his interest in the search for a new form of Jewishness in a secularised society and his essay seems also to have been influenced by several contributions to Martin Buber’s periodical *Der Jude*. (For example, K. Baruch’s ‘Die Juden des Westens im Urteil Achad Haams’ (Ahad Ha’am’s View of Western Jewry), Ludwig Strauß’s review of Alfred Lemm’s ‘Wir Deutschjuden’ (We German Jews), and a piece by Herman Glenn whose title ‘Westöstliches Sein’ (West-East Existence) is strikingly similar to Goldstein’s own. Goldstein had, in fact, intended to publish his essay in *Der Jude*, as he made a note in his diary of having written to Martin Buber the day after he finished it.<sup>51</sup> His ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’ is a plea for the existence of a “Jewish reality” within the diaspora. He felt that the Zionist movement’s aim of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine could not be realised by his generation, since they lacked the time to prepare the ground fully for a Jewish existence outside their native countries. Instead he demanded: “We want already now, already here, already

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<sup>49</sup> North and South and West are quaking,  
 Thrones are cracking, empires shaking;  
 You must flee; the East will right you,  
 Patriarchs’ pure air delight you.

See Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe, *Poems of the West and East. West-Eastern Divan - West-Oestlicher Divan*. Bilingual edition of the complete poems. Verse translation by John Whaley. (Germanic Studies in America, vol. 68), Bern 1998. I am grateful to Dr. David Bell for pointing out this translation to me.

<sup>50</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Formulierungen’ [1905], *Aschkenas*, p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> See Moritz Goldstein, Journal I, entries 12 and 13 November 1916, II AK 85/106 - 1 - , IfZ. Buber seems to have initially accepted Goldstein’s essay as a contribution for the second issue of *Der Jude*, but either changed his mind or was forced to remove the title from the journal’s contribution by the war censor, as had previously been the case with an essay on “Eastern Jews and the German Reich” by Gustav Landauer. See Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work. The Early Years, 1878-1923*, Detroit (1st edn. 1981) 1988, p. 209. See also K. Baruch, ‘Die Juden des Westens im Urteil Achad Haams’, *Der Jude*, vol. 1 (1916/17), pp. 373–377, p. 374; Alfred Lemm, ‘Wir Deutschjuden’, cited by Ludwig Strauß in ‘Wir Deutschjuden’ [review], *ibid.*, pp. 59–61, p. 60; Herman Glenn, ‘Westöstliches Sein’, *ibid.*, p. 724.



for ourselves, some form of Jewish reality.”<sup>52</sup> What Jews possessed was the “theory of *Nationaljudentum*, its ideology”. But all that this apparently flourishing movement really offered, he felt, were thoughts and words – of which Jews already had ample experience: “We have long enough been a nation of the word, the scripture, the mind instead of the real world, and we want to stop being only that.”<sup>53</sup> Jewish organisations did not provide a “Jewish reality”. “A *vita activa* of Jewish nationalism is a beautiful thing (and I envy those men who fulfil their destiny in actively working towards the national goal) but this is no more lived Jewishness than the German government is lived Germanness.”<sup>54</sup> What, then, would qualify as a “Jewish reality” for Goldstein? “This discovered Jewish reality is Eastern European Jewry.”<sup>55</sup> Yet later he appeared unhappy with this formulation, adding sceptically: “We are completely under the spell, in fact almost under the tyranny, of this happy discovery.”<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that Goldstein’s was not a real encounter but a secondhand experience. He inferred the impact of Eastern European Jewry on assimilated Jewry from the reactions which he claimed to observe in German Jews, and took the precaution of conceding that he was by no means an expert on questions of “*Ostjudentum*”.<sup>57</sup>

Goldstein expressed his anxiety for assimilated Jews such as himself with regard to what he called the “tyranny of the discovery of Eastern European Jewry”.

We are now experiencing such an overestimation of Eastern European Jewry that we Western Jews are starting to suffer because of it. It already seems to be the case that only the Eastern Jew is considered the real Jew and that Westerners are strenuously making

<sup>52</sup> Moritz Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3–4.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Just as he had done four years earlier in his *Begriff und Programm einer jüdischen Nationalliteratur*. See Moritz Goldstein, *Begriff und Programm einer jüdischen Nationalliteratur*, Berlin 1912 (Die jüdische Gemeinschaft, 1). He was criticised for this admission by the Jewish nationalist Nathan Birnbaum: “In any case, the monstrosity remains that ... a young person, by his own admission so childishly ignorant of all things Jewish, sits down to write ‘Begriff und Programm einer jüdischen Nationalliteratur’. And this, mind you, not only for German Jewry, but for the entire, apparently expectant, Jewish nation. M[atthias] A[cher] [pseudonym of Nathan Birnbaum]: ‘Wo soll man denn hinkommen?’, *Die Freistatt. Alljüdische Revue. Monatsschrift für jüdische Kultur und Politik*, 1 (1913/14), No. 1, April 1913, pp. 66–68, here p. 67.

efforts in their conduct and behaviour to appear as Eastern Jewish as possible. We have to endure accusations that we hopelessly assimilated Western Jews are not really part of this.<sup>58</sup>

Gershom Scholem's recollections for this period seem to confirm Goldstein's observations: "It is no exaggeration to say that back then, especially at the time of the First World War, there existed something of a cult of all things *Ostjüdisches* among Zionists."<sup>59</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that the most passionate adherents of this "cult" came from families who took pains to put as great a distance as possible between themselves and the *Ostjuden*. This was perhaps attributable in part to an element of youthful revolt against a bourgeois upbringing, and in part to the fact, observed by Steven Aschheim, that the glorification of the Eastern Jew was always implicitly based "upon criticism of the Western Jew".<sup>60</sup> To Goldstein, the glorification of *Ostjudentum* at the expense of assimilated Jewry was a fatal development. Given his view that admitting to one's Jewish identity and becoming *nationaljüdisch* was motivated by a desire for uncontested membership of Jewish society, the thought of again falling between two stools was intolerable. No sooner had he affirmed his Jewish identity than he found himself criticised as insufficiently Jewish by those who advocated *Ostjudentum* as the only authentic form of Jewishness. "If we must now face the fact that [as Jewish nationalists] ... we are again considered as not naturally belonging and if we are again regarded with suspicion and have to impose ourselves, then in a very bitter sense we have fallen out of the frying pan into the fire."<sup>61</sup> In that case, Goldstein writes, he might as well have chosen the side "to which, besides so many inner inclinations, I feel drawn also by external advantage",<sup>62</sup> by which he presumably means German society and culture.

It was a misjudgement, believed Goldstein, to consider *Ostjudentum* as superior to Western Jewry. Those who did so had been misled by the fact that for the first time Jewry had been discovered as a mass phenomenon, and they believed that the Jewish centres in Eastern Europe, London and New York would now serve as an example of a Jewish reality, rendering

<sup>58</sup> Goldstein, 'Westöstliche Konfessionen', p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem. Jugenderinnerungen*, translated from the extended Hebrew edition of 1982 by Michael Brocke and Andrea Schatz, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 48.

<sup>60</sup> Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*, Madison, WI 1982, p. 187.

<sup>61</sup> Goldstein, 'Westöstliche Konfessionen', p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

previous theorising on Jewish life obsolete. Instead of creating a new form of Jewish life that would encompass both traditional Eastern European and assimilated Jewry, *Ostjudentum* had been declared to be *the* Jewish form of life. All that remained was merely to study the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe and adopt them as a model. That, however, commented Goldstein, would be to superimpose one form of Jewishness on another: “Even Western Jewry, no matter how consciously or unconsciously assimilated it might be, is a Jewish reality, and we may expect for it the same respect for life that is rightfully demanded for Eastern Jewry. We ask the East”, he declared defiantly, “to discover us as we have discovered them.”<sup>63</sup> Goldstein’s attempts to rehabilitate Western Jewry derived from his rejection of the notion that superiority was born out of authenticity. Eastern European Jewry was not intrinsically “more Jewish”; unlike Western Jewry, Eastern Jewry had not lost its national consciousness and therefore did not need to retrieve it. Its conception of national identity was naive because it did not have to withstand the acid tests (*Feuerproben*) of emancipation and assimilation.<sup>64</sup> Eastern Jewry, he felt, would not withstand these tests and would not be immune to the lures of a dominant surrounding nation and culture; those intending to keep an enclave of “authentic” Jewishness alive did so for the sake of demonstrating to Western Jewry its own degeneration.<sup>65</sup> Goldstein dismissed efforts to encourage a revival of Jewish authenticity (*Ursprünglichkeit*) among Western Jewry as “forced, a kind of acting and masquerade.”<sup>66</sup> Instead, he maintained that it was necessary to move towards a “synthesis of the contradiction between East and West”.<sup>67</sup>

To Goldstein, the inevitable outcome of the war would be the achievement of a “Jewish reality” and the resolution of the tension he experienced as a result of his dual identity. He believed that with the war individualism would be superseded by a new ethic of community. The war had changed

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> A similar metaphor appears in Baruch’s article ‘Die Juden des Westens im Urteil Achad Haams’ in *Der Jude* where the author refers to an “Assimilationsbrand” which will light up Eastern European Jewry with blazing fires. See K. Baruch, ‘Die Juden des Westens im Urteil Achad Haams’, *Der Jude*, vol. 1 (1916/17), pp. 373–377, p. 374.

<sup>65</sup> Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, pp. 7–8.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6. or, as Goethe wrote: “Wer sich selbst und andre kennt,/Wird auch hier erkennen:/Orient und Okzident/Sind nicht mehr zu trennen./Sinnig zwischen beiden Welten/Sich zu wiegen, lass’ ich gelten;/Also zwischen Ost und Westen/Sich bewegen sei zum Besten!” See Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe, ‘Aus dem Nachlass [1826/1833]’, in ‘West-Östlicher Divan’, *Goethes Werke*, vol. II, *Gedichte und Epen*, Munich 1976, p. 121.

the meaning of what it was to be a citizen: “We are not citizens in a merely legalistic or bureaucratic sense (*aktenmäßigen und paragrafenhaften Sinne*) but in as real a way as possible; we are bound to this state with our blood, with our cultural will, and with our ethos,”<sup>68</sup> whereas previously Jews had claimed citizenship as “an emotionally justified entitlement to equality as citizens despite the maintenance of a separate nationality (*Sondernationalität*).”<sup>69</sup> For Goldstein, then, the war had not only brought intensification of commitment to Jewish nationalist aims, but had re-fashioned the terms of citizenship. This he interpreted as the consequence of a new supranational form of state to which the nation states of the nineteenth century had given way and which would resolve the previous contradiction between nationality and state. In 1915 Goldstein could still optimistically assert: “I cannot, for the moment, believe that the fight for life and death in which Jews took part, not *pro forma* but with their own blood, will be quickly forgotten.”<sup>70</sup> By the end of 1916, however, he had come to believe that the new postwar Jewish reality would also include an upsurge of hostility towards Jews. In the light of such opposition it would be vital for Jews to exercise their newly found sense of community, while, in his words, “holding on to the piece of German soil which fate has granted them.”<sup>71</sup> On the whole, it must be said that Goldstein’s adoption of a more pronounced Jewish stance did not consolidate his identity as a German Jew but simply compounded his problems: “As long as I considered myself to be a German with a coincidentally Jewish religion”, he wrote, “I was someone, something whole ... . As a German I was part of a great community.”<sup>72</sup> The emergence of another – Jewish nationalist – dimension to his identity did not liberate, strengthen, unify or simplify him as he had hoped; on the contrary, he felt a diminishing of his identity, a loss of his previous rootedness.

The war’s initial promise of unity struck a chord with Goldstein, who expected the *Burgfrieden* and the war experience to relieve him of his sense of standing on the periphery of German society and replace it with a consolidation of his fragile integration. While at the outset he feared that

<sup>68</sup> Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, pp. 25–26.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> Goldstein to [Arthur] Hantke, 2 November 1915, MS, II AK 85-192-2, IfZ.

<sup>71</sup> Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, p. 27. His poems, too, testify to a pessimistic outlook in the course of 1916, with titles such as ‘Der Zweifel’, ‘Resignation’, and later ‘Der Verbannte’ expressing none of his earlier optimism. See Goldstein, ‘Gedichte’, MS, II AK 85/192-6, Nos. 090, 091, 092, 097, IfZ.

<sup>72</sup> Goldstein, ‘Westöstliche Konfessionen’, p. 17.

involvement in the Zionist movement could put his integration at risk, by the end he felt compelled to express the need for affirmation of Jewish identity. Goldstein's writings during the First World War testify to his experience of a double bind in which he both delivered lectures to troops on Germany's cultural mission and worked on a treatise about the consolidation of Jewish consciousness. It is striking that Goldstein used literary models which revealed his acculturation in order to prepare his own dissimulation. One might argue that while the war experience led many individuals to examine their own loyalties more closely it did not act as a general catalyst to a full resolution of identity conflicts. Some emerged with a strengthened sense of Jewish identity, others became politicised and others again, including Goldstein, remained as torn as before. Yet even those testimonies which do not demonstrate clear-cut positions, but simply present a state of mind in response to external upheaval, add further to our understanding of how the First World War affected German Jews.





KEITH H. PICKUS

## Divergent Paths of National Integration and Acculturation: Jewish and Catholic Educational Strategies in Nineteenth Century Hesse-Darmstadt

The history of German Jewry continues to be a subject of intense fascination and tremendous scrutiny. The unparalleled flowering of modern Jewish life, coupled with the cataclysmic events of the Nazi period, have compelled scholars to examine the rise of the German 'nation' and the concomitant processes of Jewish emancipation and integration. From George Mosse's path-breaking *Crisis of German Ideology*<sup>1</sup> to the recent multi-authored history of German Jewry in modern times edited by Michael A. Meyer,<sup>2</sup> historians have attempted to unravel the Gordian knot of German history. That is, how does one interpret the paradoxical condition of Jewish existence in a Germany that nurtured both the emergence of modern Jewry and the genocidal policies of the Third Reich?

Although the range of literature on the subject is extensive, seldom has the historical experience of German Jews been compared to that of other religious minorities.<sup>3</sup> The most noticeable exceptions to this general trend occur in three forms: historical works that investigate Catholic views of

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<sup>1</sup> George Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Michael A. Meyer (ed.), *German Jewish History in Modern Times*, 4 vols., New York 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Two path-breaking studies are Till van Rahden, 'Weder Milieu noch Konfession: Die situative Ethnizität der deutschen Juden im Kaiserreich in vergleichender Perspektive', in Olaf Blaschke and Frank-Michael Kuhlemann (eds.), *Religion im Kaiserreich. Milieus, Mentalität, Krisen*, Gütersloh 1996, pp. 410–435, and Jacob Borut and Oded Heilbronner, 'Leaving the Walls or Anomalous Activity: The Catholic and Jewish Rural Bourgeoisie in Germany', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, (1998), pp. 475–502.

antisemitism,<sup>4</sup> collected works on religious groups within Germany,<sup>5</sup> and studies of German nationalism that focus on the relationship between national and religious identities.<sup>6</sup> Outside of these arenas, comparative analyses of German Jews and other religious minorities are virtually non-existent.

Historians have been reluctant to compare the Jewish experience to that of other minority groups for two important reasons. First, the proliferation of German-Jewish historiography over the past three decades and the increasing degree of specialisation within the historical profession work against comparative methodologies. Mastering the literature relevant to the Jewish experience in Germany is challenging enough. To become sufficiently familiar with a second corpus of scholarship necessary to facilitate a comparative study is a daunting task. An additional explanation for the dearth of comparisons is due, in part, to the phenomenon of "ethnic assertiveness". This principle suggests that members of ethnic groups, like Jews, are loath to compare their experiences to those of other minorities for fear of diminishing the uniqueness and, hence, importance of their history. But, as the historian Todd Endelmann is quick to suggest, "any assertion of the historical uniqueness of a particular experience must rest on a comparative perspective, even if implicit, since the very idea of

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Walter Zvi Bachrach, *Anti-Jewish Prejudices in German-Catholic Sermons*, transl. by Chaya Galai, New York 1993; David Blackbourn, 'Catholics, the Centre Party and Anti-Semitism', in *Populists and Patricians: Essays in Modern German History*, London, 1987, pp. 168–187; Olaf Blaschke, 'Wider die "Herrschaft des modern-jüdischen Geistes": Der Katholizismus zwischen traditionellem Antijudaismus und modernem Antisemitismus', in *Deutscher Katholizismus im Umbruch zur Moderne*, Wilfried Loth (ed.), Stuttgart 1991; Ernst Heinen, 'Antisemitische Strömungen im politischen Katholizismus während des Kulturkampfes', in *Geschichte in der Gegenwart. Festschrift für Kurt Kluxen*, Ernst Heinen, Hans Julius Schoeps (eds.), Paderborn 1972; Dagmar Herzog, 'Anti-Judaism in Intra-Christian Conflict: Catholics and Liberals in Baden in the 1840s', in *Central European History*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1994), pp. 267–281; and Stefan Rohrbacher, 'Volksfrömmigkeit und Judenfeindschaft. Zur Vorgeschichte des politischen Antisemitismus im katholischen Rheinland', in *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, 192/193 (1990), pp. 125–144.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Heinrich Rengstorff and Sigfried von Kortzfleisch (eds.), *Kirche und Synagoge. Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden. Darstellung mit Quellen*, 2 vols., Munich 1988.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Altgeld, *Katholizismus, Protestantismus, Judentum: über religiös begründete Gegensätze und nationalreligiöse Ideen in der Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus*, Mainz 1992; Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914*, Princeton 1995, and Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich*, Ithaca 1975.

uniqueness implies dissimilarity, a quality that can be apprehended only through comparison".<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, Rainer Liedtke writes that in the "absence of comparison there will be no challenge to accepted paths of thinking and no test of peculiarities".<sup>8</sup>

At least in part, the "absence of comparison" in German Jewish historiography has resulted in Jews being portrayed as "abnormal", individuals whose experiences were entirely dissimilar to those of other Germans. While Jews lived in German lands and their stories are related to the lives of non-Jews, they are often depicted as having followed a unique path, a Jewish *Sonderweg*, so to speak. In much the same way that the *Sonderweg* thesis was used to explain the rise of Nazism in Germany,<sup>9</sup> the unarticulated "Jewish *Sonderweg*" suggests why Jews became the primary target of Nazi genocide. Yet, just as the *Sonderweg* was seriously criticised and led to new paths of enquiry, it is time to remove the "abnormal" stigma from German Jews. After all, in many ways German Jewish existence was undeniably "normal". Jews, like their Christian neighbours, made love, raised children, formed communities and interacted with the world around them. Members of both groups responded to the transformative developments that unfolded in Germany during the nineteenth century: industrialisation, urbanisation and the emergence of the nation-state. Rather than defining the history of German Jews in terms of "normality/abnormality", a comparative lens that employs the concepts of similarity and dissimilarity may bring the lives of German Jews into sharper relief. This is especially true when the experiences of Jews are compared to those of Germany's other significant religious minority, the Catholics.

Notwithstanding the fundamental demographic and socio-economic differences between Catholics and Jews – German Catholics far outnumbered German Jews, Catholics were over-represented in Germany's rural environs, and they constituted a disproportionately small percentage of the expanding middle class – both groups clearly occupied minority positions within German society. Their minority status is evidenced by the fact that Catholics and Jews "enjoyed fewer privileges and less recogni-

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<sup>7</sup> Todd Endelman (ed.), *Comparing Jewish Societies*, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 12–13.

<sup>8</sup> Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst, (eds.), *The emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the nation state in nineteenth-century Europe*, Manchester 1999, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> The literature on the *Sonderweg* is extensive, but the classic critique remains David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in 19th Century Germany*, Oxford 1984.

tion” in their social relations with members of the Protestant majority and that “their opportunities in life and their power to assert themselves were more limited than those of [the] majority group”.<sup>10</sup> Living in Germany required Catholics and Jews to negotiate the terrain between their respective religious identities and the Protestant “high culture”.<sup>11</sup> For Jews this meant a contested but gradual process of acculturation that enabled them to move out of the ‘ghetto’ and into an emerging civic society. Accommodations in religious ritual and diet, coupled with an enthusiastic embrace of the liberal-nationalist version of the German nation facilitated the emancipation of German Jewry. Catholics, on the other hand, crafted a confessional identity that was in opposition to the high culture readily accepted by German Jews. From the creation of Catholic charitable associations to the emergence of the Centre party, German Catholics travelled a fundamentally different road from Jews on their way to national integration. Nowhere are their divergent paths more apparent than within the realm of education.

Until the nineteenth century, Catholic and Jewish communities placed religious instruction and the preservation of their distinctive religious cultures at the forefront of their communities’ paedagogical objectives. Catholics and Jews were acutely aware of the intimate connection between education and the perpetuation of their respective religious traditions. Accordingly, clerics, priests and nuns in Catholic schools, and talmudic scholars in the corresponding Jewish setting, staffed communal schools. Catholic children were trained to fulfill their sacramental duties, and Jewish children were instructed on the maintenance of *Halakhah* (Jewish law). The transformative impact of late eighteenth-century intellectual and political developments threatened to radically alter the traditional educational structures of both communities.

The emergence of the German ‘nation’ in the nineteenth century compelled a re-orientation of educational policy. From the demise of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 to the unification of Germany in 1871 and the consequent process of nation-building that followed, Germany was trans-

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<sup>10</sup> Liedtke, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Gellner writes that “nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population”. *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983, pp. 48–49 and 55–62. David Blackbourn states emphatically that Protestants viewed German Culture as Protestant. *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918*, New York 1998, p. 293.



formed from an “imagined community” to one housed within fixed geographical boundaries and governed by representative political institutions. As an independent, sovereign German nation took shape, the creation and dissemination of a standardised high culture was necessary to unify the disparate cultural entities that comprised pre-unification Germany. According to Ernst Gellner, in modern, industrialised nations,

[C]ulture is no longer merely the adornment, confirmation and legitimation of a social order which was also sustained by harsher and coercive constraints; culture is now the necessary shared medium, the life-blood or perhaps rather the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce. For a given society, it must be one in which they can *all* breathe and speak and produce; so it must be the *same* culture.<sup>12</sup>

Although cultural homogeneity on the national level remained elusive in Germany, it did not dissuade nation-builders from attempting to impose it on a diverse populace by virtue of a uniform educational policy. Given, however, that education in Germany is supervised by each state, the relationship between education and nation building must be evaluated at the regional level.

This essay examines the nexus between the educational strategies of German Catholics and Jews in Hesse as a case study of the processes by which the two religious minorities were integrated into the German nation-state. The temporal focal point is the nineteenth century, a time of unprecedented educational opportunity for Jews and, simultaneously, bitter conflict between German Catholics and the Protestant state for control of communal schools. The study’s regional perspective reveals the distinct educational strategies of each minority group and the process of nation building at the local level. The resulting analysis will illuminate how primary school educational policy facilitated the national integration of German Catholics and Jews, and it will also suggest why, in spite of their common minority status, Jews and Catholics often found themselves in opposite political camps during the *Kaiserreich*.

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<sup>12</sup> Gellner, pp. 37–38.

*Catholic Education in Hesse*

In Hesse, control of the educational process and, particularly, the training of Catholic clergy was an early point of friction between the Church and the secular regime. The *Reichsdeputationshauptschluß* (1803) dissolved church administrative territories, closed monasteries and undermined the position of the Catholic Church within the German lands.<sup>13</sup> Deprived of great material wealth and political power, church authorities focused their concerns on educating Catholic youth. An array of communal elementary schools located throughout the Grand Duchy of Hesse provided the two Catholic *Gymnasien* (grammar schools) with numerous qualified candidates. The best students from these preparatory institutions for university and advanced studies went on to study at the seminary in Mainz that had re-opened in 1802 after being closed by French authorities during the previous decade. The situation remained stable until 1829 when a new Catholic seminary was established at the university in Gießen. Transferring the Catholic seminary to Gießen, the centre of Protestant learning for the Grand Duchy, was an explicit attempt to diminish Catholic influence in the realm of education. The move curtailed the training of priests and caused serious shortages throughout the diocese. By the time Wilhelm Kettler assumed the bishop's seat in 1850 and re-opened the Mainz seminary, forty-five parishes were without priests and thousands of Catholic school children without qualified religious instructors. *Der Katholik*, a major voice of the Mainz archbishopric, published a steady stream of articles that denounced attempts by the state to assume control over education and demanded that German Catholics retain the right to educate their youth.<sup>14</sup> Under Kettler's leadership, Catholic schools in Hesse prospered until 1872, when the passage of *Kulturkampf* legislation made education a major point of friction between the Protestant regimes in Berlin and Darmstadt and the Catholic communities of Hesse.

The attempt to create a unified national culture based on enlightened Protestantism manifested itself in the 1870s in the guise of the *Kul-*

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<sup>13</sup> An overview of these events is found in Gerhard Besier, *Kirche, Politik und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1998. More detailed accounts are provided in Heinz Hürten, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Katholizismus 1800-1960*, Mainz 1986, and Anton Rauscher (ed.), *Entwicklungslinien des deutschen Katholizismus*, Munich 1973.

<sup>14</sup> The index of *Der Katholik* for the years 1821-1889 contains three pages of entries related to the topic of schools. Johannes Stillbauer, *General-Register des 'Katholik' vom Jahre 1821 bis 1889*, Mainz 1892, pp. 215-217.

*turkampf*, a legislative assault aimed squarely against the Catholic communities of the recently established Reich. This campaign, in the words of Wolfgang Altgeld, is best understood as being about the questions “which inheritance from pre-national cultures should be woven into the new national culture, which leitmotif should be stamped on it and which groups would therefore be privileged”.<sup>15</sup> The supporters of this assault were found largely within the ‘liberal’ camp of German politics, a diverse and constantly shifting collection of individuals ranging from Protestant Prussian nationalists who wanted to give full expression to the *kleindeutsch* vision of the nation to fully acculturated Jews who had transferred their religious allegiances to an ethic of Protestant *Bildung*.<sup>16</sup>

The *Kulturkampf* labelled German Catholics as “enemies of the nation,” and it sought to diminish clerical influence and curtail the Centre Party’s political power. The 1867 school laws in Baden, the Prussian Law of March 1872 and comparable legislation in other German states mandated state supervision of public and private schools. The *Reichsgesetz* of July 1872 prohibited new Jesuit institutions in Germany from opening, dissolved those in existence, restricted where Jesuit priests could reside and gave local authorities the right to expel individual priests for ‘subversive’ activities. The May Laws of 1873 made attendance at a German *Gymnasium* and the successful completion of courses in philosophy, history and German literature prerequisites for ordination as a priest or minister. Laws passed in May 1874 allowed for the expulsion of all practising clerics who had yet to satisfy state requirements and sanctioned civil marriages. When the Prussian episcopate refused to abide by the recent legislation and an 1875 papal encyclical declared the laws against the Catholic Church to be null and void, an open conflict ensued between Catholics and the German nation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Wolfgang Altgeld, ‘German Catholics’, in Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst (eds.), *The emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the nation state in nineteenth century Europe*, Manchester 1999, p. 114. See also Smith, *German Nationalism*, p. 20, and Stephan Wendehorst, ‘Emancipation as path to national integration’, in Liedtke and Wendehorst, pp. 188–206.

<sup>16</sup> On the Jewish commitment to *Bildung* see George Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, Bloomington 1985.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Anderson demonstrates the difficulties of dating the *Kulturkampf* and looks to the “heightened popular hostility to Catholics” following the Prussian victory over Austria as a plausible starting point for the *Kulturkampf*. Anderson’s argument is found in her article ‘The *Kulturkampf* and the Course of German History’, in *Central European History* 19 (1986), pp. 82–115. A good overview of the *Kulturkampf* is found in Besier, pp. 21–26 and Rudolf Morsey, ‘The *Kulturkampf*’, in Anton Rauscher (ed.),

The school laws in Hesse, like those enacted throughout the Reich, were the cornerstones of the nation-building project engineered by German liberals. A national educational system, according to Marjorie Lamberti, would cultivate patriotism and shared political loyalties and “establish the primacy of the relationship of the citizen to the state”.<sup>18</sup> In essence, schools were perceived to be the bonding agent of the national community. In Hesse, the liberal bureaucrat and chief minister of the government, Karl Hoffman, partnered with the Hessian Diet to reform the educational system. The first blow was delivered in 1874 when Hoffman secured passage of a law that established non-denominational schools for parents who did not want their children to be educated by clerics. Although Hoffman and his allies hoped for the complete separation of church and state, the compromise legislation secured the support of Hesse’s upper house, a body still controlled by conservative forces.<sup>19</sup> When the School Laws of 1874 were reinforced with the “April laws” the following spring, greater inroads were made into the confessional character of schools in Hesse-Darmstadt. Under the old system, which had been in effect since 1832, clerics served as directors of local and state school boards. The new laws removed pastors and priests from their school board positions, reduced religious instruction from six to four hours per week, and stipulated that religious instruction need not be taught exclusively by members of the clergy. In addition, religious observance and church attendance ceased to be a mandatory part of the school day. In essence, formal religious instruction was eliminated from the curriculum, a change that meant that Catholic school children had to prepare for their first communion and other sacraments after school hours.<sup>20</sup> In communities scattered throughout Hesse, Catholic instruction was relegated to an ‘extra-curricular’ activity.

At first glance, and certainly in the eyes of contemporary Catholics, the new laws appeared to mark the end of confessional schools. A number of Catholic schools closed and others were transformed into confessionally mixed *Simultanschulen*. When examined more closely, however, the

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*Der soziale und politische Katholizismus: Entwicklungslinien in Deutschland 1803-1963*, 2 vols., Munich and Vienna 1982, pp. 76–78.

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Lamberti, *State, Society and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*, New York 1989, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> Dan White, *The Splintered Party: National Liberalism in Hessen and the Reich 1867-1918*, Cambridge 1976, pp. 30–34.

<sup>20</sup> *Der Kulturkampf in Hessen*, Gau-Algesheim, n.d., pp. 29–35.

impact on traditional, confessionally segregated schools is not as clear-cut. *Simultanschulen* did not replace confessional schools. Rather, they emerged in areas where Protestants and Catholics resided in roughly equal number, and in areas of the Catholic diaspora where it was not possible to maintain school enrolment above thirty students, the minimum number necessary to receive public funds. In predominantly Catholic communities, such as Gau Algesheim, schools remained Catholic.<sup>21</sup> As difficult as the *Kulturkampf* legislation was for Hessian Catholics, the regional focus also illuminates an element of governmental flexibility that did not exist in Prussia. For example, the parishes of Oberlenbach and Biblis successfully lobbied for replacement priests at a time when most vacancies went unfilled. The Hessian government, in spite of the prohibition against religious education within the schools, also allowed Catholic clergy to continue teaching at the *Gymnasien* in Mainz, Worms and Bensheim, and at the *Realschule* in Mainz and Bingen.<sup>22</sup> The straightforward picture of the *Kulturkampf* that is seen when one reads German history from a Berlin-centred perspective assumes greater nuance when situated in a local context. The project of nation building was not a monolithic enterprise manipulated by Prussian bureaucrats and imposed evenly throughout Germany. The means by which the Catholic minority participated in the process comes into sharper focus when examined away from the nexus of national power. The same is also true for German Jews.

### *Jewish Education in Hesse*

In direct contrast to Catholics, German Jews responded positively to government directives that threatened to alter their traditional educational patterns. In pre-modern Germany, before the parallel movements of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) and the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) opened the doors of Gentile society to some Jews at the end of the eighteenth century, the majority of German Jews were educated exclusively within the secure cultural walls of two traditional Jewish educational institutions: the *heder* and the *yeshivah*. At the age of five or six, Jewish boys were sent to a *heder* where the curriculum provided the basis of a national-religious consciousness for the Jewish community. The *yeshivah*

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Leopold Haffner, *Die Lage der katholischen Kirche im Grossherzogthum Hessen, Mainz*, 1885, pp. 67–72 and Karl Helm and Christofer Hermann, *Pfarrer Peter Koser und die Zeit des Kulturkampfes*, Gau-Algesheim 1983, pp. 96–98.

<sup>22</sup> Haffner, pp. 33–43.



was the Jewish equivalent of an institute of higher learning, one exclusively reserved for the academic elite. The essence of Jewish culture, its values, customs and legal structure, was embodied in the Jewish educational system.<sup>23</sup> By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, however, proponents of the *Aufklärung* and the *Haskalah* lobbied to end the social and cultural isolation of German Jewry and formulated a program which, among other goals, advocated restructuring Jewish education.<sup>24</sup>

While educational reform was given legal sanction in the German lands by Joseph II's Edict of Toleration in 1782,<sup>25</sup> the spread of enlightenment principles throughout Jewish and Gentile German society provided the impetus for the creation of the first modern Jewish schools, the so-called *Freischulen* (Free Schools). Founded by Jews in Berlin (1778), Breslau (1791), and Dessau (1799), the *Freischulen* introduced secular topics into a Jewish educational system. Even though only 900 Jewish children enrolled in *Freischulen* in 1812, they pioneered the secularisation of Jewish education in Germany and paved the way for German Jews to attend non-Jewish schools. In the decades that followed, the number of German Jews attending Gentile schools increased dramatically. By the middle of the nineteenth century, fifty percent of all German-Jewish male school children attended non-Jewish educational institutions and, by 1867, the number had increased to seventy-five percent of the Jewish school-aged population.<sup>26</sup> The move toward non-Jewish schools was even more pronounced in Germany's urban areas.

In Hesse's larger cities, the transformation of Jewish education was spurred by state mandated legislation that theoretically enabled Jewish children to attend non-Jewish schools.<sup>27</sup> In 1826, Jewish parents in Mainz

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<sup>23</sup> On Jewish education in the early modern period see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, New York 1961.

<sup>24</sup> For further discussion of education and identity formation see Keith Pickus, *Constructing Modern Identities: Jewish University Students in Germany, 1815-1914*, Detroit 1999, pp. 26-35.

<sup>25</sup> The document is published in Alfred Pribram, *Urkunde und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, Vienna 1918, vol. 1, pp. 494-500 and is found in Raphael Mahler (ed. and transl), *Jewish Emancipation: A Selection of Documents* by R. Mahler, Pamphlet Series, Jews and the Post-War World, no. 1, New York 1941.

<sup>26</sup> On the transformation of Jewish education in Germany see Mordechai Eliav, 'Jüdische Erziehung in Deutschland im Zeitalter der Aufklärung und der Emanzipation', in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts*, 3 (1960), pp. 207-215, and *Jewish Education in Germany in the Period of Enlightenment and Emancipation*, (Hebrew), Jerusalem 1960.

<sup>27</sup> A series of edicts were passed at the state level between 1817 and 1832 that gradually opened Christian schools to Jews and placed Jewish schools under state supervision. References to these laws are made in many of the local histories of Hesse's

who wanted to send their children to Christian schools successfully petitioned local administrators to enforce the recently enacted legislation.<sup>28</sup> Within two decades, Jewish children in Mainz regularly attended both confessionally based *Volkschulen* (Primary Schools) and non-denominational *Communalschulen* (Municipal Schools).<sup>29</sup> In Worms, an 1824 decree by the town's governing board made school obligatory for all children between the ages of six and fourteen, and it stated specifically that "children of all religious beliefs, including *Israeliten*, should be educated together". By the middle of the century, Jewish enrolment at the *Wormser Großherzogliches Gymnasium* had reached a point where the Jewish community deemed it necessary to hire a local rabbi to teach religion at the school.<sup>30</sup>

In Hesse's rural environs, however, Jewish educational patterns did not conform to the trends that were established in the larger communities. In towns and villages scattered throughout the Grand Duchy, Jewish schools remained in operation well into the second half of the century, even though many lacked the financial resources necessary to hire full-time teachers. To staff local Jewish schools, smaller *Gemeinden* often hired a single individual to lead prayers on the Sabbath, to serve as the *Schächter* (Ritual Slaughterer) and to teach the community's school-aged children.<sup>31</sup> So long as there were at least thirty Jewish children enrolled, Jewish schools remained operational. Once the migration of Jews to the urban centres gathered momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century and enrolment fell below the minimum level, many Jewish schools lost their funding and were forced to close. It simply was not economically

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Jewish communities. The 1823 and 1832 edicts are contained in *Dokumentation zur Geschichte der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Rheinland-Pfalz und im Saarland von 1800-1945*, Herausgegeben von der Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz in Verbindung mit dem Landesarchiv Saarbrücken, Band 3, Koblenz 1972, pp. 193–194 and 209–210.

<sup>28</sup> File no. 11 in folio no. 70/1406 in the Mainz City Archive contains the documents mentioned here.

<sup>29</sup> An 1876 article in the *Mainzer Journal* refers to Jews having attended *Communalschule* for decades: 'Die Juden und die *Communalschule* in Mainz und ihr Vertheidiger', in *Mainzer Journal*, no. 173 (27 July 1876).

<sup>30</sup> Fritz Reuter, *Warmaisa. 1000 Jahre Juden in Worms*, Worms 1984, pp. 151–152.

<sup>31</sup> Uri Kaufmann, 'Religiöses Leben und Volksfrömmigkeit der Landjuden', in Thomas Lange (ed.), *L'chaiyim. Die Geschichte der Juden im Landkreis Darmstadt-Dieburg*, Reinheim 1998, pp. 46–58. The communal histories of many rural *Gemeinden* also attest to this trend. See, for example, Thomas Geibel, 'Zur Geschichte der Juden in Neustadt' in *600 Jahre Stadt am Breuberg. Bausteine zu einer Geschichte der Stadt Breuber*, Sonderdruck, Breuberg 1978, pp. 147–148.

viable to maintain a Jewish school without financial assistance from the state. Jewish families that remained in rural areas without access to Jewish schools had no option but to educate their children in the local *Volksschule*, even when their presence was not welcome. In Butzbach, the local school commission not only challenged the right of Jewish students to attend Christian schools but also fined Isaak Kann, a Jew, for keeping his son out of school on Saturdays so that he could observe the Jewish sabbath.<sup>32</sup>

Regardless of whether Jewish parents elected to send their children to Christian schools by choice or default, it became increasingly common for German Jews to supplement their children's education with extra-curricular Judaica instruction, a situation that parallels that of Catholics who lived in diaspora communities. The transformation of Jewish education from an all-encompassing system to a supplementary one presented a variety of new challenges for German Jews. First, supplemental Jewish education failed to replicate the transference of Jewish cultural knowledge that occurred within a traditional educational setting. In Heppenheim, for example, the gradual reduction of religious instruction within the context of the school day from twenty-five hours per week to the two hours mandated by an 1876 law, produced a Jewish community that was functionally illiterate in Hebrew. By 1900, the community had to use bilingual prayer books.<sup>33</sup> The turn toward the supplemental model also meant that Jewish communities throughout Hesse, and all of Germany, increasingly looked to the *Bar Mitzvah* as the culmination of religious education as opposed to a ceremonial rite of passage.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, only a minority of German Jewish children attended supplemental religious schools. Urban Jews often decided against sending their children to extra-curricular religious schools, and some rural communities were too poor to hire a teacher.<sup>35</sup> After remaining relatively stable for many generations, German Jews radically altered their educational profile during the nineteenth century.

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<sup>32</sup> Ludwig Hellriegel, 'Geschichte der Butzbacher Juden', in *Wetterauer Geschichtsblätter*, 17 (1968), pp. 32–34.

<sup>33</sup> Lehrplan der Israelitischen Schule zu Heppenheim, Sommersemester 1851, Hessisches Staatsarchiv, file no.17/78. It is also reproduced in Wilhelm Metzendorf, *Geschichte und Geschehnisse der Heppheimer Juden*, Lorsch 1982, p. 118.

<sup>34</sup> Kaufman, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Steven Lowenstein, 'The Community', in idem et al, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*. Vol. 3. Integration in Dispute, New York 1997, pp. 136–138.

Having lived as outsiders for centuries, German Jews leapt at the opportunity to shed their pariah status and join an expanding civil society. As Jews changed the content and structure of their educational system, they significantly transformed their national-religious consciousness. By attending Gentile schools, Jewish students participated in an educational system which imparted a national heritage alien to traditional Jewish society. Whereas a classical Jewish education predicated exclusively on the study of Jewish texts transmitted Jewish national and religious traditions, Gentile schools prepared Jews for life within German society. The transition from self-contained Jewish schools to Protestant and Catholic *Volksschulen* fundamentally altered the national consciousness of German Jews.

The maintenance of Catholic schools, on the other hand, preserved a national-religious identity that was developed in contradistinction to Protestant Prussian nationalism. Before the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the segregation of schools along confessional lines paralleled and perpetuated divisions within society as a whole and enabled German Catholics to maintain their distinctive national-religious identity. The defeat of Austria and the southern German states on the battlefield in 1866 and the subsequent creation of a Prussian dominated German Reich in 1871 significantly altered relations between German Catholics and the nation. The preservation of a distinct Catholic-Germanic entity was anathema to the Protestant Prussian State, and the newly unified nation moved rapidly to impose cultural homogeneity on its recalcitrant Catholic minority. The attempts to shut down confessional schools and unify the nation failed miserably. Not only did Catholic schools remain operational throughout the Kaiserreich, but a distinct German Catholic consciousness crystallised in response to the *Kulturkampf*.

Ultimately, two fundamental differences between the Catholic and Jewish minorities affected their relationship to the national community, one quantitative and the other qualitative. The sheer size of the Catholic community enabled it to exert a determinant political influence that gradually informed the development of national culture in a way that simply was not available to the much smaller Jewish minority. Once liberalism ceased to play a significant role in nation building, the positions of Jews and Catholics within the nation were largely reversed. Jews found themselves stigmatised as foreign, while Catholics were reluctantly welcomed into the nation. This political transition was assisted by the two religious minorities' relationship to Christianity. Although Protestants and Catholics had been bitter enemies for centuries and remained highly

suspicious of one another throughout the Kaiserreich, the two groups shared common symbols of meaning. From Jesus as the messiah to the celebration of religious holidays, many of the symbols employed by Catholics and Protestants to orient themselves in their day-to-day existence were mutually intelligible. Jews and Christians, however, mark time and place in fundamentally different ways. The symbols of Judaism, from a Saturday Sabbath to the prayers intoned for the expectation of the messianic age, remained intractably foreign to Christians.

In the final analysis, the absence of shared symbolism between Jews and Christians complicated the membership of the Jewish minority in the national community that was defined in Christian-Germanic terms. A nation that draws upon religious symbolism to define its existence excludes, by definition, individuals who do not share the same signifiers of meaning. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Catholics and Jews seldom found themselves on the same side of the political fence. Their shared minority status was insufficient to bind the two groups in common cause.



ROBIN JUDD

## Jewish Political Behaviour and the *Schächtfrage*, 1880-1914\*

In 1892 the Kingdom of Saxony promulgated slaughterhouse regulations that highlighted the particularities of Germany's Jewish minority and challenged Jewish acculturation in Saxony. Interestingly, while the abattoir regulations significantly affected Saxon Jewish life, they did not specifically target or address Saxon Jewry. Instead, the laws prohibited women and children from entering the slaughterhouse, demanded that animal slaughterers be licensed, and required the stunning of all animals into a state of unconsciousness before their slaughter.<sup>1</sup> It was the latter portion of the regulations that most affected Saxon Jewry. The Saxon insistence that *all* animals be stunned before their slaughter was synonymous with a prohibition of kosher butchering because the laws of Judaism dictate that a *conscious* animal must be slaughtered for food. (Jewish law mandates that the *shohet* – slaughterer – must slaughter the conscious animal by severing its trachea and oesophagus with an extremely sharp, smooth knife, i.e. *shehitah*.)

For almost twenty years, the 1892 regulations helped to emphasise Jewish distinctiveness and propelled discussions of that difference into the public sphere. As Saxon Jews requested an exemption on the basis of their religious particularities and their alleged history of seamless acculturation, the State rejected their pleas. It asserted that the Jewish commu-

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<sup>1</sup> 'Das Schächtverbot in Sachsen', in *Die Laubhütte* 16 (1892), pp. 152-153; 'In Bezug auf das Betäuben der Schlachtthiere', in *Deutsche Thierschutz-Zeitung "Ibis"* (*Ibis*) 5/6 (1892), p. 29; O. Hartmann, 'Aus dem Rechenschaftsbericht für 1889/92', in *Ibis* 9/10 (1892), p. 49-51; '3. August Polizeiverordnung betreffend das Verfahren beim Viehschlachten', in *Ibis* 11/12 (1892), p. 66; J. Auerbach II, 'Das Schächtverbot in Sachsen', in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums (AZdJ)*, 6 (1894).

nity needed to abandon its differences in order to integrate further into Saxon society.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1892 and 1910, the kosher butchering debates in Saxony helped to establish new norms of Jewish political behaviour. Rather than quietly appeal to a few non-Jewish notables as they had done in past instances of conflict, Saxon Jewish leaders petitioned governmental authorities at all levels, organised numerous letter writing campaigns, garnered letters of support, attended animal protection society meetings, and spoke at dozens of city councils. In addition, the Saxon Jewish federation's president during the first decade of the twentieth century, Max Elb, consulted Jewish and non-Jewish institutions outside of Saxony on the art of defence, served on the executive boards of national *shehitah*-defence agencies, and helped publish a collection of letters defending the Jewish ritual. Elb, a businessman in Dresden, and his organisation thrust themselves into the political sphere. Emphasising their Jewish particularities as well as their Saxon citizenry, they made no secret of their specifically "Jewish" agenda.<sup>3</sup>

The 1892 slaughterhouse reforms and the reactions they engendered were not unique to Saxony.<sup>4</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, dozens of German states, cities and villages enacted slaughterhouse regulations, many of which had been lobbied for by animal protection, veterinarian and antisemitic societies.<sup>5</sup> Like in Saxony, Jewish communal leaders across Germany – regardless of denominational

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<sup>2</sup> 1892 letters between the Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Dresden and the Minister des Innern, Neue Synagoge Berlin-Centrum Judaicum Archiv (NSBCJ) 75CVE1 344 10-39; 'Ministerial-Verordnung (Königreich-Sachsen) am 1 Oktober 1892', in *Berliner Thierschutz-Verein* (BTV) 1 (1892), p.1; 'Zur Schlachtreform in Sachsen', in BTV 1 (1892), p. 1; J. Auerbach II, 'Das Schächtverbot'; O. Hartmann 'Aus dem Rechenschaftsbericht für 1889/92'.

<sup>3</sup> 1892 letters between the Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Dresden and the Minister des Innern, NSBCJ 75CVE1 344 10-39; 21 October 1907 letter from Max Elb to M. Philippson, NSBCJ 75Cvel 344 195; 1908 petition of the Verband der israelitischen Religionsgemeinden in Königreich Sachsen, NSBCJ 75Cvel 344 320; 22 April 1910 letter from the Verband der israelitischen Religionsgemeinden in Königreich Sachsen to the Verband der Thierschutzvereine des deutschen Reiches, NSBCJ 75Cvel 243.

<sup>4</sup> Robin E. Judd *German Jewish Rituals, Bodies, and Citizenship*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan 2000).

<sup>5</sup> These debates were not unique to Germany. On the *Schächtfrage* in England, see Geoffrey Alderman, 'Power, Authority and Status in British Jewry: The Chief Rabbinate and Shechita', in Geoffrey Alderman and Colin Holmes (eds.), *Outsiders & Outcasts: Essays in Honour of William J. Fishman*, London 1993, pp. 12-31. On Switzerland, see Pascal Krauthammer, *Das Schächtverbot in der Schweiz*, Zurich 2000. Also see Judd, 'German Jewish Rituals', chaps. 3, 4 and conclusion.

or political affiliation – responded to these challenges by demanding Jewish civic and religious freedoms. Their behaviour, like that of the Saxon Jews, departed from previous practice. Before the late 1880s, German Jewish communal leaders tended to discourage public defence surrounding specifically religious themes. Now, whether or not they ate kosher meat at home, they chose to air their concerns within the public (non-Jewish) political sphere.<sup>6</sup>

The Saxon case and the German debates over kosher-butchering (*Schächtfrage*) provide a useful site for analysing the origins and characteristics of modern German-Jewish political life and its many challenges. First, an examination of the *Schächtfrage* highlights the complicated and often contradictory nature of the charges made against German Jews during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By emphasising Germany's character as a civilised and cultured nation (*Kulturstaat*), the alleged humanity of stunning an animal before its slaughter, and the public health benefits of implementing new abattoir regulations, critics of kosher butchering successfully cast doubts on Jewish integration. In their exaggerations of kosher butchering's abnormality, they effectively portrayed the deviance of those who persisted in the practice despite new stunning regulations that mandated otherwise. Not surprisingly, their attack on kosher butchering propelled Jewish leaders to justify Jewish acculturation and emphasise their own universality while simultaneously defending Jewish religious difference.

An analysis of the kosher butchering debates is also worthwhile because it highlights the activities of political organisations other than the oftstudied *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (*Centralverein*) and types of political behaviour that were outside of the *Centralverein*'s purview. Furthermore, a study of the *Schächtfrage* stresses the ways in which Jewish political life was deeply influenced by developing forms of German politics and by the paradoxes German Jews faced in everyday life. When defending kosher butchering practices, German Jews simultaneously advocated Jewish rights and downplayed Jewish difference, petitioned for protection and defended Jewish privileges, and spoke for “all of German Jewry” while representing only par-

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<sup>6</sup> On the shift in Jewish politics see Jacob Borut, ‘*Wehrt Euch!*’ *Founding of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens*, (Hebrew), Jerusalem 1996; Marjorie Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany: The Struggle for Civil Equality*, New Haven and London 1978; Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893-1914*, Ann Arbor 1975; Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism*, New York and London, 1972.

ticular interests. This study, then, uses the German *Schächtfrage* not only to discuss the shift in Jewish political life that took place during the late nineteenth century but also to describe the challenges German Jews faced in launching a confessionally orientated defence campaign.

There are two potentially misleading aspects of such a study.<sup>7</sup> First, this analysis focuses mainly on Jewish organisational life and not party politics.<sup>8</sup> Second, the discourse employed by the organisations considered here can also be deceptive. Participants in the *Schächtfrage* often hid themes of resistance behind declarations of love for the fatherland; they often obfuscated their political motivations by claims of apoliticism. When the Saxon Jewish Federation claimed to be apolitical, it was not implying that it held no political opinions. Historians of Germany have explained that apoliticism was a political strategy endorsed by politicians in order to distance themselves from what was seen as the inefficiency and radicalisation of national party politics.<sup>9</sup> Jewish leaders adopted the language of apoliticism not to distance themselves from the national political sphere but to separate themselves from the growing conservatism of German national politics and to affirm their universality and similarity to other German *Vereine*. By adopting a universal character, Jewish leaders could make particularistic demands for all of German Jewry and for the specific definition of *Judentum* that they espoused. The seemingly apolitical Jewish organisations helped to negotiate conflicts among Jews, between Jews and the state, and between Jews and non-Jewish society.

The organised defence of kosher butchering began on a national scale in the 1880s when unrelated German Jewish organisations united to protect *shehitah* and to demand the legal protection of their religious practices. The proliferation, empowerment and local successes of animal protection societies across Germany precipitated their actions. Three kinds of animal protectionist societies existed within the German state: anti-vivi-

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<sup>7</sup> See Evyatar Friesel's path-breaking articles which raise similar and additional concerns. Evyatar Friesel, 'The German-Jewish Encounter as a Historical Problem: A Reconsideration', in *LBI Year Book XLI* (1996), pp. 263–275; *idem*, 'The Political and Ideological Development of the Centralverein before 1914', in *LBI Year Book XXXI* (1986), pp. 121–146; and *idem*, 'A Response to the Observations of Chaim Schatzker and Abraham Margliot', in *LBI Year Book XXXIII* (1988), pp. 107–111.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Brenner has published one of the few studies of German Jewish communal political parties. Michael Brenner, 'The Jüdische Volkspartei: National-Jewish Communal Politics during the Weimar Period', in *LBI Year Book XXXV* (1990), pp. 219–243.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880-1935*, Chapel Hill and London 1986.

sectionists, who generally did not express interest in the *Schächtfrage* until the early 1900s;<sup>10</sup> animal protectionists, who focused on kosher butchering as well as other issues; and humane societies, who were interested in issues of temperance and education, as well as slaughterhouse reform.<sup>11</sup> These organisations were composed of a broad cross section of members of the German middle class, and some had Jewish members.<sup>12</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these groups expressed concern with the state of affairs in Germany's municipally run slaughterhouses. In their view, the abattoir encouraged violence, enticed brutal spectators, attracted deviant characters as employees and posed a public health risk because of its dirty, bloody surfaces. Furthermore, animal protectionists were troubled by the method of slaughter that most European butchers employed, namely the killing of conscious animals with sharp knives (*Schächten*). Animal protection advocates warned that such a method cruelly allowed animals to feel their own murder and they encouraged the creation of new standards for the slaughtering and butchering of animals.<sup>13</sup>

The mere existence of these societies and their platforms for reform were not sufficient to provoke a large-scale defence of *shehitah*. Instead, the 1880s witnessed, among other things, the invention of new stunning methods, the electoral successes of antisemitic parties, and the end of the *Kulturkampf*, a state-led initiative against its Catholic minority. Before the late 1870s, slaughterhouses employed a crude form of stunning ani-

<sup>10</sup> The Bavarian anti-vivisectionist society proved to be an exception to this generalisation.

<sup>11</sup> Judd, 'German Jewish Rituals' and 'The Politics of Beef: Animal Advocacy and the Kosher Butchering Debates in Germany' (forthcoming in *Jewish Social Studies*).

<sup>12</sup> Even as late as 1925, one national animal protectionist society scheduled its meeting to accommodate its Jewish members who might observe Passover. See the *Bericht über die Versammlung des Verbandes der Tierschutzvereine des Deutschen Reiches in München vom 15-18 April 1925*, Stadtarchiv München Vereine 2223. Also see *Verein gegen Thierquälerei zu Königsberg. 3. Bericht über die Thätigkeit des Vereins gegen Thierquälerei zu Königsberg*, Königsberg 1873.

<sup>13</sup> For a more in-depth study of the movement against kosher butchering, see Judd, 'German Jewish Rituals', chaps. 3–6 and *idem*, 'The Politics of Beef'. Sander Gilman's study of Kafka, Richard Levy's examination of Germany's antisemitic parties in the 1890s, and John Efron's analysis of German Jews and medicine also discuss the *shehitah* debates within their larger studies, even if in Levy's case quite briefly, and place the deliberations within Germany's history of medicine and/or antisemitism. John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History*, New Haven 2001; Sander L. Gilman, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient*, New York and London, 1996; Richard S. Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany*, New Haven and London, 1975.



mals before their slaughter. If they stunned animals at all, they did so by bludgeoning them. By the early 1880s, inventors had introduced new stunning methods that were less painful and less cumbersome to execute. As animal sentimentalists encouraged local, regional and national governments to promulgate stunning legislation, they increasingly were influenced by antisemitic challenges to Jewish civic and social participation, as well as by questions that had been raised concerning Catholic uniqueness in the new German state.<sup>14</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth century, Prussian political leaders and Protestant liberals increasingly interpreted the confessional differences between Catholics and Protestants as particularly worrisome. They advocated an anti-clerical stance, publicly expressing concern that Pope Pius IX's reactionary policies and his statements against progress would result in German Catholic disloyalty to the German state, a shibboleth they maintained for much of the nineteenth century. The promulgation of animal stunning legislation, the rise of German antisemitism and the campaign against Catholic difference helped to shape the slaughterhouse reform movement of the late nineteenth century and converged during the anti-*shehitah* campaign of the 1880s.

During the mid- and late 1880s, the *Verband der Thierschutzvereine des deutschen Reiches* (TSV) and its member organisations submitted dozens of petitions to the *Reichstag* calling for a re-examination of the national code concerning animal cruelty. Their petitions requested laws that would mandate the stunning of animals, the slaughtering of animals only in government approved slaughterhouses and the licensing of slaughterers.<sup>15</sup> While the *Reichstag* later rejected the petition and while some of the appeals did not name the Jewish communities of Germany specifically, several Jewish community councils and leaders entered the

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent overview of these many changes, see David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918*, New York and Oxford 1998, pp. 351-399; Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, revised edn., Cambridge, MA 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Unlike petitions introduced in future *Reichstag* debates, some of the petitions submitted in 1886-88 recommended the exemption of the Jewish community from state regulations; others did not mention the Jewish community at all. See the different viewpoints expressed in *Aus den Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags über das Schächten (18. Mai 1887, 25. April 1899, und 9. Mai 1899)*, Berlin 1909; 1886 petition from the Verband der Tierschutzvereine des Deutschen Reiches, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem (CAHJP) GA II/721; 'Abermals das Schächten', in *AzDJ*, 29 (1886), pp. 452-453; 'Die Petitionen für die fernere Freiheit des rituellen Schächten', in *AzDJ*, 49 (1886), pp. 771-772; 'Die Schechitah-Angelegenheit vor dem deutschen Reichstage', in *Der Israelit* 45/46 (1886).

public arena in order to prevent what they envisioned as a new form of discrimination. Rather than privately appeal to the governmental authorities, they publicised their claims, emphasising their religious difference as Jews and the rights they deserved as Jewish citizens of the state.<sup>16</sup>

Two Berlin-based groups, which historically had been adversaries, spearheaded the first set of public defences. Esriel Hildesheimer was the director of Berlin's orthodox rabbinical seminary and the rabbi of its separatist orthodox community.<sup>17</sup> As a supporter of the separatist cause, he had pushed for individual Jews to have the right to be recognised as Jews without formally belonging to a state-recognised religious community. The executive council of the Berlin Jewish community – the second group in question – had been on the opposite side of the separatist debate. For much of the nineteenth century, it had requested that the state enforce its laws requiring all Jews to belong to a single local religious community. Yet it now shared Hildesheimer's concern that kosher butchering might be prohibited. Even though several of its members no longer followed Jewish dietary laws, the Berlin Jewish community council organised a national defence of *shehitah*.

While there is little evidence that Hildesheimer and the Berlin community council collaborated on their first letters and petitions, their campaigns grew increasingly similar. Both of these groups generated thousands of letters of support from Jewish community councils, individual Jews and Jewish leaders across Germany. They sought out allies in the defence of Jewish rituals and collected written statements of support, which they published as a single collaborative anthology. In addition to these other activities, these groups also tracked the activities of animal protection, veterinary and conservative associations across Germany.<sup>18</sup>

The involvement of Hildesheimer and the Berlin Jewish community thus suggests that significant Jewish defence took place before the founding of the *Centralverein* in 1893. In defending kosher butchering, Hildesheimer and others introduced new strategies for defence, marked a

<sup>16</sup> The *Reichstag* formally considered the petition in 1886-7, and again in the 1890s and early 1900s. For a discussion of the *Reichstag* debates and the responses of the Jewish community, see Judd, 'German Jewish Rituals', particularly chaps. 3 and 4.

<sup>17</sup> On Esriel Hildesheimer, see David Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of a Modern Jewish Orthodoxy*, Tuscaloosa, AL and London 1990.

<sup>18</sup> 1886 Letters between Hildesheimer and orthodox rabbis throughout Germany, NSBCJ 75 Aer1 96; 21 June 1886 letter to Germany's Jewish communities from the Ausschuss des Verbandes der deutschen Juden in Berlin, CAHJP DA/648; 1886 Counter-Petition issued by the Ausschuss des Verbandes der deutschen Juden in Berlin, NSBCJ 75 Aer1 97 16-16rs.

shift from Jewish apologetics to the embrace of *Judentum*'s religious difference and encouraged fragmented Jewish communities to work in consort with one another. Warning their readers that a prohibition of ritual slaughter would affect all communities, the Berlin board, for example, beseeched other communal councils to join their defence and provide financial, administrative and emotional support. "This is not only an issue of local concern," they wrote, "but also that of the rabbis of communities of Breslau, Danzig, Dresden, Königsberg, Magdeburg, and Stettin."<sup>19</sup> Their emphasis on the communities in Eastern Germany was intentional. Not only were many of these communities traditionally more observant, but they were hesitant to be subsumed by what previously had been considered the dominant Jewish community of Berlin. Other letters tried to heal the rift caused by the secessionist movement of the 1870s and 1880s. Esriel Hildesheimer, originally hired in 1869 to serve as the rabbi of the separatist orthodox community, chided those communities who let internal religious squabbles cloud their better judgement. His letter urged his co-religionists to act "unanimously and energetically."<sup>20</sup>

While several German Jewish leaders became involved in defending *shehitah* during the 1880s, the existing stunning laws tended to exempt Jews from their purview and allowed them to practise kosher butchering. This was to change over the course of the 1890s and early 1900s. The turn of the century witnessed a shift in public opinion about *shehitah* and German city and town councils increasingly limited or prohibited the Jewish rite.<sup>21</sup> Now, debates about stunning reforms at the local, regional and national levels targeted Jewish communities, questioned whether it was appropriate to engage in particularistic customs in the post-emancipatory age and mandated Jewish compliance to already existing abattoir regulations. Dozens of Jewish organisations responded to this shift, even those agencies that previously had not advocated involvement in the political sphere. In 1902, for example, the *Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund* (DIGB), which had historically expressed reluctance publicly to fight discrimination based on religious distinctions, announced its inten-

<sup>19</sup> 1886 Counter-Petition issued by the Ausschuss des Verbandes der deutschen Juden in Berlin, NSBCJ 75 AerI 97 16-16rs

<sup>20</sup> March 1887 letter from Esriel Hildesheimer to Germany's Jewish communities, CAHJP GA 11/166.

<sup>21</sup> 1902 letters exchanged between the *Centralverein* and the DIGB, NSBCJ 75CGE1 893 8-24; 1902 Petition (DIGB), NSBCJ 75CGE1 893 8-19; June 1903 letters between the DIGB and the communities of Breslau, Oldenburg, Posen, West Prussia, Stuttgart and Insterburg, NSBCJ 75CGE1 893 60-73.

tion to protect *shehitah*. After a magistrate in a small Rhine town prohibited kosher butchering, the DIGB joined forces with the local town council to appeal to the Prussian ministry and launch a regional defence campaign.<sup>22</sup> Over the next ten years, the DIGB continued actively to take part in the defence of kosher butchering.

The political activities of the DIBG and other Jewish agencies reveal that several organisations outside of the *Centralverein* defended German Jewry and, in so doing, utilised innovative political tactics. This can be seen most explicitly in the campaign of the *Verband der deutschen Juden* (*Verband*) to protect kosher butchering. Historians often dismiss the *Verband* because it never acquired the public mandate it sought to speak in the name of all of German Jewry.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the *Verband* achieved a degree of prominence within the political sphere and was extremely active in the defence of kosher butchering. After its formation in 1904, it coordinated the publication of letters defending kosher butchering, organised lobbying efforts at all levels of government to prevent future prohibitions and helped staff and fund committees whose sole purpose was to defend *shehitah*.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the *shehitah* defence activities of the early twentieth century encouraged the creation of a new core group of Jewish activists who became involved in Jewish politics. Through fund-raising networks, constant meetings and interactions with Jewish community councils of all sizes, lawyers, physicians, middle-class businessmen and rabbis from across Germany created and served in new Jewish institutions and helped to transform old ones. It was in this way that Rabbi Jacob Cohn, an orthodox communal rabbi in Kattowitz (Silesia, Prussia), was catapulted from anonymity to a degree of prominence. Cohn became involved in the deliberations about kosher butchering in 1898 after the local Kattowitz animal protection society endorsed a proposal to ban *shehitah*. That year

<sup>22</sup> The tensions that erupted between town councils and magistrates over the control of *shehitah* are fascinating. See Judd, 'German Jewish Rituals', chap. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Schorsch, for example, described the *Verband* as an "illusion". Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism*, 150.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the 9 May 1904 Commission meeting to "Fight the Prohibition of *Shehitah*", NSBCJ 75CGE1 893 90-94; 10 May 1905 letter from the Commission zur Bekämpfung der Schächtverbot, CAHJP AHW 943b; 29 May 1906 letter from the Berlin-based Jewish agencies to Germany's Jewish communities, CAHJP BII 3; 7 July 1908 minutes of the major Jewish defence agencies, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 1-6; July 1908 letters between the *Verband* and the *Centralverein*, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 7-9; February 1909 letters between the *Verband* and the *Centralverein*, 75Cve1 114-115; 24 February 1909 letter from Rabbi Bergmann to the *Verband*, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 123.

Cohn attended the meeting of the Silesian regional animal protection society and heatedly debated with the coordinator of the anti-*shehitah* petition drive.<sup>25</sup> He regularly attended local and national animal protection society meetings, publicly defended the Jewish rite and promoted Jews as compassionate, humane German citizens.<sup>26</sup> When, in 1906, the national animal protection society endorsed a petition demanding kosher butchering's prohibition, Cohn coordinated the writing of the counterpetition.<sup>27</sup> His defence activities encouraged him to assume the chair of the Association of Rabbis of Upper Silesia and led to his participation in the *Shehitah* Commission, *Verband*, and *Centralverein*.<sup>28</sup> He was considered so important to *shehitah* defence that, in 1914 when the *Centralverein* leadership issued a report on the prohibition of ritual slaughter in Oppeln (Prussia), it reported that it had been consulting with Cohn on how to overcome the local prohibition.<sup>29</sup>

The *shehitah* protection campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century also highlight the challenges minorities faced in launching confessionally orientated defence operations.<sup>30</sup> Jewish leaders had to assert *shehitah*'s respectability as well as their own civic worth. They not only needed to prove the rite's significance but also why Jewish particularities should be allowed to override existing state or local laws. To craft their confessionally orientated defences, Jewish agencies pursued a two-pronged campaign. On the one hand, Jewish agencies emphasised German Jewry's right to free religious practice and they therefore recast German legal tradition as one centred on the extension of religious free-

<sup>25</sup> Otto Hartmann (ed.), *Bericht über die Siebente Versammlung des Verbandes der Thierschutz-Vereine des Deutschen Reiches in Hamburg*, Cologne 1898.

<sup>26</sup> Otto Hartmann (ed.), *Bericht über die Neunte Versammlung des Verbandes der Thierschutz-Vereine des Deutschen Reiches in Leipzig*, Cologne 1904, pp. 61-62.

<sup>27</sup> *Record of the 1906 TSV*, NSBCJ 75 Cve1 344 153-158rs.

<sup>28</sup> 28 February 1906 letter from Horovitz to Cohn NSBCJ 75Dco128 193-194; November 1907 letter from Cohn to the *Verband*, NSBCJ 75Dco128 237-238; November 1907 letters from the Kommission zur Abwehr der gegen das Schächten gerichteten Agitationen, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 220-223; 5 November 1907 minutes of the Kommission zur Abwehr der gegen das Schächten gerichteten Agitationen, NSBCJ 75Dco1 28 233-234; 11 March 1914 letter from Munk to Cohn, NSBCJ 75Dco129 82.

<sup>29</sup> 21 February 1914 letter from the *Centralverein* to Rabbi Goldmann of Oppeln, NSBCJ 75Dco1 29 69.

<sup>30</sup> For a similar argument in another context see the works by Jacob Borut. Jacob Borut, "'A New Spirit Among Our Brethren in Ashkenaz': German Jews Between Antisemitism and Modernity in the Late Nineteenth Century", (Hebrew) (Ph.D. Diss, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1991); *idem*, 'The Rise of Jewish Defence Agitation in Germany, 1890-1895: A Pre-History of the C.V.?', in *LBI Year Book XXXVI* (1991), pp. 59-96; *idem*, 'Wehrt Euch!'



dom. Promoting the religious, cultural, historical and scientific importance of the Jewish religion (*Judentum*) and specific Jewish rites, Jewish organisations insisted upon German Jewry's right to practice its religion freely. Jewish leaders drafted their petitions in "the interest of [their] religious lives", warned that a prohibition of kosher butchering would negatively affect German Jews and cited German case law that supported their viewpoint.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the earlier campaigns of the 1880s and 1890s often overstated the number of Jews at risk.<sup>32</sup> In a statement of 1894, for example, over two hundred German rabbis argued that "stunning . . . would prohibit *shehitah* and affect *hundreds of thousands* of adherents of the Jewish faith."<sup>33</sup> A decade later, when increasing numbers of towns and cities implemented bans or restrictions on kosher butchering, fewer organisations chose to inflate the numbers of Jews who would be affected by mandatory stunning laws.

By the turn of the century, Jewish leaders increasingly expressed concern that an emphasis of the Jewish religious nature of *shehitah* would only promote Jewish distinctiveness and publicise the very existence of a Jewish Question. Many of them had an ambivalent relationship to the practice of Judaism themselves and they feared that an assertion of *shehitah*'s religiosity would endanger German Jewish security. To whom, these leaders asked, was the rite significant and why? The *Centralverein* was the first organisation to distance itself from characterising *shehitah* as a rite important to all Jews. In 1903, the agency issued a public statement that it had no interest in considering the religious character of kosher butchering, but instead wished to defend the rite because it was healthy and because of the illegal discrimination against Jews that took place whenever it was banned.<sup>34</sup> In this way, the organisation quickly marked its leadership (and members) as acculturated Jews who wished to fight legal injustice, but who themselves worried little about Jewish practice. The *Verband* and numerous other defence committees eventually followed the *Centralverein*'s lead. In 1906, for example, two members of the *Verband*, Heinemann Vogelstein and Martin Philippon, demanded that

<sup>31</sup> 21 June 1886 letter to Germany's Jewish communities from the Jewish Community Council of Berlin, CAHJP DA/648; Counter-Petition issued by the Ausschuss des Verbandes der deutschen Juden in Berlin, NSBCJ 75 Aer1 97 16-16rs.

<sup>32</sup> W. and M.L., 'Das Töden der Schlachtthiere', in *Im deutschen Reich (IDR)* (February 1901), 73-80.

<sup>33</sup> See the statement in support of *Shehitah* circulated by the Rabbiner Verband in Deutschland, CAHJP CA 1657 (my emphasis).

<sup>34</sup> 'Vereinsnachrichten', in *IDR* (November 1903), pp. 678-683.

references to *shehitah*'s solely religious character be deleted.<sup>35</sup> Vogelstein was a Liberal rabbi in Stettin and a determined reformer; Dr. Martin Philippon was a former professor of history at the University of Brussels and served as the chairman of the DIGB, the founder of the *Verband*. While both embraced Jewish defence, they were hesitant to be recognised as distinct from their German compatriots in any regard other than faith: both men therefore downplayed the need to assert the religious importance of *shehitah* and reminded members that only a portion of Jews followed the Jewish rite.

By 1910, the organisations had increasingly distanced themselves from the Jews they were trying to protect, while only orthodox and some local agencies outside of Berlin described the rite as significant to the entire Jewish population. Instead, in their defences of kosher butchering, German Jewish leaders tended to affirm the rite's ability to enhance the public good and Jewish assimilability. Their campaigns promoted the ability of Jews to become integrated into the German social fabric and serve as upstanding citizens. In their view, meat from ritually slaughtered animals tended to remain fresher longer, was free of contagions and tasted better. Furthermore, because blood carried the dreaded syphilis and tubercular pathogens, it was supposedly preferable that all animals be bled after their slaughter. Finally, because the slaughter required by *shehitah* was so rapid it allegedly caused the animals little pain. The suggestion implicit in their publications was clear. Jews do not eat ritually slaughtered because of their religious orientation. They do so because they are good, rational, moral individuals – in other words, good Germans.<sup>36</sup>

The *Shehitah* Commission, an umbrella organisation that attempted to defend kosher butchering, divided when it attempted to navigate this terrain. In 1910, the committee met to set out its strategy to analyse an amendment proposed by Centre Party deputy Adolf Gröber. Gröber's bill outlawed national regulations that interfered with a community's religious laws, specifically those concerning animal slaughter. Commission members privately expressed ambivalence over the proposed amendment. While they supported the bill's intentions, they justifiably worried that it

<sup>35</sup> 23 October 1906 minutes of the Schächtkommission meeting, NSBCJ 75Dco1 28 209-213

<sup>36</sup> 21 June 1886 letter to Germany's Jewish communities from the Ausschuss des Verbandes der deutschen Juden in Berlin, CAHJP DA/648; Draft of April 1910 statement by Horowitz (*Centralverein*), NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 356-357. A more detailed bibliography can be found in Judd, 'German Jewish Rituals' and a review of medical sources can be found in Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews*.

would stir up a tremendous amount of anti-*shehitah* agitation. They were also unsure whether Gröber was just in describing kosher butchering as legally binding for all German Jews. They fretted that his bill, which they believed had little chance for success, would only highlight Jewish difference. In the end, they demanded that it be described as a ritual that held deep importance for some but was significantly healthy for all.<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, the orthodox members of the commission objected to what they saw as the belittling of the rite's religious significance. They suggested that kosher butchering be described as "a Jewish ritual that is based in law and absolutely binding on traditional, Torah-true Jews." "*Shehitah*", Rabbi Ezra Munk of *Agudat Israel* reminded the committee members, "was not just a law for orthodox Jews, but something that bound all Jews."<sup>38</sup> After the majority of the *Shehitah* Commission rejected these suggested changes, the *Freie Vereinigung für die Interessen des orthodoxen Judenthums* submitted its own petition with much stronger language. Soon after that, it created its own *Shehitah* Defence Agency. Ironically, the *Reichstag* later passed Gröber's bill with some significant modifications. The passage of this bill, however, did not put an end to the *Schächtfrage*. Instead, local and regional animal protection societies continued to demand mandatory stunning laws and the Weimar period witnessed a revisiting of the national laws concerning animal slaughter. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, this struggle between religious difference and German "universalism" was a persistent characteristic of Jewish politics and the defence of *shehitah*.

The controversy surrounding Gröber's bill highlights another challenge that defenders of *shehitah* faced: whether they were to demand laws protecting Jewish rituals or merely respond to attacks against them. While most Jewish leaders agreed that it was necessary to lobby non-Jewish leaders and launch public campaigns when kosher butchering rights seemed threatened,<sup>39</sup> they disagreed on whether Jewish leaders should try to promote new laws for the ritual's protection. Small Jewish community

<sup>37</sup> December 1909 statement by M. Loewenthal NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 44-49; 20 November 1910 Commission statement and minutes, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 268-278.

<sup>38</sup> 20 November 1910 minutes, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 277-278.

<sup>39</sup> 8 April 1904 letter from Benjamin Hirsch to the *Centralverein*, NSBCJ 75Cge1 893 80; Hirsch Hildesheimer 4 September 1906 letter, NSBCJ 75Dco1 28 144-146; 30 July 1906 letter from the Jewish members of the *Tierschutzverein* (Offenbach), NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 138; 14 November 1907 letter from Hirsch Hildesheimer to Cohn, NSBCJ 75Dco1 28 237-238; 28 April 1909 minutes of the *Schächtkommission*, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 402-404; March 1910 minutes, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 250-255; 11 October 1912 letter from Munk to Cohn, NSBCJ 75Dco1 29 30-38.

councils in Prussia, Bavaria and Saxony, as well as many orthodox leaders throughout Germany, tended to demand the creation of legislation that would protect the rite whether or not it was endangered. Most Berlin-based organisations expressed concern that such a strategy would merely call attention to Jewish difference. *Centralverein* executive board member and *Im Deutschen Reich* editor Alphonse Levy voiced his opposition to such an endeavour as early as 1901. That year Hirsch Hildesheimer expressed his desire to lobby for individual city laws throughout Prussia that would explicitly protect religious freedoms, a tactic that animal protection societies mimicked in 1906 when they pushed for local prohibitions of the Jewish rite. After Hildesheimer sent a letter to Prussia's Interior Minister asking for local protection laws,<sup>40</sup> Alphonse Levy angrily sent letters to other members of the *Centralverein* board denouncing Hildesheimer. As long as there was no prohibition, he argued, there was "nothing good" that could come out of such a campaign.<sup>41</sup> Over the next ten years, the *Centralverein* leadership made clear that Jewish responses to the *shehitah* question should only take place where and when German Jewish freedoms were threatened.<sup>42</sup>

The struggles over the nature of *shehitah* defence tapped into longstanding turf wars over the control of Jewish religious and cultural activities. The conflicts were not always framed in religious terms. In 1908, leaders of the *Verband*, *Centralverein*, DIGB, Berlin's orthodox community and the General Assembly of German Rabbis temporarily ceased their collaborative efforts to defend kosher butchering after Jewish leaders learned that the *Verband* was going to receive credit for publishing a massive anthology of letters defending kosher butchering. Each organisation bitterly accused the *Verband* of accentuating its place in Jewish defence by listing its name first – a move made by Hildesheimer and not the *Verband* leadership – among the Jewish organisations who had helped to organise the publication. The organisations finally agreed that the *Verband* could be listed as the publisher, with the other organisations being prominently named in the preface.<sup>43</sup> During other moments, however,

<sup>40</sup> 1901 letters from Hildesheimer to the Prussian Interior Ministry and from the Minister des Innern to Hildesheimer, NSBCJ 75Cra14.

<sup>41</sup> 22 September 1902 letter from A. Levy, NSBCJ 75Cra14 331

<sup>42</sup> The *Centralverein* leadership had been confident in the German constitution's powers of protection before 1901. In 1898, its legal advisor, M. Loevinson, remarked that defences of *shehitah* should be limited to the courtroom. M. Loevinson, 'Bericht der Rechtsschutzkommission', in *IDR* (July/August 1898), pp. 287-312.

<sup>43</sup> February 1909 letters between the *Verband* and the *Centralverein*, NSBCJ 75Cve1 114-115.

concerns over the religiosity of individual agencies or leaders clearly characterised the disputes. Liberal organisations feared that traditional factions would demand control because they allegedly spoke to a higher standard of religious behaviour and would depict all Jews as distinct. Traditional factions had parallel concerns. They worried that liberal groups would misrepresent their needs and desires. The ongoing disputes between the *Verband*, the *Shehitah Commission*, and orthodox organisations in Frankfurt and Berlin illustrate this dilemma. Between 1907 and 1914, these agencies bickered incessantly over whether it was possible for them to collaborate in the defence of kosher butchering.<sup>44</sup> Communal orthodox and liberal groups were open to a potential partnership, but agreed to collaboration only if Berlin-liberal forces remained in control.<sup>45</sup> Traditional leaders like Ezra Munk rejected the political strategies of his liberal colleagues who, in his view, represented a constituency of non-observant Jews and were therefore unable to speak on behalf of observant Jews or knowingly defend a religious practice. These discussions came to a head in 1913 when Meier Hildesheimer (1864-1934), the son of Esriel Hildesheimer and the rabbi of Berlin's orthodox community, suggested healing the rift between the Jewish agencies by creating a single organisation to protect kosher butchering. Active in religious and secular politics, Hildesheimer strongly believed that a single agency would carry more weight with the German government. Because of the concerns set out above, the *Verband* and *Centralverein* rejected his proposal.<sup>46</sup> Orthodox leaders in Berlin responded to the refusal by creating a new defence agency, which, they claimed, had a mandate to represent all of German Jewry. Hildesheimer, Munk and their followers housed this new agency in a building owned by Berlin's orthodox Jewish community (*Adas Israel*) and immediately launched a nationwide defence, calling itself the *Büro für Schächtschutz*.<sup>47</sup> Members of the *Verband* and the *Shehitah Commission* expressed outrage at the Bureau's activities. Over the next two years members of the *Verband* and *Adas Israel* continued to bicker over the

<sup>44</sup> 5 November 1907 minutes of the *Shehitah Commission*, NSBCJ 75Dcol 28 233-234.

<sup>45</sup> 9 November 1910 minutes of the *Shehitah Commission*, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 260-267; Horowitz 28 1910 statement, NSBCJ 75Cve1 340 356-357; 15 December 1910 letter from Benjamin Hirsch to Max Elb, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 425-426.

<sup>46</sup> 4 February 1913 letter from *Verband* to Rabbi Horovitz, NSBCJ 75Cve1 341 126.

<sup>47</sup> 1914 Reports of the *Schächtbüro*, CAHJP DA 439; CAHJP D/Ba28/2; 1916 Reports CAHJP D/BA28/2 12; 3 November 1925 report to the Vienna *Israelitische Kulturgemeinde* CAHJP A/W1392; August 1927 letters to Königsberg.



new defence agency and plotted ways to reassume control of the defence of *shehitah*.

An analysis of the *Schächtfrage* raises an important question. What prompted German Jews from across the religious, political and geographical spectrum to enter the public arena, attempt collaborative defence, and demand the protection of a Jewish rite that many of them did not actually follow at home? First, late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Jewish leaders were deeply concerned by the rise and recasting of anti-Jewish animus. Jews defended kosher butchering in part because they interpreted attacks against Jewish ritual as a central aspect of the anti-Jewish campaign of the modern period. They worried that slaughterhouse laws were merely a pretext or trial run for revoking Jewish privileges more generally. While not all attempts to limit kosher butchering were shaped by antisemitic impulses, the campaign against kosher butchering did share several themes with the chauvinistic sentiments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like the antisemitic movements of the time, the attempts to limit kosher butchering expressed a concern with Jewish particularity and brutality, a desire to eradicate deviance from society, a longing to return to a “utopian” past and a general anxiety concerning political, economic and social changes.<sup>48</sup> The call to enforce Jewry’s compliance to the stunning laws provided antisemites with a platform with which they could address the Jewish Question.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the “scientific” character of the campaign and its widespread audience lent them an element of respectability and allowed for the normalisation of chauvinistic discourse. Therefore, in articles, petitions, pamphlets and public statements, Jewish leaders dismissed the stunning campaign as motivated simply by antisemitism and

<sup>48</sup> The most egregious example of this accusation was the linkage of kosher butchering with ritual murder. 18 February 1891 statement by the First Mayor of Erfurt, NSBCJ 75aEr1 96 24; 1899 *Reichstag* transcript, CAHJP TD 475, 1-2; ‘Stuttgart, 12. August’, in *Der Israelit* 33 (1909), p. 6; Otto Hartmann, *Bericht über die Zwölfte Versammlung des Verbandes der Tierschutzvereine des Deutschen Reiches in Berlin vom 4. bis 7. Oktober 1910*, Cöln 1910, p. 44; ‘Wann wird der Qual ein Ende gemacht werden?’, in *Deutsche Tageszeitung* 19 November 1913, NSBCJ 75CVe1 341 186. Both Gilman and Levy examine this linkage as well. Gilman, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient* and Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany*.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Ernst Froelich, *Das Schächten - ein mosaischer Ritualgebrauch? Beitrag zur Lösung der Schächtfrage*, Potsdam 1899; Bernardin Freimut, *Die Jüdischen Blutmorde von ihrem ersten Erscheinen der Geschichte bis auf unsere Zeit*, Münster 1895; Heinrich Pudor, ‘Das Schächten und der Fall Fritsch’, in *Der Hammer*, 210 (1911): p. 166; Hans Wehleid, ‘Vom Schächten’, in *Der Hammer*, 208 (1911), pp. 102-104.

denounced the falsehoods that had been spread about kosher butchering. Fashioning themselves as the bearers of truth, Jewish defence agencies presented themselves as rational and legitimate (and as victims) and portrayed the animal sentimentalists as irrational and insidious.<sup>50</sup>

Second, Jewish leaders entered the national arena and demanded their specific rights as minority members of the state because other political groups were doing so as well. Jews learned from the successes of the Catholic Centre Party, local animal protection societies and even the antisemitic parties of the 1880s. They adopted their bureaucratic structures, established comparable networks, engaged in analogous forms of fundraising and adopted identical strategies and approaches. Jewish organisations, like non-Jewish ones, adopted the tactics of mass politics and, in some cases, created their own. They distributed questionnaires and post-cards to Jewish and *non-Jewish* agencies, targeted specific inflammatory books, infiltrated rival organisations and lobbied important officials.

Finally, Jewish communities experienced a shift in political behaviour because of their frustration with the growing regulatory impulses of their city, town, regional and state administrations.<sup>51</sup> The abattoir regulations were part of the impetus on the part of government and science to control a location where violent actions take place, move it to the city's edge and regulate it. The promulgation of mandatory stunning laws and kosher butchering reforms were of utmost concern to Jewish leaders whose communities and religious institutions had already diminished in authority. Many Jewish agencies supported the abattoir regulations but believed that the local, regional and national authorities should not intervene in kosher butchering practices unless they created laws that would protect the rite from the stunning laws already in place.

In 1907, after the Saxon Jewish Federation reinstated its *shehitah* defence campaign, the newly formed *Shehitah* Commission in Berlin requested that the Saxon Jewish community restrict its crusade to Saxony's borders. Max Elb, the Saxon Jewish Federation's president, had hoped to repeal the 1892 stunning laws that had prohibited kosher butchering; he also recognised that his agency's petitions, propaganda material and lobbying would draw attention to Jewish religious particularities during a

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, 'Zur Schächtfrage', in *Die jüdische Presse* 30 (1886), p. 287; Rabbiner-Verbands, 'Zur Schächtfrage', in *Israelitische Wochenschrift* 8 (1902), p. 115-6.; 2 April 1914 petition to the Minister des Innern, NSBCJ 75Dco129 84-89.

<sup>51</sup> On this regulatory shift, see Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945*, Cambridge and New York 1989.

year when no national anti-kosher butchering campaign was taking place. In the end, he limited his campaign to Saxony but manipulated the commission's anxieties for his federation's benefit. Threatening to take his petition drive to the national arena unless the commission assisted it in some way, the Saxon Jewish community received additional financial and administrative assistance from the Berlin-based group.<sup>52</sup>

The story of Max Elb and his 1907-8 campaign highlights the pressures Jewish agencies experienced when they launched confessionally orientated campaigns that, by their very nature, could not escape the question of Jewish difference. These tensions were exacerbated by the fact that many of the German Jewish leaders who entered the political arena to protect German Jewry's right to free religious practice did not embrace the religious rites they sought to defend. Jewish leaders felt compelled to defend *shehitah* for a variety of reasons. More observant participants in the debate were concerned that a restriction or prohibition of *shehitah* would result in a vegetarian diet or payment of high taxes on meat imports. Others expressed alarm with the antisemitic nature of the anti-kosher butchering campaign and/or the regulatory nature of government. While some Jewish agencies envisioned the protection of kosher butchering as an issue around which a divided Jewish community could unite, others were nervous that their absence from such a defence would force them to lose their influence in the Jewish community. Earlier defences of *shehitah* had presented a united front; after the late 1890s, however, Jewish agencies increasingly bickered over the nature of Jewish defence, the right to control political campaigns and the meaning of Jewish rites.

While Jewish attempts to protect kosher butchering were not always unified, they shared several commonalities. First, their struggle over the appropriate character of and spokesman for *shehitah* defence highlighted the concern that criticisms of kosher butchering cast doubts on Jewish integration. Regardless of their own level of observance, Jewish leaders responded to the animal protection appeals by justifying their own acculturation and that of other Jews. Their defence emphasised their universality by highlighting the respectability of Jewish rites and simultaneously defending Jewish religious difference. This dialectic continued to influence Jewish politics and *shehitah* defence until 1933. Furthermore, the

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<sup>52</sup> 21 October 1907 letter from Max Elb to M. Philippson, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 195; 1908 Petition of the Verband der israelitischen Religionsgemeinden im Königreich Sachsen, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 320.

*Schächtfrage* encouraged Jewish organisations other than the *Centralverein* to become active in Jewish political life. The debates catalysed a new generation of orthodox and provincial Jewish leaders to enter the political arena and helped to create new forms of political behaviour. While not always successful, the defence campaigns registered a number of accomplishments. Jewish leaders helped to prevent a national prohibition of *shehitah* until the Nazi period,<sup>53</sup> encouraged the repeal of dozens of local restrictions of kosher butchering, advanced a national awareness of the cause and fostered new relationships between liberal and orthodox Jewish community councils and leaders of geographically disparate regions. They set new standards for acculturation, while simultaneously promoting Jewish difference in the public sphere.

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<sup>53</sup> Germany prohibited *shehitah* in 1933.





SILVIA CRESTI

## German and Austrian Jews' Concept of Culture, Nation and *Volk*

In recent years many studies have been dedicated to the structure and formation of European nation-states. This renewed interest in nations and nationalism should be seen in relation to the implosion of the Soviet Union, which reintegrated the East into the emotional landscape of Western Europe. The secessions and ethnic wars that followed in the heart of Europe have raised the problem of oblivion and memory in history, of how memories are composed in a national frame. Thus, the transformation of Europe after 1989 has raised the question of national identities. These questions have become all the sharper due to the other phenomena that followed the upheavals of 1989, such as migration, economic globalisation and European integration. These and related phenomena have challenged the nature of the nation-state as it has been known in Western Europe since the end of the Second World War during an unprecedented period of stability and prosperity: the nation as a place where state, economy and society were congruent. Terms and concepts such as national identity and collective memory are now in the forefront of debate, having lain virtually dormant for more than half a century since the pioneering work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.<sup>1</sup> Jewish studies are also concerned with this shift from society to state and nation and the theoretical and comparative issues it raises. One central topic deals with the dynamics by which Jews were nationalised within different European countries, examining the questions of how different Jewries of different

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<sup>1</sup> See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago 1992 (original version: *La Mémoire Collective*, ed. posth., Paris 1949) and *idem*, *The Psychology of Social Class*, London 1959 (original version: *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*, Paris 1925).

countries became and defined themselves as citizens.<sup>2</sup> If previously the focus has been primarily on issues that arose from emancipation within a single Jewish community, most recent studies underline the role of the state.<sup>3</sup> The different national profile of each Jewry is drawn within the framework of the specific structure and nature of each nation.

Following this trend, this paper aims to explore two different and opposite paths of nationalisation undertaken by two Jewish communities: Jews in Imperial Germany on the one hand and, on the other hand, by what for a long time was regarded as a conglomerate whose definition was uncertain, namely Jews in the western part of Cisleithania following the formation of Austria-Hungary in 1867. This comparison between German Jews and what may be called Austro-German Jews is particularly interesting, as it starts from a comparable condition: in the early 1870s Jews in both countries still used the same terms for defining their religious allegiance, that is to say their being Jews. In the very first years of the two new political entities, both Jewries still defined themselves on the basis of peoplehood: *Volk*, *Abstammung* and *Stamm* were categories still related to Judaism, whereas *Deutschtum* meant an ideal enlightened German culture granting participation in the German nation. But during the first decades of the Dual Monarchy and the Second Reich, these Jewries moved progressively apart. Despite using the same language and the same terms, the concepts of culture, nation and *Volk* came to mean different and even opposite things.

From the early 1880s the only *Volk* German Jews recognised was the German *Volk* to whom they claimed to belong. Parallel to this new designation, any ethnic definition of Judaism was denied. Jews in Germany adapted to the German tradition of national belonging based on people and culture, exemplified by the term *Deutschtum*. But Germanness underwent substantial change during these years, as its meaning was progressively restricted; the common descent and common culture *Deutschtum* had once meant increasingly became linked to a narrow idea of *Volk* based on ethnicity and a narrow idea of German culture cleansed of any universal or cosmopolitan traits. While German Jews claimed the German *Volk* as the entity to which they belonged as citizens, their German cul-

<sup>2</sup> See Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katzneson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, Princeton 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Birnbaum has spoken of the "intégration étatique" of French Jewry. See Pierre Birnbaum, *Destins Juifs : de la Révolution Française à Carpentras*, Paris 1995 and *idem*, *Les Fous de la République: Histoire Politique des Juifs d'État de Gambetta à Vichy*, Paris 1992.

ture granted them a lesser entrée into the German nation than would have been provided by ethnic German descent, which was perceived as the core of mainstream German identity.

At the same time, Jews in Austria – or at least the Austrian equivalent to the German-Jewish middle class, i.e. the liberal Austrian Jewish bourgeoisie – underwent a different development. Even though this Jewish bourgeoisie sustained the German cause within the Empire, espousing a centralised Empire on the basis of German hegemony, it was nevertheless also open to supra-national or international identification. This Jewish middle class became what is now considered a commonplace when speaking of Jews and the Habsburgs – Jews as the *Staatsvolk* par excellence of the multi-national Empire, and the *Weltvolk* par excellence of Europe. The word “state” in *Staatsvolk* implied a political and therefore non-ethnic use of the word “people”; the identification of Austro-German Jews, unlike their German counterparts, was therefore not obscured by such pre-political entities as culture and an ethnic *Volk*. On the contrary, their national identification was a political commitment revolving around an abstract Austrian identity. Austro-German Jews did not express their national allegiance through the notion of *Volk*, but *Volk* remained the term they used when referring to Jews. While the Viennese liberal Germanophile Jewish bourgeoisie spoke of Judaism as a religion, their definition nevertheless reveals an ethnic implication at a time when their Berlin counterparts meticulously avoided any relation of Judaism to *Volk*.

This divergent relationship to Judaism and *Volk* is reflected in the nomenclature of the two major Jewish organisations of Germany and Austria: the German *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* referred to German Jewry as a *Glaubens- und Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (community of faith and fate), whereas the *Österreichisch-Israelitische Union* referred to Austrian Jewry as a *Glaubens- und Volksgemeinschaft* (faith community and *Volk* community). The link between faith and destiny meant that German Jews reaffirmed a collective entity beyond religion on the basis of a common history, and German Jews affiliated to the *Centralverein* used the terms “*Volksgenossen*” or “*Volksgenossenschaft*” to denote the bond between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans and the community which they formed together. Austro-German Jews, in contrast, related the Jewish faith to the Jewish people and thereby to a collective entity with an ethnic implication.

In examining how German and Austro-German Jews moved progressively apart in the course of the 1870s, I will focus on the three previously cited terms – culture, nation and *Volk* - and their changing meaning

for these two Jewries. These three key concepts derived from the terminology of emancipation, and are at the same time categories expressing national belonging and patriotic commitment; indeed, one could go so far as to say that in German, *Volk*, *Nation* and *Kultur* open up semantic strata representing a kind of coded history of the German tradition of national identification in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The term *Volk* will be analysed from two perspectives: first, the Jewish people as the collective entity Jews were expected to suppress in order to enter society as citizens according to the paradigm of emancipation since the time of the French Revolution; and second, as the surrounding society into which Jews were expected to assimilate and acculturate. In German, the word *Volk* has a specific resonance that goes back to Herder and his theory of *Volksgeist*; more than in English, French or Italian, *Volk* evokes a collective entity without a subject, a pre-political community. *Nation* in German is as pre-political as *Volk*, meaning not only the institutional framework of belonging but a spiritual and abstract belonging that is emotionally charged and indeterminate. Finally, “culture” in German carries a deep semantic implication, with *Kultur* and *Bildung* being the two key concepts of the German Enlightenment, regarded as the vehicles of human emancipation.<sup>5</sup>

For the most part, I will concentrate on a short historical period, the decades of the 1870s and 1880s. With regard to Germany, I will examine the allegiances of German Jews in two public debates that occurred in the newly founded Reich. First, I will discuss the stance German Jews took on the issue of Alsace-Lorraine. Within the debate on annexation that took place between German and French scholars in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, German Jews were forced to consider the question of Jews from Alsace. The official position German Jewry took in the early 1870s was that Alsatian Jews should be considered Germans because they belonged to the German-Jewish *Stamm* through their Ashkenazi descent and their German religious ritual. The Alsace-Lorraine issue may be considered a counterpart to the issue of the *Ostjuden* in late Imperial Germany. When German Jews discussed their estrangement from the *Ostjuden* at the turn of the century, they did not apply the same categories of culture and descent to their Eastern co-religionists. These different approaches might be held to express a switch from a Jewish to a

<sup>4</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse’, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. VII, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 141–413.

<sup>5</sup> On the political implications of *Kultur* and *Bildung* in German collective identity, see Georg Bollenbeck, *Bildung und Kultur: Glanz und Elend eines deutschen Deutungsmusters*, Frankfurt 1996.

German allegiance. The public debate on citizenship and belonging initiated by Heinrich von Treitschke in 1879, known as the *Antisemitismusdebatte*, focused precisely on this turning point in German Jewish allegiance, when *Volk* became definitively linked to the German people. This first public dispute between Jewish and non-Jewish scholars set off a discussion about the relationship between *Deutschtum* and *Judentum*, about national belonging, patriotic commitment and religious allegiance that continued until the First World War.

In the Dual Monarchy, too, the decades of the 1870s and 1880s set the scene for the allegiances of Austro-German Jews. In the western part of Cisleithania the early 1880s saw a parting of the ways between Germans and Jews, that is to say between ethnic Germans and those middle-class liberal German speaking Jews who considered themselves to be German. From this point, growing antisemitism forced many Jews in western Austria to reconsider the terms of their belonging to the “German nation” and to redefine their patriotic commitment. Austro-German Jews developed what Marsha Rozenblit has called a tripartite identity: a German cultural identity, an Austrian state-patriotism and an ethnically tinged religious identity.<sup>6</sup> I will follow this development by analysing material that appeared in Austro-Jewish journals and contemporary memoirs, beginning in the late-1860s. The 1880s may be considered the decade during which the divergent positions of Jews in Imperial Germany and Habsburg Austria first crystallised, without the added complicating factor of Zionism that surfaced in the 1890s. In any event, I will focus on that segment of the two Jewries that is comparable and that later opposed Zionism.

Comparative studies on Jewish emancipation in Europe often propose a dichotomy between an Eastern and Western model. Emancipation in the West was accorded to individuals and brought with it what in German is sometimes called the confessionalisation of Judaism, the reduction of Judaism to a “mere” religion and its subsequent relegation to the private sphere, where its relation to the Jews as a *Volk* was suppressed. In eastern Europe, Judaism as a collective entity was maintained, but within a changed framework; it was secularised, not as a private religion based on faith but in national terms. Jews, it was held, were a nation living among other nations. Judaism as religion and Judaism as nation represent the two opposite projects with which European Jews entered modernity during the

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<sup>6</sup> Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*, Oxford 2001, chap. 1, pp. 14–38; *idem*, ‘The Jews of the Dual Monarchy’, in *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. 23 (1992), pp. 160–180.



long nineteenth century. These models may well be considered paradigms from the overall viewpoint of emancipation, but such a sharp division may well prove too rigid in closer focus.

Within Western Europe, for example, the categories through which the collective sense of the nation was expressed varied considerably. In France and England, the nation was defined politically through institutions and values, whereas in Imperial Germany the nation was still defined as it had been during the decades of German fragmentation. During the pre-Wilhelmine period, the German nation had not been experienced as a political or abstract category, as in France, but was related rather to pre-political categories such as language and descent. In late Imperial Germany, Friedrich Meinecke classified these two divergent categories of national belonging in France and Germany with the famous definition of a Western *Staatsnation*, where belonging was defined politically through the state, versus a German *Kulturnation*, where belonging was defined culturally through a common language and a common culture. At the time, the question of the diverse political cultures of both countries was not merely academic but underlay a concrete political issue: the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany after the Franco-Prussian war. The debates between German and French scholars such as Theodor Mommsen and Fustel de Coulanges, and between Ernest Renan and David Strauss, in the aftermath of the annexation illustrate the clash between the two definitions of nation and their political implications and, tangentially, the problems of German-Jewish national identity in the early years of the Second Reich. German scholars justified the annexation on the basis of two key concepts: people in Alsace-Lorraine were Germans through *Volk* and *Kultur*. People in these provinces were ethnically and linguistically, and thereby culturally, Germans. French scholars, however, claimed these provinces and regarded Alsatians as politically French: they defined themselves as French, in as much as they desired to remain French citizens. French intellectuals thereby introduced the idea of self-determination as the central criterion of national belonging.

In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, Ernest Renan wrote an essay entitled 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' (What is the meaning of nation?), in which he gave a political definition of "nation". His most quoted definition, which has become a standard characterisation of nation in France, is "la nation comme plébiscite de tous les jours" (the nation is a continuously repeated plebiscite). Renan grasped the meaning of nation precisely in its most political expression, in the vote as a democratic act. For Renan, national belonging was a political commitment reaffirmed daily and

people were the subjects of that political commitment. In essence, the French had a political notion of “le peuple”, the Germans an ethnic notion of *Volk*.

Jews from both sides of the Rhine were deeply concerned with the issue of Alsace-Lorraine, first and foremost because some 45,000 Jews lived in these provinces, representing two-thirds of what had previously been French Jewry. German Jews debated the annexation as an internal Jewish concern, asking whether Alsatian Jews should be considered French or German. The German Jewish answer faithfully reproduced the collective German sense of the nation founded on *Volk* and culture. During the 1870s, the *Archives Israélites*, the most important French-Jewish journal of the time, underlined how French the Alsatian Jews were. It meticulously described the declarations of love and commitment to France of the Jewish communities of Strasbourg, Metz and Colmar and constantly reported the large number of Alsatian Jews who emigrated to France so as not to live “under the German yoke” and be exposed to German anti-Jewish discrimination. The tenor of the articles was that the French state, by contrast, put equality into practice.

The analogous German-Jewish journal of the time, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, argued in a number of articles published in the early 1870s that the Alsatian Jews should be considered Germans. The criteria these articles adopted for including Alsatian Jews in the German nation were significant. Ludwig Philippson (the editor) reasoned that Alsatian Jews, as Ashkenazi Jews, belonged to the German-Jewish family because they belonged ethnically and religiously to German Jewry. As religion was understood in a wider sense as an expression of culture, Alsatian Jews should be considered both culturally and ethnically as belonging to German Jewry and were thereby Germans.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, this ethnic-tinged Judaism permitted membership of the German nation. This apparent contradiction can be resolved by analysing the meanings of *Abstammung* and *Stamm* in early Imperial Germany. Both terms belonged to the conventional terminology of the time, as the German nation was seen as a conglomerate of different German *Stämme*, such as Bavarians, Saxons and the like. Germans participated in the new Reich not as individual citizens, as in France, but grouped into different *Stämme*.<sup>8</sup> Once again, the

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<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Philippson, ‘An unsere Glaubensgenossen in Elsass und Deutsch-Lothringen’, in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, vol. 35, No. 11 (14 March 1871), pp. 209–211.

<sup>8</sup> On *Abstammung* and *Stamm* as central categories of early Imperial Germany, see Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century*

*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* borrowed the meanings of *Abstammung* and *Stamm* from the official German terminology and applied these concepts to the Jewish situation. An article published in January 1871 defined the newly proclaimed Reich as a congregation of *Stämme*: it was “the unity of the German tribes forming a national state.”<sup>9</sup> Since the Empire was composed of different *Stämme*, Jews should be able to find a place among Bavarians, Saxons and Franconians. The idea of Jews as a distinct *Stamm* can be interpreted as the mirror-image of an ethnic-tinged *Deutschtum*.

The issue of Alsace-Lorraine also shows the way in which German Jews stood behind the foreign policy of their government, because the criteria of ethnicity and ritual were not applied to what later became a major problem for German Jews in Imperial Germany – the immigration of *Ostjuden*. The criteria of descent and culture could equally have been applied to them, but the *Ostjuden* were not German citizens and the German government did not envisage annexing Galicia or other eastern provinces. This shift of allegiance on the part of German Jewry between the early 1870s and late Wilhelmine period is also evidence of another change: all links between Judaism and *Volk* expressed through the category of *Stamm* was gradually rejected and German Jews attributed the noun “people” only to the German *Volk*. By the end of the 1870s German Jews considered themselves as belonging to the German nation and thus a part of the German *Volk*, not because of their *Stamm* – a term they no longer used – but because of their German culture. In place of *Stamm*, culture now played the decisive role. Indeed, for German Jews culture could substitute for German descent.

The second debate on belonging and nationality was the Berlin *Antisemitismusstreit*, initiated by an article written by Heinrich von Treitschke in November 1879. In this instance, the very Germanness of German Jews was put into question. All the same arguments were revisited, and everyone involved in the dispute, Jews and non-Jews alike, assumed the same ideas of national belonging based on *Volk* and culture. These terms, however, were defined differently according to ideological position. While non-Jewish scholars like Treitschke and Mommsen continued to use the term *Stamm*, it disappeared from articles by Jews. The central issue for Treitschke was how the Germans could absorb this “for-

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*Germany*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 270ff.. On the historical terminology of German and Germanic *Stämme* in nineteenth-century Germany, see Koselleck, ‘Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse’, pp. 174ff.

<sup>9</sup> *AZJ*, 17 January 1871, p. 41.

eign *Volksthum*".<sup>10</sup> Treitschke assumed two distinct and estranged peoples, the German and the Jewish, based on different ethnic characteristics. The "Polish-Jewish *Stamm*", i.e. German Jews, needed to amalgamate into the German body, but this fusion had failed. Treitschke attributed this failure to the illusory premise that culture could exert an educational and moral influence. *Bildung* could not in fact overcome ethnic diversity.<sup>11</sup> As the Jews were precluded from the world of German sentiment and feeling, they could not become Germans, since both national belonging and national values were based on and derived from the ancient Germanic people, in essence from an ethnic *Volk*.<sup>12</sup>

Mommsen too assumed that the German nation was based on an ethnic *Volk* and was divided into different *Stämme*: "We can surely all agree that the German nation rests on the unity, and in a certain sense the amalgamation, of the various German tribes. We are Germans precisely because the Saxon or Swabian accepts the Rheinlander and Pommeranian as an equal."<sup>13</sup> But for him, the German nation had yet to be united<sup>14</sup> and the different German *Stämme* needed to fuse into one another: "Given the circumstances, a certain blending of the tribes, the creation of a German nationality which does not correspond to any particular region, is imperative."<sup>15</sup> As the "German metal" had to be created, "some percentage of Israel [was] necessary".<sup>16</sup> German Jews could contribute to this synthesis, as they had already been nationalised in much the same fashion as their ancestors in the Roman Empire, by adopting a foreign language and creating culture in it.<sup>17</sup> So for Mommsen the equivalent, or at least the surrogate, categories of national belonging beside descent and *Volk* were language and culture.

The Jewish scholars and personalities involved in the controversy employed the same terms (descent and language) with one important absence – the term *Stamm*. Since even Mommsen, the most benign German

<sup>10</sup> Heinrich von Treitschke, 'Unsere Aussichten', in Walter Boehlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, Frankfurt am Main 1988, pp. 9–10.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Treitschke presumes an ethnic imprint even on ethics, as he traces German moral principles back to the Germanic people: "die Jahrtausende Germanische Gesittung", *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Theodor Mommsen, 'Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum', in Boehlich (ed.), p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 216.

scholar speaking in favour of German Jews, assumed that Jews belonged to a foreign *Stamm* and had an historical function only because the diverse German *Stämme* needed to be united, from the point of view of German Jews the idea of *Stamm* had proven to be an impasse. This might have worked had Germany been composed of different ethnic *Stämme*, but the Saxons, Bavarians and Alemanni formed a single, ethnic, Germanic people, to which Jews could not belong on an equal basis. German Jews therefore abandoned the idea of a German nation comprising different *Stämme*, just as they abandoned the idea of Judaism as a *Stamm*. They needed new criteria that could grant equal participation in the German nation. For the Jewish scholars, the German *Volk* was now based on descent and culture alone. Culture was not the expression of descent, as it was for Treitschke, and for this reason German Jews were not precluded from it. On the contrary, German culture could replace non-German descent. German Jews were Germans on the same terms as non-Jewish Germans.<sup>18</sup> The only difference between German Jews and other Germans that the writer Moritz Lazarus acknowledged was their different descent. But the real and unique elements forming national unity for Lazarus were language, spirit and a common history. In an article ‘Was heisst national?’ he wrote that “Blood means little to me, while spirit and historical development mean almost everything.”<sup>19</sup> For the Jewish intellectual élite, *Geist* was equivalent - if not superior - to ethnicity. This new element could reconcile *Deutschtum* and *Judentum*, and therefore constituted a spiritual affinity between them, a common *Geist*. As Ludwig Bamberger noted, “The commonality is the spiritual basis: Jews and Germans are without doubt the two most spiritual nations of all times and places.”<sup>20</sup> The Jewish scholars could in some measure be said to have borrowed from Treitschke the idea of being German as a spiritual condition, an emotional state that - in contrast to Treitschke’s notion - could be attained even by persons of non-German descent and which could therefore replace descent and blood.

From this point, debates about *Deutschtum* and *Judentum* among German Jews dealt with the spiritual affinity of Germans and German Jews. Hermann Cohen, for example, asserted this mutual empathy for many decades. His position is paradigmatic, as his plea for an emotional and spiritual encounter between Germans and German Jews was supple-

<sup>18</sup> *Ostjuden*, by contrast, whose language, behaviour and dress were alien, were not culturally German and could not belong to the German *Volk*.

<sup>19</sup> Moritz Lazarus, ‘Was heisst national?’, Berlin 1925(2), p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Ludwig Bamberger, ‘Deutschthum und Judenthum’, in Boehlich (ed.), p. 167.



mented by Protestantism, a central feature of late-Wilhelmine Germany. For Cohen the spiritual empathy between Germans and German Jews could take place only on the basis of a common intellectual background, which he defined as religion. “[T]his religious commonality [is] the strongest binding force ... for a true national fusion. ... [It] could in truth become the means to partially replace the lack of the objective trait of descent with the ... endeavour in our hearts to approach the ideal meaning of *Volk*.”<sup>21</sup> As the encounter between Judaism and *Deutschtum* had to take place in the abstract arena of religious sentiment and feeling, Cohen tried to engineer the convergence of Judaism with hegemonic Protestantism. For Cohen, Judaism itself had already undergone a metamorphosis: “Our Israelite religion... has in fact engaged in a cultural relationship with Protestantism.”<sup>22</sup> And it was German Jews who had transformed Judaism in the direction of Protestantism. “I want to point out how the history of the Jews, and in particular of the German Jews, demonstrates that their religious development accords with the historical inclination of German Protestantism.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout the Second Reich, Cohen maintained that German Jews should acknowledge a national belonging coloured by Protestantism.<sup>24</sup>

The influence Protestantism, and specifically liberal Protestant theology, exerted on Cohen’s philosophical system has been analysed elsewhere, and such influence is generally attributed primarily to his personal choice. I believe, however, that the hegemonic role enjoyed by Protestantism in Imperial Germany forced German Jews to turn to a religious dimension to express their national commitment; they needed to confront – and to conform to – Protestantism to have access to Germanness. Furthermore, as has been discussed, German Jews needed to confront Protestantism in a way that German Catholics – unquestionably of German descent – did not. Protestantism was not only the hegemonic religion of Imperial Germany but also defined the character of the monarchy and the state: the Kaiser symbolised the alliance of secular and religious authority as Emperor of Germany, King of Prussia and head of the Prussian Lutheran Churches.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Protestantism became identified *tout court* with

<sup>21</sup> Hermann Cohen, ‘Ein Bekenntnis zur Judenfrage’, in Boehlich (ed.), pp. 150–151.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, *idem*, ‘Zu Martin Luthers Gedächtnis’, in *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, vol. II, No. 2 (1917), p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> On Protestantism as *the* German religion excluding and fighting against what were perceived as non-German religions like Judaism and Catholicism, see Wolfgang Alt-

*Deutschtum*. As Victor Klemperer recalled in his autobiography, at the time of his conversion to Protestantism in 1903, Protestantism was the cloak of *Deutschtum*.<sup>26</sup> This particular view of German culture as an extension of Protestantism, that in turn was the expression of Germanness, can be traced back to the cultural foundations of Imperial Germany. "German studies", for example, were established as a scientific discipline at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, and projected into the past the idea of a German nation born from the defeats of Jena and Auerstädt in 1806.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, it can be said that the post-1871 academic discipline of German literature reflected the cultural predominance of Protestantism in public life during the Second Reich.<sup>28</sup> In short, the Protestant ethos and Protestant values were identified as national values and expressed by German culture. Beginning with Cohen, then, Protestantism in its cultural dimension became the third implied term in the discussion about a reconciliation of *Deutschtum* and *Judentum*.

Living in a multinational empire, Austrian Jewry was influenced in a very different way by the concepts of descent, people, language and religion. Prussia and Habsburg had a long-standing historical rivalry, due in part to their struggle for influence and hegemony over Central Europe but also to their different ideas about state, nation and German unification. Prussia's national vision, partially realised during the Second Reich, was based on a complete identification between state, nation and *Volk*, as defined by German culture and German ethnicity. Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, the only multinational state on European soil, tried to maintain a dynastic vision through the legitimacy of the reigning house and was formed as a multicultural and multi-ethnic entity. In Austria-Hungary, the state could not be identified with any prevailing ethnicity, lan-

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geld, *Katholizismus, Protestantismus, Judentum. Über religiös begründete Gegensätze und nationalreligiöse Ideen in der Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus*, Mainz 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Victor Klemperer, *Curriculum vitae. Erinnerungen 1881-1918*, vol. 1, Berlin 1996, pp. 350-351.

<sup>27</sup> The first chair of German Studies (Wissenschaft der deutschen Sprache und Literatur) was established at the newly founded University of Berlin in 1810. See Hartmut Böhme, 'Die Literaturwissenschaft zwischen Editionsphilologie und Kulturwissenschaft', in Anne Bentfeld-Walter Deblabar (ed.), *Perspektiven der Germanistik. Neueste Ansichten zu einem alten Problem*, Opladen 1997, pp. 32-46; Pier Carlo Bontempelli, *Storia della Germanistica. Dispositivi e istituzioni di un sistema disciplinare*, Rome 2000, pp. 7-21; Jost Hermand, *Geschichte der Germanistik*, Reinbek 1994.

<sup>28</sup> On German literature and Protestantism in Imperial Germany, see Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914*, Princeton 1995.

guage or religion, even though the emperor was both Catholic and a German prince and the German language enjoyed a privileged position in Cisleithania. The capital, due to its supranational role as *Haupt- und Residenzstadt* of the Empire, was not a linguistic and nationally homogeneous city like Berlin; likewise, its Catholicism – and Vienna had been a stronghold of the counter-reformation – did not determine the nature of the state as Protestantism did in Imperial Germany.

The only entities officially recognised in Austria-Hungary were the supranational reigning house, with its army<sup>29</sup> and bureaucracy, and the different *Volksstämme* or *Nationalitäten*. The Habsburg Empire was officially a *Nationalitätenstaat* and the term *Volksstamm* was *verbum legale*, as article 19 of the 1867 constitution declared.<sup>30</sup> Nationalities in the Habsburg system referred to people with individual and distinctive characteristics in common, such as language and religion, with – and this is key – no necessarily corresponding territory, much less a state. Within an empire that claimed to be a *Völker-Verein*, the term *Volk* was set in a different context and acquired a different meaning than in Imperial Germany. Instead of implying the homogeneity of unique German and Teutonic descent, it stressed difference and diversity. In the Habsburg Empire different *Volksstämme* were legally recognised and ethnic diversity was legally sanctioned. Even though this equality between the different *Volksstämme* was more proclaimed than realised, since in practice the Austro-Germans dominated Cisleithania and the Magyars dominated Hungary, *Volk* came to signify *Völker*. In Habsburg Austria, the *Reichsrat* could not have sported the legend that appeared on the Reichstag in Berlin, “dem deutschen Volke”, nor would the formula on the Berlin Nationalgalerie, “den deutschen Künsten”, have been appropriate for the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum.<sup>31</sup>

The 1867 constitution can be said to have established a *Nationalitätenpolitik*, with which Jews in Habsburg Austria were sympathetic, even though they were not formally recognised as a distinct *Volksstamm* but

<sup>29</sup> On the supranational role of the army see István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918*, New York and Oxford 1990.

<sup>30</sup> See Gerald Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs 1848-1918*, Vienna 1985; *idem*, ‘Die Gleichberechtigung der Volksstämme als Verfassungsprinzip 1848-1918’, in Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch (eds.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, vol. III, part 2, Vienna 1980, pp. 975–1206.

<sup>31</sup> The National Gallery was inaugurated in Berlin in 1876, whereas the Kunsthistorisches Museum, an example of Habsburg patronage of the arts, opened in 1894.

were considered only a religious community.<sup>32</sup> The term *Volk* influenced Austrian and German Jews in markedly different ways. First, officially sanctioned pluralism in Austria worked against the dominance of any single ethnicity, although the Austro-Germans occupied a privileged position. Second, as this diversity was set within a supranational framework, a relationship to any single *Volk* was compatible with other allegiances and commitments. Austrian Jews did not need to prove their allegiance to one particular and exclusive *Volk*. Austro-German Jews could identify with one specific *Volksstamm*, the Germans in Austria, but such an identification could coexist with different commitments, as all of them applied to different spheres: a political identification, a cultural allegiance and a religious identity.

As with *Volk*, so too German culture meant something different in the Dual Monarchy. Its plurality of people and cultures had an impact even on the German culture professed by so many of the Jewish intellectuals participating in the Wiener Moderne, which maintained the cosmopolitan and universal aspect that had been lost in Germany, where culture underwent the narrowing process of nationalisation and identification with Protestant values. Like Jews in Germany, Austro-German Jews could consider themselves Germans through German culture and *Bildung*, but this cultural identification was set in a European and universal context; there was no link between German culture and Protestantism and their loyalty to German culture did not imply inclusion in the German people. The identities of Austro-German Jews seem to have been subjected to less coercive adjustments. This rather idyllic picture is darkened by two historical developments: first, Jews in Cisleithania were caught between the different nationalities, a conflict in which antisemitism became an issue; and second, related to this progressive radicalisation of the *Nationalitätenfrage* that ultimately led to the dissolution of the Empire, was the corollary development of the *Nationalitätenrecht*. Ethnic attribution, i.e. the attribution of membership of a specific nationality, spread from individuals to the imperial institutions, meaning that more and more spheres of social life were subjected to “national separation”.<sup>33</sup> Further, the crite-

<sup>32</sup> Gerald Stourzh, ‘Galten die Juden als Nationalität Altösterreichs? Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des cisleithanischen Nationalitätenrechts’, in *Studia Judaica Austriaca*, vol. X (1984), pp. 73–98, esp. p. 86.

<sup>33</sup> Gerald Stourzh, ‘Ethnic Attribution in Late Imperial Vienna: Good Intentions, Evil Consequences’, in Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms (eds.), *The Habsburg Legacy: National Identity in Historical Perspective (Austrian Studies, vol. V)*, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 67–83.

ria by which first persons and then institutions were attributed a specific nationality changed over the years and underwent progressive ethnicisation. As the cases deliberated upon by the Court of Arbitration in national matters show, ethnic attribution was initially guided by the voluntary declaration of the persons themselves, but developed into a mandatory determination where, in cases of doubt, attribution was determined by so-called “objective criteria”.<sup>34</sup>

The development of a tripartite identity by liberal and middle-class Austro-German Jews, i.e. a Habsburg loyalty, a cultural Germanness and a Jewish ethnic sense, should be analysed in the framework of both the radicalisation and the ethnicisation of the nationalities question. Moreover, the development of what had previously been called a “pure state citizenship”, also known as the “Austrian Idea”, by those middle-class liberal German-speaking Jews in Cisleithania who considered themselves the exemplary *Staatsvolk* of the Empire should be considered against the background of these contradictory tendencies in an empire that gradually lost the cohesiveness of its supranational structures and where even the very term *Österreich* was banned, and was therefore used only colloquially. The identity of these Jewish middle-classes, who vehemently opposed the centrifugal forces of nationalism that in the end brought about the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, appears to have been their particular response to the crisis of the Dual Monarchy.

An example of how a slightly ethnic sense of Judaism could coexist with an abstract Austrian patriotism is the Chief Rabbi Adolph Jellinek, “the preacher” – as he defined himself – of the liberal community of Vienna. In the 1860s, like his German coreligionists, Jellinek spoke of Jews as defined by *Abstammung* and *Stamm*. As his ethnographic study about Jews attests, he referred to Jews as the Jewish *Stamm*.<sup>35</sup> But unlike German Jews, who soon abandoned the term *Stamm* for defining both Germans and Jews, Jellinek continued to use it during the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Jellinek espoused an implicitly ethnic Judaism based

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* See also Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity* and *idem*, ‘Jewish Ethnicity in a new Nation-State: The Crises of Identity in the Austrian Republic’, in Michael Brenner and Derek J. Penslar (eds.), *In Search of a Jewish Community: Identities in Germany and Austria 1918-1933*, Bloomington 1998, pp. 134–153.

<sup>35</sup> Adolph Jellinek, *Der jüdische Stamm*, Vienna 1869.

<sup>36</sup> Shortly before he died, he claimed that the Jews no longer formed a separate nation: “The Jews have ... long ago ceased to be a nation. ... A king without a country is no ruler, a tribe without an independent political and cultural life can no longer be a nation.” See Adolph Jellinek, ‘Das Judentum – eine Nationalität’, in *Die Neuzeit*, (10 March 1893), p. 91.



on descent, but one in which acculturation and assimilation were not the *sine qua non* of Austrian nationality, as they were for the German Jews. His ethnically tinged definition of Judaism differed from the idea of German culture and national inclusion then current in the German Empire. Along with other Viennese Jews, Jellinek's assimilation into German culture involved a cultural rather than political identification. German-Austrian Jews conceived of themselves via German culture as culturally German, in contrast to German Jews, whose German culture bore the stamp of nationalisation. For the latter, German culture was the sole means of belonging to the German people.

The idea of Jews being more than a religious community was shared by another proponent of assimilation in Vienna, Theodor Gomperz. Opposing Zionism as an "unnatural and unhistorical movement", he nevertheless spoke of Jews as a *Stamm*, or a *Rasse*,<sup>37</sup> and even as a national minority,<sup>38</sup> this last a term that German Jews would not have used because it presumed a state segmented into different national entities. The idea that Jews were defined by both religion and descent was widely held in the liberal community of Vienna. The Israelitische Kultusgemeinde of Vienna did not eliminate liturgical references to the Jewish hope for a return to Zion, whereas the liberal prayer books in Germany did. The prayers for Zion represented an understanding of Jews as a people, and their elimination was equal to a denationalisation of Judaism.<sup>39</sup>

In Austria-Hungary, then, not only the Zionists but even liberal assimilated Austro-German Jews took up an ethnic definition of Judaism, while in Germany liberal Jews continued to define themselves in strictly religious terms and the term *Volk*, in relation to matters Jewish, became taboo. As already noted, this slightly ethnic identity of Austro-German Jews went together with an abstract Austrian patriotism. The corollary identification of Austro-German Jews, who saw themselves as a *Volk* within a *Völker-Verein*, was with a political understanding of the state. In *Die Neuzeit*, the Jewish weekly later edited by Jellinek, Austria became an abstract idea, where the Jews were its best citizens, the "pure Austri-

<sup>37</sup> Theodor Gomperz, 'Der Zionismus', in *Die Zeit*, 29 February 1896, reprinted in *Essays und Erinnerungen*, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1905, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup> Robert A. Kann (ed.), *Theodor Gomperz. Ein Gelehrtenleben im Bürgertum der Franz-Josefs-Zeit. Auswahl seiner Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, 1869-1912*, Vienna 1974, p. 227.

<sup>39</sup> See Marsha L. Rozenblit, 'The Jews of Germany and Austria. A Comparative Perspective', in Robert S. Wistrich (ed.), *Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century: From Franz Joseph to Waldheim*, New York 1992, p. 10.

ans": "Austria per se, the abstract constitutional state Austria, has no more reliable citizens than the Jews, who want nothing more than to be Austrians."<sup>40</sup> This idea of Jews as "Austrians *sans phrase*" remained popular.<sup>41</sup> Such unconditional patriotism, however, held dangers. Since within Austrian society it was only the Austro-German Jews who defined themselves as "pure Austrians",<sup>42</sup> their identification with the Austrian state initially led them to misinterpret the nature of Austrian antisemitism, and specifically its clerical impetus and the activity of the Pan-German League.<sup>43</sup> (Something of the same could be said to have happened to German Jews during the early phase of the Weimar Republic, due to their wholehearted identification with the state and the republic.) This may explain why Austro-German Jews needed more than a decade before they could confront antisemitism with political strategies undertaken overtly as Jews, as the Viennese Jews and the Kultusgemeinde of Vienna did from the early 1900s.<sup>44</sup> In the early 1880s, however, antisemitic attacks were perceived as a threat to Austria rather than to the Jews.

In the eyes of Austro-German Jews, the growing antisemitism of the Pan-German League from the 1880s was subversive in character, as it attacked the multinational structure of the Austrian state. It was un-Austrian in a double sense: it threatened the state and above all it was alien to Austria, being seen first and foremost as a German product.<sup>45</sup> This notion

<sup>40</sup> *Die Neuzeit*, (26 August 1870), pp. 389–390.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, from some twenty years later: "The Jews are proud to call Austria their fatherland. They are loyal to the Emperor and Empire and no part of the population exceeds their love of the fatherland."

'Verhandlungen des Abgeordnetenhauses über den Gesetzentwurf, betreffend die Regeln der äußeren Rechtsverhältnisse der Israelitischen Religions-Gesellschaft', in *Die Neuzeit*, (14 February 1890), p. 63; see also *ibid.*, (17 November 1899), p. 459 and, for an even later example, see H. Kadisch, 'Die österreichische Nationalitätenfrage und die Juden', in *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, vol. I, No. 11 (10 March 1917), p. 301.

<sup>42</sup> *Die Neuzeit*, (3 June 1870), p. 245.

<sup>43</sup> On the particularly Austrian type of antisemitism, see Robert Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph*, Oxford 1989, specifically chapter 11.

<sup>44</sup> On Viennese Jewish responses to antisemitism, see Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938: A Cultural History*, Cambridge 1989, especially chapter 12, pp. 188–206; Jacques Le Rider, *Modernité viennoise et crises de l'identité*, Paris 1994, part IV, pp. 233–363; Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity*, Albany 1983, chapters 7 and 8, pp. 147–193; Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*.

<sup>45</sup> As Jellinek wrote: "The antisemite in Austria, and particularly in Vienna, is neither an Austrian patriot nor dynastically minded but a son of the German race, which has its centre of gravity in Germany. All these considerations remained alien to those men appointed to maintain order in the state and to guard its well-being." See Adolph

that Austro-German antisemitism belonged originally to Germany conveys something of what *Deutschtum* meant to Austro-German Jews in the 1880s. While Germans in Austria increasingly identified Germanness with an exclusive ethnic belonging, for Austro-German Jews it remained an enlightened, cosmopolitan culture best represented by Goethe and Schiller. As with their unreserved commitment to Austria, Austro-German Jews maintained the ideal of a Germanness based on a cosmopolitan and universal German culture throughout the 1880s; not only was its relationship to Protestantism ignored (as it also was by Austro-Germans) but so too was any link to racial and ethnic descent.

The definitions of *Deutschtum* that appeared in *Die Neuzeit* in the 1860s could have been subscribed to even by German Jews of the time: Germanness was an enlightened culture allowing broad and cosmopolitan participation, an “entry ticket to European culture” as it had been for Heine. “We cannot disguise that a German consciousness underlies our education... It is as Germans that most of the Jews of Austria (with the exception of Italy) have become children of the modern world.”<sup>46</sup> The link between a *Deutschtum* that lacked ethnic and religious implications and a liberating, enlightened culture was stressed: “What has Germanised the Jews? The Hep Hep call of the young German rabble and servitude in the old Empire? Oh, no! It was the notion that Germanness was identical with education, enlightenment and a liberating culture, and that vandalism and spiritual degeneration leads to bondage even among the freest of institutions.”<sup>47</sup> Two decades later, *Deutschtum* was still interpreted as enlightened and cosmopolitan German culture, even though the context had radically changed. Arguing against the pretension of Schönerer and other Pan-German deputies to represent a “pure and unchanged Germanness”, Adolph Jellinek wrote: “[Schönerer’s] holy mission, to save Germanness in Austria, [has been] passed on to others who do not gravitate towards Berlin and prostrate themselves before the idol Bismarck.”<sup>48</sup> Because Austro-German Jews did not derive their belonging to Austria from German culture – unlike their counterparts in Germany – their idea of that culture remained static throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, essentially because a relationship between Germanness and *Volk*

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Jellinek, ‘Der enthüllte Antisemitismus in Wien’, in *Die Neuzeit*, (25 May 1888), p. 204.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, (4 October 1861), p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, (27 April 1866), pp. 187–188.

<sup>48</sup> Adolph Jellinek, ‘Der Niedergang des Antisemitismus’, *ibid.*, (27 November 1885), p. 441.

made little sense to them. Not only did *Deutschtum* maintain the same meaning during the crucial years of the 1880s, but Austro-German Jews did not need to discuss the ethnic understanding of Germanness as German Jews did in the same years. Whereas an ethnic Germanness represented a threat for German Jews, for Austro-German Jews (who were politically Austrian) *Deutschtum* could remain a purely cultural concept, as at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They defended what they regarded as the true and unique values of *Deutschtum* against the new, distorted, racial version of it coming from Germany, as represented by the Pan-German League.

The idea of a German culture that did not undergo the narrowing process of nationalisation and identification with Protestant values, a culture still cosmopolitan and set in a European context, shines through the autobiography that Stefan Zweig wrote in his Brazilian exile. Zweig's version of the Habsburg Empire had a cosmopolitan, European dimension, as the title tells us: *The World of Yesterday: Memoirs of a European*. Another "European Jew", Arthur Schnitzler, recalled his different spheres of belonging and identity following the dissolution of the Empire in November 1918 as a tripartite identity based on descent, culture and citizenship, describing himself as an "Austrian citizen of Jewish race and German culture."<sup>49</sup>

Both the tripartite identity of Austro-German Jews and the German cultural identity of Jews in Protestant Wilhelmine Germany can be considered at one and the same time accomplishments and failures. These complex Jewish self-definitions as citizens and as Jews may be interpreted as an attempt to normalise identity and belonging in the two new political entities. At the same time, they vividly illustrate the difficulties and challenges faced by the Jewish middle classes in Habsburg Austria and Imperial Germany.

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<sup>49</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch 1917-1919*, Vienna 1985, p. 196.





HELGA EMBACHER

## Jewish Identities and Acculturation in the Province of Salzburg in the Shadow of Antisemitism

For almost four hundred years following their expulsion from Salzburg in 1498, Jews were not permitted to settle in the province.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the 1867 constitution was enacted, Albert Pollak was the first Jew to be granted civil rights (in 1873). According to the founding myth of the Jewish community in Salzburg, the mayor of the city prophesied to Pollak that he would be the last and only Jew there.<sup>2</sup> But liberalism could not be held back even here. Pollak became a successful businessman; he married in 1873 and his family lived the life of upper-middle-class burghers. A photograph shows him wearing a jacket made of green loden and a hat with a *Gamsbart* (chamois-hair plume used as a hat decoration in traditional Austrian costumes). According to the memoirs of Pollak's granddaughter, Erna Karplus, he wore this outfit each and every day.<sup>3</sup> Superficially at least, Albert Pollak appeared entirely acculturated and integrated into Salzburg society. In this article, I will discuss the process of the founding of the Jewish community in Salzburg that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, Jewish identities in the provinces, and Jewish notions of acculturation and integration. On the face of it, assimilation would seem to have succeeded in Salzburg. Most Salzburg Jews led a bourgeois lifestyle, mastered the German language and were successful in business, while religion was only of secondary importance. Salzburg's Jewish Community was homogeneous and "enlightened", with scarcely any strictly Orthodox Jews. The history of Salzburg Jewry is of additional

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Altmann, *Geschichte der Juden in Salzburg*, Salzburg 1990, pp. 118ff.

<sup>2</sup> Hanns Haas and Monika Koller, 'Jüdisches Gemeinschaftsleben in Salzburg – Von der Neuansiedlung zum Ersten Weltkrieg', in Marko Feingold (ed.), *Ein ewiges Dennoch. 125 Jahre Juden in Salzburg*, Vienna 1993, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Erna Karplus in Daniela Ellmauer, Helga Embacher and Albert Lichtblau (eds.), *Geduldet, geschmäht und vertrieben. Salzburger Juden erzählen*, Salzburg 1998, pp. 25ff.

interest because here, where they made up a mere 0.1 per cent of the population – in contrast to Vienna where the corresponding figure was approximately 9 per cent – Jews had no option but to interact with non-Jews (business partners, neighbours, classmates); consequently, Jewish/non-Jewish relations can be seen with particular clarity. If the majority settled in close proximity to the synagogue, there were by no means clearly defined Jewish neighbourhoods. In many cases, Jewish children were the only Jews in their school classes. Further, in contrast to Vienna where bourgeois Jews could feel politically or emotionally at home in the Social Democratic Party, Social Democracy was of no significance for Salzburg Jewry (with the exception of a few individual Jewish functionaries) and provided no focus of Jewish identification. Based on interviews with expelled Salzburg Jews,<sup>4</sup> I will focus on the question of why Jews settled in Salzburg and the extent to which it was possible to live a Jewish life as a tiny minority in an increasingly antisemitic political climate.

#### *Liberalism and the Founding of a New Jewish Community in Salzburg*

Following the 1867 constitution, Jews could no longer be prevented from settling in Salzburg. Albert Pollak had in fact arrived in the city prior to 1867 in order to serve in the famous Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment *Erzherzog Rainer*. In 1862, in the wake of the passage of the liberal commercial code (*Gewerbeordnung*), he was granted a trade licence for gold and silver wares, clocks and gift articles. Ultimately he became a successful antique dealer by appointment to the Emperor, and while it took more than ten years for the city council to accept Pollak as a citizen he was nevertheless apparently well integrated into the bourgeois society of Salzburg. A sincere patriot, he was involved in both prominent veterans' associations and local liberal politics. When he died in 1921, numerous veterans' associations as well as leading politicians such as the governor and vice-governor of the province attended his funeral. He had clearly travelled a great distance: raised in a poor religious family in the

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<sup>4</sup> When the City and Province of Salzburg invited former Salzburg Jews to visit in 1993, Albert Lichtblau and I conducted numerous interviews, and collected autobiographies and addresses of expelled Jews who refused to visit Austria or were too old to travel. Hans Pasch (born in 1908) is now living in Denver, CO; Erwin Bonyhadi of San Francisco and Nina Lieberman and her sister Gabriella Margules were interviewed in subsequent years. Most of the interviews were published in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), *Geduldet, geschmäht und vertrieben*.

Jewish community of Mattersdorf on the border of Austria and Hungary, he died as an acculturated, wealthy businessman in Salzburg.<sup>5</sup>

In the Province of Salzburg, and also in Tyrol and Carinthia, family networks formed the basis of Jewish migration and the founding of a Jewish community. As soon as the founders of the community managed to earn a living, relatives followed.<sup>6</sup> After 1867, for example, Albert Pollak convinced relatives in Mattersdorf to move to Salzburg. Similarly, Isidor Fuchs followed his sister, who was married to a successful businessman in the city.<sup>7</sup> Jews came to Salzburg in search of new economic opportunities. Friedrich Pasch – who grew up in Bohemia and worked in elegant shoe stores in Prague and Vienna – was searching for a place to open his own shoe store. He was supported in this undertaking by his cousins who owned a shoe factory in Bohemia, and then convinced his brother to open a shoe store in Innsbruck.<sup>8</sup> As a result of this family migration, the family's network stretched across Austria as well as Germany. The Schwarz family, for example, not only owned the largest department store in Salzburg but was also co-owner of important department stores in Linz, Graz and Vienna, while their relatives owned a department store in Innsbruck.<sup>9</sup>

By 1881, fourteen Jewish families had already settled in Salzburg and many were interrelated in some way. As was typical of the Jewish migration pattern in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the first wave of Jews to reach Salzburg migrated from the border area of Austria and West Hungary, from Bohemia and Moravia. In the main, the founders of the Jewish community were businessmen who had largely abandoned Orthodoxy and were already accustomed to the German language.<sup>10</sup> Ignaz Glaser, for example, bought the assets of a bankrupt glass factory in Bürmoos in 1881 and thanks to his investment the small village experienced an economic boom.<sup>11</sup> The successful Salzburg Jews made an effort to assimilate into the local bourgeoisie and by the turn of the century the majority of Salzburg Jews were comfortably bourgeois. But, as will be demonstrated,

<sup>5</sup> Haas and Koller, p. 33. Käthe Sporer, née Pollak in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> For Carinthia and Tyrol, see August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 1987; Thomas Albrich (ed.), *„Wir lebten wie sie...“ Jüdische Lebensgeschichten aus Tirol und Vorarlberg*, Innsbruck 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Louis Fox, né Ludwig Fuchs in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Pasch in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), pp. 170ff.

<sup>9</sup> Embacher, 'Exil als neue Heimat', in Feingold (ed.), pp. 439.

<sup>10</sup> Haas and Koller, p. 33f.

<sup>11</sup> See Hanns Haas, 'Die Bürmooser Fabrikantenfamilie Glaser – Industrielle-Bürger-Juden', in Feingold (ed.), pp. 53–72.

German nationalism, which became an essential part of the identity of the Salzburg bourgeoisie, denied the right of Jews to participate in the political and cultural life of the elite. Ultimately, the Jews could rely only on one another.

### *Expansion and Consolidation of the Community*

As the historian Bruce Pauley has demonstrated, Austrian antisemitism was merely taking a “brief nap” (*Schlummerphase*) during the 1860s and 1870s. The long depression endangered liberalism from 1873; in the 1880s, aggressive German nationalism displaced the liberal tradition. “Modern” antisemitism was no longer based on religious prejudices but rather on “scientific racism”, which became a political program.<sup>12</sup> While the Christian Social antisemitic Karl Lueger became mayor of Vienna by instrumentalising antisemitism, in provinces such as Linz, Graz and Salzburg young German nationalists were taking over the reins of municipal government and dominating cultural life.<sup>13</sup> The boundaries between the new racial antisemitism and the old Christian antisemitic tradition were often difficult to delineate, and if antisemitism was the lowest common dominator that bound together the heterogeneous bourgeoisie of Salzburg aggressive German nationalism was nonetheless directed against both Jews and Czechs.<sup>14</sup>

The Austrian historian Hanns Haas has described how young German nationalists in Salzburg took control of liberal clubs and wrested political

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Pauley, *Die Geschichte des österreichischen Antisemitismus. Von der Ausgrenzung zur Auslöschung*, Vienna 1993, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> See Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria*, London 1988; Albert Lichtblau, ‘Antisemitismus – Rahmenbedingungen und Wirkungen auf das Zusammenleben von Juden und Nichtjuden’, in Emmerich Talos *et al.* (eds.), *Handbuch des politischen Systems Österreichs. Erste Republik 1918-1933*, Vienna 1995, pp. 454–471; Pieter Judson, ‘Deutschnationale Politik und Geschlecht in Österreich 1880-1900’, in David F. Good, Margarete Grandner and Mary Jo Maynes (eds.), *Frauen in Österreich*, Vienna 1994, pp. 1–8.; Günther Fellner, *Antisemitismus in Salzburg 1918-1938*, Vienna-Salzburg 1979, p. 63; Kurt Tweraser, ‘Der Linzer Gemeinderat 1880-1914. Glanz und Elend bürgerlicher Herrschaft’, in *Historisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Linz*, 1979, pp. 300 ff; Helga Embacher, ‘Von liberal zu national: Das Linzer Vereinswesen 1848-1938’, in *Historisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Linz*, 1990, pp. 71ff.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hellmuth, “Identitätsbausteine”. Deutschnationalismus und Antiklerikalismus in Salzburg’, in *Historicum*, Herbst 2000, pp. 8–13.

power from the old liberals after the 1880s.<sup>15</sup> In the 1890s, many new German nationalist clubs were founded, such as the *Verein Südmark* or the *Deutscher Schulverein*, and Jews were excluded from all of them by the so-called *Arierparagraph*. At the same time, discussions concerning the introduction of the *Arierparagraph* began in formerly liberal clubs, a development which might also be interpreted as a conflict between liberal fathers and German nationalist sons. In 1887, Albert Süß, the only Jewish member of the famous *Salzburger Turnverein* (Gymnastics Association) was expelled; in 1891, three Jewish girls were forced to leave the women's section of the *Turnverein*.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the First World War, no Jewish members remained in formerly liberal clubs such as the *Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein* or the *Salzburger Liedertafel*. Thus, Jews were excluded from major parts of social as well as of political life in the city: participating in sports events, staying in certain huts in the mountains, as well as dancing at clubs or balls. As Haas notes, the *Schillerfestival* organised by the *Verein Südmark* was one of the highlights of Salzburg's social calendar.<sup>17</sup> What was left for Jews was, on the one hand, the Social Democratic Party with its clubs and, on the other, Jewish organisations. When Hugo Schwarz, born in 1913, or Hans Pasch, born in 1906, were excluded from huts owned by the *Alpenverein*, they found shelter at the Social Democratic *Naturfreunde*.<sup>18</sup> The Schwarz family, who ran the largest and most modern department store in Salzburg, were friendly with leading Social Democrats, and Hans Pasch recalled that the only non-Jewish partner his father could find for his regular card game in a café was a politician from the Social Democratic Party. In contrast to Vienna, Jews in Salzburg did not assume a leading role within the Social Democratic movement. Due to its social structure, the party could not offer any prospects for advancement to bourgeois Salzburg Jews.

The few working-class Jews who lived in Salzburg regarded themselves as more integrated into non-Jewish society than the Jewish middle class. As Hans Pasch commented, most of the successful Jews in Salzburg distanced themselves from the working class. Able to afford a bourgeois lifestyle, they desired integration into the non-Jewish middle and upper

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<sup>15</sup> Hanns Haas, 'Vom Liberalismus zum Deutschnationalismus', in Heinz Dopsch (ed.), *Geschichte Salzburgs*, vol. II, Salzburg 1988, pp. 833–906.

<sup>16</sup> Haas and Koller, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> Haas and Koller, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> Hugo Schwarz in Ellmayer *et al.* (eds.), p. 270; Video interview with Hans Pasch conducted by Helga Embacher, Albert Lichtblau and Karl Rothauer, Denver, CO, April 2002.



classes; unfortunately for them, however, these were the very people who had found a new identity in German nationalism and antisemitism. The Salzburg Jewish bourgeoisie's notion of assimilation was to become part of the city's elite, the successful non-Jewish businessmen.<sup>19</sup> While Albert Pollak had found a political home in the liberal movement, represented by the Liberal party as well as by many liberal bourgeois clubs, at the end of the nineteenth century the Salzburg Jews became politically homeless.

At the very same time that antisemitism was emerging in its racial form, the Jewish community was establishing itself and beginning to expand. From 1900 to 1910 the membership of the Jewish community increased from 199 to 285, while almost nobody withdrew from the community. At no time did the Jewish population of Salzburg number more than 0.1 per cent of the population, compared with a maximum of some 9 per cent in Vienna. In 1892, the Jewish cemetery was built; in 1901, the synagogue was dedicated. It had proved impossible to find a (Christian) general contractor for the construction of the synagogue and the municipal authorities repeatedly raised petty objections in order to refuse a building permit. In 1907 Adolf Altmann, rabbi and historian, was installed in Salzburg.<sup>20</sup> In 1911, the Jewish community, until then a branch of the Jewish Community of Linz, was – following immense efforts – officially founded.<sup>21</sup>

A majority of the Jews who settled in Salzburg became successful businessmen. Nina Margules, who moved to Salzburg from Tachov, a small town near Marienbad, was astounded by the wealth of members of the Jewish community. She noted that although they were equally wealthy they enjoyed markedly different lifestyles:

One family, a partner in an exclusive clothing store in Salzburg, lived in a small castle, surrounded by carefully tended gardens. Father and children went horse-back riding; they not only had a car but a chauffeur as well, and vacations were spent skiing in France, Italy, and Switzerland. The largest coal merchant was a Jew and his sons were extremely active in the Jewish community.<sup>22</sup>

While it is true that some of the most modern and largest stores in downtown Salzburg were owned by Jews, it should be emphasised that in

<sup>19</sup> Video interview with Hans Pasch.

<sup>20</sup> In 1913 Adolf Altmann published the first volume of *Die Geschichte der Juden in Stadt und Land Salzburg bis 1911*. The second volume appeared in 1930.

<sup>21</sup> Haas and Koller, pp. 45ff.

<sup>22</sup> Nina J. Lieberman, 'Lost and Found: A Private Memoir' (unpublished), pp. 28ff.

contrast to Vienna, Jews played only a minor part in Salzburg's economic, political and cultural life. On the other hand, many of the city's Jewish artists and writers, such as those who founded the *Salzburger Festspiele*, showed little or no interest in the Jewish community.<sup>23</sup> The writer Stefan Zweig, who lived with his wife Friderike in a house on Kapuzinerberg, maintained only casual contact with the Jewish community.<sup>24</sup> Rabbi David Margules complained that only a handful ever found their way to the synagogue.<sup>25</sup> As early as the 1920s, Rabbi Altmann remarked: "When all are going to the Festival, who is left to go to synagogue?"<sup>26</sup>

### *Jewish Identities and Traditions*

Living as part of a vanishingly small minority meant dispensing with, or at least modernising, Jewish tradition and partially acculturating to non-Jewish society. Jews who settled in Salzburg were ready to acculturate: they came to the city to do business, neither expected nor demanded an Orthodox community and were ready to modify their Jewishness and adapt to the non-Jewish world. While they were Jews at home, in the public sphere they adapted their lifestyle to that of the majority. Being Jewish was thus only one facet of their identity; they also regarded themselves as members of the German *Kulturkreis* and as Salzburgers. Hans Pasch, born in 1906 in Salzburg, assumed that had they been permitted to do so the local Jews would have entirely assimilated. Ludwig Löwy, born in 1892, believed that the Jewish minority was accepted and supported by local government authorities, but commented that the only contact between Jews and non-Jews was in the conduct of business.<sup>27</sup> Here, how-

<sup>23</sup> Helene Thimig-Reinhardt, *Wie Max Reinhardt lebte*, Percha am Starnberger See 1973, p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> See *Die Wahrheit. Jüdische Wochenschrift*, No. 1, January 1, 1932, p. 5. Also see Dr. Margules, 'Stefan Zweig – der Jude', in *Die Wahrheit. Jüdische Wochenschrift*, No. 49, 4 December 1931, pp. 4ff.

<sup>25</sup> Rabbi Dr. D.S. Margules, 'Jüdisches aus der Festspielstadt Salzburg', in *Die Wahrheit. Jüdische Wochenschrift*, No. 41, 10 October 1930, p. 7. Also see Christian Strasser, *Carl Zuckmayer. Deutsche Künstler im Salzburger Exil 1933 – 1938*, Vienna–Cologne–Weimar 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Manfred Altmann, 'Einführung zum Kriegserinnerungsbuch von Adolf Altmann', in Feingold (ed.), p. 528.

<sup>27</sup> Ludwig Löwy, 'Erinnerungen eines Salzburger Juden', in *Salzburgs wiederaufgebaute Synagoge. Festschrift zur Einweihung*, Salzburg 1968, p. 17.

ever, we need to ask what assimilation actually involved. Was the Jewish minority prepared to abandon Jewish tradition and just how far could such a process go in an antisemitic climate?

“If I had wanted my sons to receive a very religious education, I would not have moved to Salzburg.” With these words, Daniel Bonyhadi – born in 1861 in Hungary, where he himself received a strict religious education – justified his “new” Jewish tradition, whereas his brother expressed shock that the Bonyhadi boys were eating without wearing a yarmulke. On the other hand, the Jewish community of Salzburg regarded the Bonyhadis as one of the most observant of the city’s families. As Erwin Bonyhadi recalled, when his family was invited to eat with other Jewish families the hosts frequently emphasised that they did not keep kosher.<sup>28</sup> While Jews in Salzburg attempted to maintain a certain degree of Jewish tradition in private life, in public and business life they were very much assimilated. Like Albert Pollak, many preferred to wear *Trachten* on a daily basis, not like Viennese Jews who did so only during *Sommerfrische* (vacation in the country) or while visiting the Festival in summer.<sup>29</sup> The Ornstein family became famous for their *Trachten* wares, especially their *Wetterfest* brand loden coat. As early as 1911, the clothing store “Zum Matrosen” on Salzburg’s Mirabell Square had its own department for *volkstümliche* goods, where they offered mountaineering and *Trachten* outfits.<sup>30</sup>

Becoming a businessman meant first of all relinquishing one’s Jewish name: Avraham Pollak became Albert Pollak, Isidor Neuwirth was transformed into Julius Neuwirth, Luser Nissen Ornstein into Ludwig Ornstein. Some also changed their family names: Abeles turned into Anninger, Kohn into Köhler. As Ludwig Ornstein’s daughter Hella remarked, in the Catholic atmosphere of Salzburg it would have been impossible to do business with a Jewish name.<sup>31</sup> Jews closed their stores on Christian holidays and worked on the Sabbath. German was spoken in public and in private, and children were no longer taught Hungarian, Czech, Yiddish or Polish. Daniel Bonyhadi, for example, was upset when he noticed Hungarian visitors speaking Hungarian in the famous Café Bazar. Although himself born in Hungary, he advised them to speak German

<sup>28</sup> Erwin Bonyhadi in Ellmayer *et al.* (eds.), pp. 123f.

<sup>29</sup> See Reinhard Kriechbaumer (ed.), *Jüdische Sommerfrische in Salzburg*, Vienna–Cologne–Weimar 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann, ‘Von der Trachtenmode zur heiligen ererbten Vätertracht - “Volk in Tracht ist Macht!”’, in Feingold (ed.), p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> Hella Neuwirth, private family chronicle (unpublished).

as “people here don’t like to hear Hungarian.” Galician-born rabbi David Margules was intensely proud of his “perfect High German”, and refused to speak a word of Yiddish, the language he had learned in childhood.<sup>32</sup>

At home, the Jews of Salzburg lived according to their own versions of Jewish tradition, expressed in a variety of different forms:

“The Jewish congregation in Salzburg practiced their religion in varying degrees, from Orthodox to non-observant. However, there was only one congregation and that was traditional. Women sat separately from men, but only a minority kept the dietary laws and were Sabbath-observant.”<sup>33</sup>

Besides the Bonyhadis, few other families – some of whom arrived during the First World War – kept a kosher household and regularly attended synagogue each Sabbath, rather than solely on the Jewish High Holy Days. The Pollaks maintained a kosher household and an open house for religious Jews travelling through the city on the Sabbath, but somehow this was not made public. Erna Karplus, Pollak’s granddaughter, recalled that her father was a passionate hunter, but when his friends ate a meal after the hunt he pretended to be a vegetarian.<sup>34</sup>

Since religious institutions necessary to guarantee an Orthodox Jewish life did not exist in Salzburg, keeping kosher was difficult. For Nina Margules, who grew up in the 1920s and 1930s, a piece of kosher salami or a hot dog was a rare treat, either sent by relatives from Poland or ordered from Vienna. She recalled that the cantor was also the ritual slaughterer and carried out these duties once each week.<sup>35</sup> Keeping kosher involved ordering from a butcher in Vienna, buying live chickens and bringing them to the cantor to be slaughtered in the prescribed manner.<sup>36</sup> Nina also described how her family prepared for the High Holy Days, and also for Pesach, which entailed a great deal of hard work for the women. In Vienna, or other cities with a larger Jewish community, traditional Jewish foods like gefilte fish, chicken fat or horseradish could be bought in stores, but in Salzburg such things had to be prepared at home, where the Jewish wives were assisted by Christian maids. During Passover, the

<sup>32</sup> Video interview with Nina Lieberman.

<sup>33</sup> Lieberman, p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Lieberman, p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> Erwin Bonyhadi and Bertha Reichenthal in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), pp. 123f., pp. 244ff.

Margules family took their own milk pail to the farmer to receive milk directly into the pail that had been made kosher for Pesach.<sup>37</sup>

Religious services in the synagogue were liberal. The first Rabbi, Adolf Altmann, was not only an ordained rabbi but also a very well-educated scholar with a doctoral degree in history and philosophy, a member of the Salzburg Historical Society, one of the few local clubs that still accepted Jews.<sup>38</sup> Dr. David Margules, the last rabbi in Salzburg, was also liberal in orientation and deeply committed to the synthesis of the secular and religious in daily life. He left his Orthodox family and community in Galicia in order to acquire a secular education at the University of Vienna, and tried valiantly to combine Jewish observance with his love for German culture and language, theatre, opera and the graphic arts.<sup>39</sup> Upon learning in 1990 that a Lubavitch Rabbi had been installed in Salzburg, Nina Lieberman commented:

“What a contrast to my father who presented himself in morning coat and striped trousers to the mayor and governor upon taking up his duties... I am just wondering whether it is more palatable to the Salzburg natives to see Jews in medieval garb and making a point of keeping themselves from the general population. Back to the ghetto?”<sup>40</sup>

If few Jewish families kept kosher, many nonetheless attended synagogue at least on the High Holy Days, when most closed their shops. After services, they gathered at home with their families. Excluded from non-Jewish society, relatives became very important for both Jewish social and business life. Even some religious Jews who, like the Bonyhadis, kept a kosher household, bought Christmas trees and celebrated Christmas, although, they stressed, this was devoid of religious meaning. Celebrating Christmas as a non-religious holiday was possible due to the fact that Christmas had largely lost its religious character by the late nineteenth century and had become almost a folk festival.<sup>41</sup> In order to allow

<sup>37</sup> Lieberman, p. 120.

<sup>38</sup> Haas and Koller, p. 44.

<sup>39</sup> Video interview with Nina Lieberman, Woodstock, NY April 2002, conducted by Helga Embacher, Albert Lichtblau and Karl Rothauer. Also see Lieberman, pp. 135ff.

<sup>40</sup> Lieberman, p. 35. In a similar vein, when visiting Salzburg in 1993, expelled Jews expressed their alienation and disapproval when they discovered that the synagogue service was now strictly orthodox and performed by a Lubavitch rabbi.

<sup>41</sup> Helga Embacher, “Weihnukka”. Zwischen Assimilation und Vertreibung – Erinnerungen deutscher und österreichischer Juden an Weihnachten und Chanukka’, in Esther Gajek and Richard Faber (eds.), *Politische Weihnachten in Antike und Moderne*, Würzburg 1997, pp. 287–305.



children to participate in Christmas festivities, Jewish families invented minor subterfuges. Hugo Schwarz's mother, one of the leading Zionists in Salzburg, refused to accept a Christmas tree; instead, Hugo received his Christmas presents under the Christmas tree of their maid.<sup>42</sup> Although Jews in Salzburg strove to acculturate, conversion to Christianity or mixed marriages were unusual. Those who migrated to the city looked for partners either in their hometowns in Bohemia or Hungary or in other major Jewish communities. Some even married within the family. Hella Ornstein was married to her uncle; Hans Pasch married Herta Pasch, his cousin in Innsbruck, a union very much appreciated by their parents because "two businesses were merged" thereby.<sup>43</sup>

Within Salzburg Jewry, wide gaps existed not only between classes but also between Jews from Bohemia, Moravia or the Burgenland and the so-called "*Ostjuden*", especially when the latter were poor and apparently unwilling to acculturate. As Hans Pasch put it: "The Polish Jews were very unpopular among the established locals – first of all because they spoke Yiddish, and secondly because they did not look Western European." Even when successful, the Eastern Europeans were still met with a certain mistrust. When Hans Pasch's aunt thought he was considering marrying the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish lawyer, she expressed her shock by commenting: "How can you marry the daughter of this Polish man!"<sup>44</sup> In the Jacoby family, we find a serious rift between Jews who migrated to Salzburg and the "native" German and Austrian Jews. Hans Jacoby, born in 1904 in Salzburg, felt that his parents were not only isolated from non-Jewish society but also from the Jewish community. "*Trau-schau-wem, Ungar-Polak-Böhm*" was his mother's slogan. He further recalled that when a friend of the family, a German Jew, married a Bohemian woman, the friendship between the two families ended.<sup>45</sup>

By the turn of the century, at the latest, Salzburg Jews were aware of the fact that they were excluded from the city's elite. In response, they intensified their contacts with family and other Jews; the extended family became increasingly important. Above all, bourgeois Jewish housewives were isolated, an impression many interviewees conveyed about their parents' lives. Non-Jewish friends only very rarely came to their homes. Some even remarked that when their parents frequented the Café Bazar, they sat only with other Jews. Apart from Albert Pollak the enthusiastic

<sup>42</sup> Hugo Schwarz in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), p. 275.

<sup>43</sup> Video interview with Hans Pasch.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Hans Jacobi in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), p. 90.

hunter, the overwhelming impression is that aside from business affairs Jews were far from well-integrated. Still, Jewish success in business and commercial life was a major achievement from their perspective. They remembered only too well the struggle at the end of the nineteenth century to be formally accepted as a religious community, and they thus appreciated that they were at least tolerated. It is also of more than passing interest in this context that religious Jews like insurance agent Daniel Bonyhadi and Rabbi David Margules maintained friendly relationships with the archbishop, notwithstanding the powerful tradition of Catholic antisemitism in Salzburg. When Gabriella Margules, the younger daughter of the rabbi, was thrown out of public school in 1938, the archbishop offered her the opportunity to continue in a private Catholic school.<sup>46</sup>

A subject that deserves further investigation is the relationship between Jewish families and their non-Jewish maids, who were often the only non-Jews with whom the families lived and worked together in private life. The Bonyhadis, for example, employed a devout Christian maid for twenty years who confronted them with all kinds of antisemitic prejudices, a consequence of her ignorance about Judaism. But when their mother died the maid saw to it that the household remained kosher, because when she confessed to her priest that she worked for a Jewish family she was instructed to obey the Jewish rules to prevent sin.<sup>47</sup> Nina Lieberman recalled a maid not only saying Hebrew prayers with her at night and preparing kosher food for the Jewish holidays but also telling her about the “facts of life”. “My mother’s prudish attitude did not welcome my questions to her about babies, so I turned to the maids for information.”<sup>48</sup> While another maid endeavoured to force her to eat non-kosher food, she still remembered this maid – Marie – as an “ersatz mother”. If her own mother had no experience with little children, Marie “was competent, warm, always available”.<sup>49</sup>

#### *The First World War – A Final Rift Between Jews and Non-Jews*

A considerable number of Salzburg Jews served as soldiers in the First World War. Rabbi Adolf Altmann, a fervent Habsburg patriot, served as

<sup>46</sup> Video interview with Gabriella Margules, conducted by Helga Embacher, Albert Lichtblau and Karl Rothauer, Woodstock, NY 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Embacher, ‘Exil als neue Heimat’, p. 456.

<sup>48</sup> Lieberman, p.103.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p.102.

military chaplain in Italy, and after the war worked as a rabbi in Germany. When confronted with antisemitism aimed at Jewish soldiers during the war, he began to collect testimonies from officers who had commanded Jewish soldiers in an attempt to demonstrate that Jews had been both brave fighters and loyal Austrians. In 1934, Altmann was honoured for his bravery and received a medal for soldiers who had served at the front; ironically, the accompanying certificate was signed by none other than Adolf Hitler. In 1942, he and his wife were killed in Auschwitz.<sup>50</sup> At the same time that Salzburg Jews were proving their patriotism during the First World War, antisemitism was assuming new dimensions in the city, as was the case throughout Austria, after having been in apparent remission between 1897 and 1914. As the Christian Social newspaper *Salzburger Chronik* commented on May 26, 1914: "People outside Austria are often amazed that every respectable person in Austria is an antisemite." Jewish refugees – who were hardly made to feel welcome by the Jewish community of Salzburg – were a prime target of antisemites. Although they at no time made up more than one-sixth of all refugees in the city, the hate campaign focused on these highly conspicuous eastern European Jews. The term "*Ostjude*" became virtually synonymous with "black market dealer" and "profiteer".<sup>51</sup>

After the war, Jews were blamed for Austria's defeat, for the inflation and for the widespread black market. "Jewry is the enemy of the people, as are all those who support it," concluded the *Salzburger Chronik*.<sup>52</sup> The 1918-19 election campaign was accompanied by aggressive antisemitism.<sup>53</sup> A unique characteristic of Salzburg antisemitism was that it was used as an instrument with which to distance the province from the despised metropolis Vienna. In the 1921 Salzburg plebiscite, an overwhelming majority voted for *Anschluß* with Germany in preference to remaining part of the Austrian First Republic. Developing a sense of Austrian identity posed serious problems for the Province of Salzburg; its identity was largely shaped by distancing itself from Red Vienna, "ruled by left-wing Jews". During the 1918 election campaign, antisemitism and

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<sup>50</sup> Manfred Altmann, pp. 507ff.

<sup>51</sup> Of a total of 13,831 refugees on 1 May 1917, 1,915 were Jews; by the summer of 1918, this number had declined to six. See Fellner, pp. 85ff.; Beatrix Hoffmann-Holter, "*Abreisendmachung*". *Jüdische Kriegsflüchtlinge in Wien 1914 bis 1923*, Vienna-Cologne-Weimar 1995, p. 283.

<sup>52</sup> *Salzburger Chronik*, 26 January 1919; see also Fellner, pp. 69ff.

<sup>53</sup> *Salzburger Chronik*, 7 December 1918; see also *Salzburger Chronik*, 6 December 1918, 25 January 1919, 26–27 January 1919 or 31 January 1919.

hostility to “Jewish Vienna” were of particular importance in winning the votes of women, who were permitted for the first time to take part in elections. Jews were blamed not only for sucking the economic lifeblood out of the German *Volk*, but also for destroying the Christian family and thereby the entire German people by reforming the institution of marriage or supporting prostitution.<sup>54</sup> To guarantee the survival of the German *Volk*, the Christian Social party in Salzburg demanded the exclusion of non-Germans from employment in government and civil service positions, emphasising that Jews were a non-German people. “Break with Vienna” was now the slogan of the once-liberal *Salzburger Chronik*. In 1919 it asserted that centralism only survived thanks to “Jewish money”. Jews, therefore, should be kept out of Salzburg. “*Das Alpenland muß deutsch bleiben*” (The Alpine lands must remain German).<sup>55</sup>

As was the case in other tourist regions in Austria, a new kind of antisemitism – which might be called summer vacation antisemitism – emerged in Salzburg in the postwar years. The precarious economic situation of these years led to a general rejection of all “that was strange and foreign”, leading to the peculiar phenomenon of the tourist city of Salzburg protesting against the presence of tourists and above all against Jewish summer visitors. Many complained that the Jews “made themselves comfortable” in restaurants and ate the hungry Salzburgers out of house and home.<sup>56</sup> By the early 1920s, some vacation spots in Salzburg declared themselves to be “cleansed of Jews”.<sup>57</sup> Even the popular protest movement against the founding of the Salzburg Festival “amidst the postwar hunger”<sup>58</sup> was not free of antisemitic resentment. The Festival was considered “Jewified” and many took exception to Jewish or purportedly Jewish artists like Max Reinhardt, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Alexander Moissi and Helene Thimig.<sup>59</sup> Many in Salzburg also expressed dis-

<sup>54</sup> Helga Embacher, ‘Das Frauenwahlrecht als Belohnung für die Kriegsarbeit?’ in Brigitte Mazohl-Wallnig (ed.), *Die andere Geschichte. Eine Salzburger Frauengeschichte von der ersten Mädchenschule (1695) bis zum Frauenwahlrecht (1918)*, Salzburg 1995, pp. 311–334.

<sup>55</sup> *Salzburger Chronik*, 31 January 1919.

<sup>56</sup> Fellner, pp. 97ff.; Lichtblau, ‘Antisemitismus’, pp. 465ff.; *Eiserner Besen*, 15.3.1924; Käthe Sporer in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), p. 28.

<sup>57</sup> Fellner, pp. 102ff.

<sup>58</sup> Ingrid Bauer, ‘Vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zum Beginn der Großen Krise 1914–1932’, in *1287–1987. 700 Jahre Stadtrecht von Salzburg. Katalog zur Ausstellung*, Salzburg 1987, p. 229; Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival. Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890–1938*, Ithaca, NY 1990.

<sup>59</sup> See Alma Scope, ‘Das Ambiente der Salzburger Festspiele’, in Feingold (ed.), pp. 191ff.; Helga Embacher, ‘Pendlerinnen zwischen Konventionen und Welten: Verhin-

may at Jewish guests attending the Festival, especially those who wore *Dirndlkleider* and *Lederhosen*.<sup>60</sup>

The end of the Habsburg Monarchy was as an important caesura in the history of Austrian antisemitism. At the very point that democracy was installed for the first time, antisemitism reached a new peak. From June 1920, Austria was governed by political parties that openly propagated antisemitism.<sup>61</sup> In 1919 the “*Deutsch-österreichischer Schutzverein Antisemitenbund*” was established; in 1920 a Salzburg branch was created. The *Eiserner Besen* (Iron Broom), the *Salzburger Antisemitenbund*’s publication (somewhat akin to the Nazi periodical *Der Stürmer*), anticipated in these years the ideas of the National Socialists. The people of Salzburg were called upon to boycott Jewish stores, while Jews were portrayed as vermin.<sup>62</sup>

How did Jews react to this new wave of antisemitism? While the older generation – perhaps deceived by their success in business – retained a belief in assimilation, those born after 1900 reacted much more acutely. Excluded from and disparaged by non-Jewish society, young Salzburg Jews gravitated towards left-wing and Zionist movements, in sharp contrast to the older generation. The exclusion of Jews from bourgeois life, and discrimination against them in schools, rendered many of the younger generation – previously strongly identified with German culture – susceptible to a variety of alternative identities. Hans Pasch, for example, was enthusiastic about the revolution in Russia and left-wing radicalism in Germany. Following a brief flirtation with both socialism and communism, he became an enthusiastic right-wing Zionist and follower of Jabotinsky. Accompanied by Richard Ornstein, he travelled to Palestine in the 1920s, although he never seriously considered living there. The land was too primitive and at that point he “was still too comfortable in Austria”.<sup>63</sup>

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derte große Salzburgerinnen’, in Erika Thurner (ed.), *Die andere Geschichte 2. Eine Salzburger Frauengeschichte*, Salzburg 1996, pp. 71–94.

<sup>60</sup> Kammerhofer-Aggermann, ‘Von der Trachtenmode zur heiligen ererbten Vätertracht’, pp. 183ff.

<sup>61</sup> Lichtblau, ‘Antisemitismus’, pp. 454–471.

<sup>62</sup> Fellner, pp. 89ff.

<sup>63</sup> Video interview with Hans Pasch.



*Memories of the Children and Grandchildren*

Those born after 1900, the second and third generation following the founding of the community, regarded their parents as ambitious business people with scant time for entertainment and little interest in active participation in local politics and culture. For their part, they were generally no longer interested in pursuing the family business and looked elsewhere for fulfilment, a pattern that frequently resulted in major inter-generational conflict.<sup>64</sup> The founder generation was viewed as representing the “World of Yesterday”, as being too conservative and traditional.<sup>65</sup> If the generation of Albert Pollak identified with liberalism and the subsequent generation with the Monarchy and Emperor, the 1900 generation felt politically homeless. While their parents attempted to ignore antisemitism, they suffered terribly from isolation from the surrounding society. Due to their small numbers, Jewish children often felt like outsiders even in elementary school and very often had direct experience of antisemitism. In their perception, life in Salzburg had been very much better prior to the First World War.<sup>66</sup>

Nina J. Lieberman (born in 1921), recalled how difficult it was for a Jewish girl to take part in a dance course. To ensure a partner, her parents attempted to arrange that she attend class with a Jewish boy.

A week before we were to start, my parents received a telephone call from the director of the dancing school informing them that the other boys and girls had threatened to withdraw – or rather their parents had threatened to pull them out – if Jews were part of the group. Regretfully, therefore, the director asked my parents and those of the young boy to withdraw us. He quickly added that he would be very happy to give us private lessons, thus showing his liberal attitude and probably also his underlying thinking that the Jews could pay for them.<sup>67</sup>

Nina again felt caught up in a web of prejudice when looking for a tennis partner. As a properly bourgeois girl she took tennis lessons, but the daughters and sons of doctors, lawyers or teachers would not consider a Jewish partner.<sup>68</sup> Antisemitism did not just exclude her from middle-

<sup>64</sup> See Hugo Schwarz and Ornstein in Ellmayer *et al.* (eds.), p. 267, p. 255.

<sup>65</sup> See video interview with Hans Pasch and Nina Lieberman.

<sup>66</sup> See also Albert Lichtblau, *Als hätten wir dazugehört. Österreichisch-jüdische Lebensgeschichten aus der Habsburger Monarchie*, Vienna–Cologne–Weimar 1999; David Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War*, London 2001.

<sup>67</sup> Lieberman, p.184.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p.188.

class Salzburg society; she also felt cut off from the normal run of social activities among children and adolescents.

Even when I was invited to the home of one or another schoolmate, I had to be careful about what I could eat. Milk, cocoa, chocolate, sodas were permitted, but with every cake or cookie I had to be reassured that no animal fat had been used in the baking. Even when I was invited, I stuck out by being different. This in itself was not perceived as a hardship by me; I felt special.<sup>69</sup>

As the daughter of a liberal and well-educated rabbi, she had a strong Jewish identity and was proud of her Jewish heritage; others, however, were ashamed of being Jewish. While Nina's identity was very much based on trying to combine religion and modernity, for many boys and young men it was important to prove that Jews were strong and brave fighters. To this end, Zionism proved to be an ideal option.<sup>70</sup> But in fact hardly anybody departed for Palestine before 1938.

The generation born after 1900 was not only excluded from non-Jewish society; its members also came under substantial pressure from their own families and the Jewish community as a form of extended family. Jews in Salzburg depended on the small Jewish community, while in Vienna there were at least many different Jewish subcultures and a segment of the Social Democratic or even Communist party with which Jews could identify and in which they could even "lose" themselves. As a result, a number of Jews left Salzburg; in 1934 the Jewish community numbered only 239, compared to almost 300 in 1910. Of particular interest is that while the exclusion of Jews from the Salzburg elite began in the 1880s our interviewees perceived their parents – and above all Albert Pollak – as highly esteemed by non-Jewish society. We must therefore ask whether these family stories express not so much the actual position of Albert Pollak and other founders as the desire of the interviewees to be accepted by non-Jewish society.

Salzburg Jews regarded the assumption of a bourgeois lifestyle as the primary means of acculturation. Accordingly, religion was relegated to the home and considered a strictly private matter. In business and social life, they adapted completely to their non-Jewish environment. As entrepreneurs who established modern department stores, however, they were considered symbols of modernisation. The extent to which this might have been a source of concern and insecurity among their non-Jewish

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid*, p. 160.

<sup>70</sup> Hans Pasch and Erwin Bonyhadi in Ellmauer *et al.* (eds.), pp. 181f., pp. 121ff.

competitors remains to be investigated. One especially striking characteristic of their acculturation was the Jews' noted devotion to German language and *Kultur*. In comparison with Viennese Jewry, veneration of the Monarchy was insignificant in Salzburg, although many Salzburg Jews served in the army during the First World War. Despite their obvious willingness to assimilate and their economic success, during the years immediately following that war (at the very latest), this model of acculturation proved to be a failure, even if many Salzburg Jews were unwilling or unable to perceive or accept this fact. The Salzburg bourgeoisie, with its strong German nationalist orientation, refused to admit Jews, a liberal bourgeoisie did not exist and the Social Democrats offered no alternative. Notwithstanding increasingly aggressive antisemitism, Jews remained economically successful and in general showed no great devotion to religion. The enthusiasm of Jewish youth for Zionism thus emerges as indicative of the fact that antisemitism had made it impossible to continue on what was purported to be the path to normality.

TOBIAS BRINKMANN

Exceptionalism and Normality:  
“German Jews“ in the United States 1840-1880

Between 1820 and 1880, more than 150,000 Jews left Central and Eastern Europe for the United States. Although an insignificant percentage of transatlantic mass-migration, this constituted a rather large part of Central European Jewry and, even more importantly, it boosted the American Jewish population from a few hundred families in 1800 to some 250,000 in 1880. This “German-Jewish” migration, however, was dwarfed by the immigration of more than two million Jews to the United States from Eastern Europe between the 1870s and the early 1920s.<sup>1</sup> The “German Jews” of nineteenth-century America maintained a close relationship with Germany and with German Jewry, and to this day the term “German-Jewish period” in American Jewish history before 1880 is commonly used. Although of late the term “German Jews” has been challenged, as will be discussed below, the special relationship between Jews in Germany and in the United States before 1880 remains uncontested.

From the perspective of modern Jewish history the American Jewish experience can be described both as normal and exceptional. The status of American Jews was exceptional because they had already achieved relative normality with the American Revolution, at a time when most Jews in Europe were still second-class citizens (or worse). In the United States, Jewish emancipation was not at issue. Even before the Revolution, the few hundred Jews living in the British colonies enjoyed far-reaching rights. The American Constitution of 1789 gave full citizenship to all free men and the First Amendment of 1791 guaranteed the separation of state and religion. Jews and Judaism were not mentioned in the Constitution, nor were they the subject of special legislation. American Jews were full-

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Toury, *Soziale und politische Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland, 1848-1871*, Düsseldorf 1977, p. 43. For a general treatment, see Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migrations in Western Europe since 1650*, Bloomington 1992, p. 147.

fledged citizens of a democratic republic with a liberal constitution, which nevertheless – it is worthwhile recalling – for decades tolerated slavery and led a brutal war against the indigenous population. Although anti-Jewish stereotypes were widespread, even when very few Jews actually lived in the United States, there was no debate over the “Jewish Question” and Jews were not treated by the state as a distinct minority or as a group with special status.<sup>2</sup> President Washington reminded the Jews of Newport, who had written him a welcome letter on the occasion of his visit to the Rhode Island town in 1790, that the United States knew no “toleration ... of one class of people ... [by] another”. Toleration entailed different status and thus violated the spirit of the Constitution.<sup>3</sup> The new American republic defined itself as a state or nation based on the principles of the American Constitution and not on potentially exclusive categories of ethnicity or religion. The absence of a dominant cultural or religious tradition and the openness to immigration created unique conditions for Jews.<sup>4</sup>

Initially, Jews were treated by the state and by the general population as relatively “normal” (immigrant-) citizens. This contrasts with the experience of African-Americans, even after emancipation, the indigenous population, Chinese, Japanese and (Catholic) Irish immigrants, all of whom were victims of often violent attacks. At a time when Jews in Western, Central and, to a much lesser degree, Eastern Europe were striving “towards normality”, American Jews had already ‘arrived’, legally and, at least for the most part, socially. This status of relative “normality” was exceptional compared with the status of Jews in other states

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<sup>2</sup> Ira Katznelson, ‘Between Separation and Disappearance: American Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism’, in idem and Pierre Birnbaum (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, Princeton 1995, pp. 164–166.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Seymour Martin Lipset, ‘A Unique People in an Exceptional Country’, in idem (ed.), *American Pluralism and the Jewish Community*, New Brunswick and London 1989, p. 8. In his much-quoted letter, Washington repeated passages of the original letter sent to him by the Jewish congregation; the cited passage, however, was written by the President. Legal equality did not automatically confer social acceptance. Ira Katznelson has emphasised the “ugly underside of the Jewish entanglement with America”. Even at a time when very few Jews had settled in North America, anti-Jewish stereotypes were pervasive and in violation of the American Constitution several states prevented non-Christians, in some cases even non-Protestants, from taking elected office well into the nineteenth century. See Katznelson, p. 167, fn. 18; p. 169. On anti-Jewish stereotypes before 1865, see Frederic Cople Jaher, *Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and the Rise of Anti-Semitism in America*, Cambridge, MA 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Katznelson, pp. 164–166.



at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Looking at American Jewry, therefore, offers a way to approach the concept of "normality" in the European context by using its mirror image, by looking more closely at "exceptionalism".

The definition of "normality" is a complex matter. A fluid term that needs to be historicised, it carries within it the implicit notion of a comparison and its definition accordingly depends on a matrix of political, social and cultural circumstances. If "normality" is used in the context of modern Jewish history in the nineteenth century, it connotes legal equality and social acceptance within a society that tolerated difference. In nineteenth-century America, as opposed to European states in the same period, "normality" in the sense of legal equality and social acceptance was primarily defined by skin-colour or "race" and, to a lesser extent, by class. As whites, Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe who arrived before 1880 could engage much more freely in the economic, political and social spheres than those left behind in Europe – unlike African-Americans, Native Americans, Sino-Asiatic immigrants and, after 1880, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe including Jews. Although John Higham's assertion that "German Jews" were the most successful immigrant group in American history is somewhat problematic, pre-1880 Jewish immigrants were certainly socially and economically upwardly mobile, a process which was at least superficially – especially on the socio-economic level – similar to the embourgeoisement of Jews in Germany.<sup>6</sup>

The massive anti-Jewish social discrimination of the 1880s and 1890s was an attempt to put a stain on Jewish whiteness and "normality", in order socially to exclude already established Jews from the upper echelons of society. Public discrimination against Jews was part and parcel of a larger anti-immigrant and racist movement that thrived in a turbulent period of economic growth and social change accompanied by strong immigration, especially from Southern and Eastern Europe. Exclusion mechanisms directed against Jews can be explained as a defensive reaction by the upper classes to foster cohesion in a period of social and economic upheaval caused by the transformation from an idealised organic

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<sup>5</sup> Lipset, p. 3; Katznelson, p. 170. On anti-Jewish stereotypes, see Jaher, *Scapegoat in the New Wilderness*; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, New York and Oxford 1994.

<sup>6</sup> John Higham, *Send These To Me: Immigrants in Urban America*, rev. edn., Baltimore 1975, p. 144; Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America*, New Brunswick 1998.

agrarian-rural *Gemeinschaft* to a dynamic urban-industrial society, a transformation fuelled by massive immigration. Nevertheless, the impact of anti-Jewish stereotypes in the United States before 1900 was never as powerful as in Imperial Germany or France. Prior to the First World War, anti-Jewish agitation was by no means the most prominent facet of a diffuse Nativist movement.<sup>7</sup>

In the following, two major aspects of “German-Jewish” history in the United States will be examined: first, the surprisingly complex definition and *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history) of the term “German Jews” in the American context; and second, the relationship between “normality” and “exceptionalism” in American Jewish perceptions of Germany and German Jewish perceptions of America.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Definition of “German Jews”*

In comparison with the German Jewish experience and American Jewish history after 1881, the pre-1880 period of American Jewish history, often described as the “German-Jewish period”, has received relatively little attention from scholars. Moreover, few of those who have worked on the large group of German-speaking immigrants in the United States focused on Jewish immigrants, although Jews played prominent roles in German associations and German-language papers reported widely on Jewish issues.<sup>9</sup> In its early years the Leo Baeck Institute devoted a small volume to “German Jews” in the United States, but apart from a few works, notably by Rudolf Glanz, little subsequent research was undertaken.<sup>10</sup> In the past

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<sup>7</sup> Jaher, p. 9; Brodtkin, p. 27; Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820-1880* (The Jewish People in America, vol. 2), Baltimore 1992, pp. 169–200; Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896*, Cambridge and New York 2001, pp. 265–267; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, New Brunswick 1955.

<sup>8</sup> This essay is drawn from material in Tobias Brinkmann, *Von der Gemeinde zur “Community”: Jüdische Einwanderer in Chicago 1840-1900*, Osnabrück 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley Nadel, ‘Jewish Race and German Soul in Nineteenth-Century America’, *American Jewish History* 77 (1987), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Eric E. Hirshler (ed.), *Jews From Germany in the United States*, New York 1955; Adolf Kober, ‘Jewish Emigration from Württemberg to the United States of America (1845-1855)’, *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 41 (1952), pp. 225–273; Rudolf Glanz, ‘The “Bayer” and the “Pollack” in America’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 17 (1955), pp. 27–42; idem, *The Jews of California: From the Discovery of Gold until 1880*, New York 1960; idem, *Studies in Judaica Americana*, New York 1970;

half-century, a few scattered articles have dealt with the emigration of Jews from the German states, while in the 1990s Avraham Barkai presented a broad survey of the migration of Jews from Germany to the United States between 1820 and 1914.<sup>11</sup> The recently published four-volume study of German-Jewish history, sponsored by the Leo Baeck Institute, devotes only a few sentences to Jewish emigration from the German states in the nineteenth century, although proportionally the number of emigrants was significant.<sup>12</sup> This relative lack of interest may reflect the growing distance of German Jewry from Jews in the United States, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, American Jews became increasingly alienated from German Jewry, emancipating themselves from its cultural dominance, for instance, by training and ordaining rabbis in Cincinnati and New York rather than sending students to Germany or importing German-educated rabbis.<sup>13</sup> The situation has been partly redressed in the past two decades, however, as studies by Naomi Cohen, Hasia Diner and the already noted Avraham Barkai have opened up new avenues of research on the period before 1880.<sup>14</sup>

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idem, *The Jewish Woman in America: Two Female Immigrant Generations 1820-1929* (vol. 1: The Eastern European Jewish Woman, vol. 2: The German Jewish Woman), New York 1976; Hanns G. Reissner, 'The German-American Jews 1800-1850', *LBI Year Book X* (1965), pp. 57-116.

<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Glanz, 'The German-Jewish Mass Immigrations 1820-1880', *American Jewish Archives* 22 (1970), pp. 49-66; Jacob Toury, 'Jewish Manual Labour and Emigration: Records from some Bavarian Districts (1830-1857)', *LBI Year Book XVI* (1971), pp. 45-62; Avraham Barkai, 'German-Jewish Migrations in the Nineteenth Century', *LBI Year Book XXX* (1985), pp. 301-318; Stefan Rohrbacher, 'From Württemberg to America: A 19th Century German-Jewish Village on its Way to the new World', *American Jewish Archives* 41 (1989), pp. 142-171; Avraham Barkai, 'Aus dem Dorf nach Amerika: Jüdische Auswanderung 1820-1914', in Reinhard Rürup and Monika Richarz (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben auf dem Lande*, Tübingen 1997 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 56), pp. 109-120. Two monographs are Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States 1820-1914*, New York 1994; Cornelia Östreich, "*Des rauhen Winters ungeachtet ...*": *Die Auswanderung Posener Juden nach Amerika im 19. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Brenner, 'Zwischen Revolution und rechtlicher Gleichstellung', in Michael A. Meyer (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, Munich 1996/97 (Veröffentlichung des Leo Baeck Instituts), vol. 2 (Emanzipation und Akkulturation), pp. 304-305.

<sup>13</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, 'The View from the Old World: German Jewish Perspectives', in Norman J. Cohen and Robert M. Seltzer (eds.), *The Americanization of the Jews*, New York 1995, pp. 19-40.

<sup>14</sup> Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: German Jews in the United States 1830-1914*, Philadelphia 1984; Diner, *A Time for Gathering*; Barkai, *Branching Out*.

Against this background, the work of Michael A. Meyer is particularly important. His study on the Reform movement is notable, for example, both because he examines the movement from its German origins through to its success in the United States and because it nicely highlights the transatlantic dimension of modern Jewish history in the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Meyer distinguishes between three interrelated pillars of German-Jewish identity in the United States, all of which were shaped by a specific German *Kultur* as it emerged in the late eighteenth century, comprising language, religion and the close relationship between Jewish and other German-speaking immigrants. Most Jewish immigrants originated in the German states (including Posen) and continued to speak German into the 1870s. In the United States, Jewish immigrants were welcomed in associations formed by German immigrants. For Jewish reformers the German language played an important symbolic role. Reform, of course, originated in Germany and was strongly influenced by the rise of critical *Wissenschaft* and by the ideal of *Bildung*. Due to the favourable conditions for religious minorities in the United States, Reform flourished, emerging in different forms as the dominant religious affiliation in the late 1870s. The success of Reform helps to explain why Germany remained important as a cultural point of reference for American Reform Jews into the second and third generation, i.e. until around 1900. In the United States, Jewish immigrants from Germany remained on the margins of “highbrow” culture (arts and academia) until the turn of the century and they therefore admired Jews in Germany for their achievements as writers, musicians and scholars.<sup>16</sup>

Naomi Cohen’s definition of “German Jews” incorporates two aspects of Meyer’s work. For Cohen, “German Jews” includes “those from central Europe and Poland who spoke German or looked to Germany for intellectual and cultural leadership.”<sup>17</sup> Her work, however, focuses almost entirely on the national level and on New York and belongs to a more traditional historiography that deals largely with Jewish elites. In the

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<sup>15</sup> Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York and Oxford 1988.

<sup>16</sup> Michael A. Meyer, ‘German-Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century America’, in Jacob Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, New Brunswick 1987, pp. 247–267. In “lowbrow” culture, especially on the popular vaudeville stage, Jewish immigrants from Germany were successful as actors and managers. See Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920*, New Brunswick 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, p. 12.

early 1990s social historians posed strikingly different questions about the "German-Jewish" period in American-Jewish history, especially with regard to the precise meaning of the term "German Jews". In 1990, for example, migration historian Stanley Nadel published a detailed analysis of German immigration to New York City between 1840 and 1875, concentrating on the *Kleindeutschland* or "Little Germany" neighbourhood on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Unlike most others who had discussed German immigration to North America, Nadel examined the role of religious affiliation, discovering that many of the inhabitants of *Kleindeutschland* were Jewish. To Nadel, Jewish immigrants in New York formed an integral part of the large and heterogeneous German community and on the face of it he made a strong case for the German identity of the Jewish immigrants. In fact, though, in an article aptly titled "Jewish Race and German Soul in Nineteenth-Century America", he stressed that the German-Jewish nexus in nineteenth-century America had been overlooked by historians of German-speaking migration and of Jewish migration. For Nadel, then, the term "German Jews" described the close contact between Jews and other German-speaking immigrants.<sup>18</sup>

The five-volume series *The Jewish People in America*, published in 1992 by the American Jewish Historical Society, marked a further decisive turning point in the historiography on the "German Jews". Hasia Diner, author of the volume covering the period 1820-1880, put considerable emphasis on social history, not least on the hitherto neglected history of everyday life, women and the social composition of communities. More importantly, however, Diner also called for a complete moratorium on the use of the terms "German Jews" and "German-Jewish period", arguing convincingly that the uncritical use of these terms does not adequately convey the diversity of Jewish migration from different parts of Europe. Rather, these terms are applicable only, at least from the perspective of the massive post-1880 Eastern European Jewish immigrants, to a rather small, elite group of successful businessmen and prominent rabbis. Diner's definition of "German Jews" explicitly links ethnic identification in the United States with geographic origin in Europe. Large groups of Jews, she points out, did not come from the German states but from Alsace, Bohemia, Poland and Hungary, and hence could hardly be properly described as "German". And most Jews who did come from the

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<sup>18</sup> Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion and Class in New York City 1845-80*, Urbana 1990, esp. pp. 99-103; idem, 'Jewish Race and German Soul', pp. 6-26.



German states, she emphasises, moved directly “out of the ghetto” to America without any prior immersion in German culture. Diner notes that “many American Jews who themselves – or their parents – had hailed from the lands of the east described themselves as ‘Germans’, an identity thought to be prestigious, and ignored their Polish or other roots.”<sup>19</sup> Shortly after Diner’s study, Avraham Barkai published his already mentioned survey of German-Jewish migration – another social history of the “German Jews”. Barkai devoted close attention to the dynamics of the migration process and, unlike Diner, he emphasised the close relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants from German-speaking regions in the United States. Barkai did not question the applicability of the term “German Jews”; rather, he argued that “German Jews” in the United States formed a “branch of German Jewry” until 1880.<sup>20</sup>

All of the preceding raises the question of how we ought to define the term “German Jews”. Should it be dispensed with entirely? Does “German Jews” describe the affiliation of Jews with communities of German-speaking immigrants or does it describe a branch of German Jewry? Does “German Jews” perhaps imply a special relationship with German culture (especially for Reform Jews), or does it merely inform us about geographic origin? Or is its meaning a combination of some or all of these?

Research on Chicago and other cities supports Diner’s argument, especially in regard to the diversity of Jewish life that should not be portrayed as “German-Jewish”. Indeed, the term should either be replaced by more precise terms like “German-speaking Jews”, “Jews who were active in German immigrant associations”, or “Reform Jews”, or used with more caution, paying due attention to the concrete historical context – but for reasons other than those suggested by Diner. To fully understand the term, we need to clarify its *Begriffsgeschichte* and a number of its related but distinct layers. At least three levels can be distinguished: first, the origin of a majority of Jewish immigrants in the United States before 1880 in the German states; second, the involvement of these immigrants with other German-speaking immigrants; and third, and most important, the strong cultural identification with “Germany”, not least by the adherents of the so-called radical Reform movement in the United States.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Diner, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 228.

<sup>21</sup> Recently Maria Baader has stressed the important cultural dimension of the term “German Jews”, implicitly questioning Diner’s rejection of the term and recalling the older position of Meyer. See Maria T. Baader, ‘From “the Priestess of the Home” to “the Rabbi’s brilliant Daughter”’: Concepts of Jewish Womanhood and Progressive

The case of Chicago indicates that Nadel's argument appears to be superficially well-founded. Most Jews in Chicago spoke German until the 1870s and read German newspapers, and the Chicago-based *Illinois Staatszeitung* covered events in the Jewish community well beyond 1880. Jews acted as organisers and even leaders of the German community in Chicago. But they did so individually. Jewish associations and congregations were not part of the German community. While Jews participated in German parades, even on occasion as leaders, Jewish congregations and associations did not march. In 1867, Jews in Chicago organised their own "Jewish parade" to celebrate the opening of a Jewish hospital. These examples demonstrate that the emerging Jewish community remained clearly distinct from the German community. Both the successful efforts by the fraternal organisation B'nai B'rith to establish a central platform for the Chicago Jewish community in the form of the "United Hebrew Relief Association" in 1859, which resembled a secular *Ersatzgemeinde* in American terms, and the Jewish engagement during the Civil War are clear indicators of the ethnicisation of Jewish immigrants on American rather than German terms. Even the radical reformers, who were influential in Chicago, acted explicitly as "American Israelites" when they called for a 'Germanisation' of American Judaism. The term "Jewish German-Americans", therefore, better describes the involvement of Jews in ethnic German associations than "German Jews".<sup>22</sup>

Hasia Diner's argument, however, is problematic because geographic origin did not automatically determine the ethnic identification of Jewish immigrants in the United States. In nineteenth-century Central and Eastern Europe, state and nation were not coterminous and citizenship did not automatically predetermine the ethnic identity of immigrants from these

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Germanness in *Die Deborah and the American Israelite, 1854-1900*, in *LBI Year Book XLIII* (1998), pp. 47-72.

<sup>22</sup> Tobias Brinkmann, 'Charity on Parade – Chicago's Jews and the Construction of Ethnic and Civic "Gemeinschaft" in the 1860s', in Jürgen Heideking and Geneviève Fabre (eds.), *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Early Twentieth Century*, New York 2001, pp. 157-174; Walter Ehrlich, *Zion in the Valley: The Jewish Community of St. Louis*, vol. 1, 1807-1907, Columbia, MO 1997. Jewish leaders in Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St. Louis opted for similar strategies. Jews in these cities participated in German community life but the Jewish and German communities developed separately. See Ehrlich, *Zion in the Valley*; Kathleen Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City*, Cambridge, MA 1976; Lloyd Gartner and Louis Swichkow, *The History of the Jews of Milwaukee*, Philadelphia 1963; Jonathan Sarna and Henry D. Shapiro (eds.), *Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati since 1820*, Urbana 1992.

regions. The adjective “German” did not relate to a state that did not exist before 1871 but rather to a spiritual and cultural concept. Reform rabbis like Bernhard Felsenthal and David Einhorn, described by Diner as elitist “German Jews”, are a case in point. Their identification with Germany was cultural rather than political and their calls for ‘Germanisation’ can only be understood in their American context.<sup>23</sup> For Jews who identified themselves as part of the Reform movement, Barkai’s definition of “German Jews” in America as part of “German Jewry” before 1880 – if only in a broad cultural sense – has merit. But his definition reflects the perception of “German Jews” in America more than that of German Jews in Germany, who increasingly distanced themselves from Jews in the United States before 1880, as will be discussed below.

There is yet another dimension to the term that is frequently overlooked. Research on Chicago indicates that the term “German Jews” was in fact rarely used before 1880 to describe Jews living in the United States. Jews acknowledged their relationship to “Germany” on different levels, but they referred to themselves as Jews, Israelites or simply as Americans. Other Americans described them also as Jews, and sometimes as Germans because of their language, or as members of German communities. It was only in the early 1880s that the term “German Jews” became commonplace within the Jewish community. But by the 1880s most “German Jews” had ceased to speak German, even in Reform Temples, had cut their ties to other German-speaking immigrants, and had become alienated both from German Jewry and, with the rise of antisemitism in Germany, increasingly from German *Kultur* itself.<sup>24</sup>

From 1870 a growing number of Eastern European Jews arrived in the United States and these new arrivals were – to some extent – excluded by (and isolated themselves from) the Jews already there. Diner is correct to criticise the subsuming of these migrants into the “German-Jewish” group. Although the separation between the older, established immigrants and the new immigrants has been overemphasised in the literature, the term “German Jews” originated as a consequence of the larger immigration of Eastern Europeans. “German Jews” was a codeword for status – for education, refinement, cultural superiority and assimilation. Consequently, “German Jews” represented the class difference between estab-

<sup>23</sup> Diner, pp. 232–233. On this definition of “German Jews”, see also Baader, p. 55.

<sup>24</sup> Meyer has pointed out that with the arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants “German-Jewish identity” was “ironically” strengthened, just as it was fading. See Meyer, ‘German-Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century America’, p. 266.

lished Jews and recent immigrants.<sup>25</sup> It is this use of the term, which reflects the perspective of the newly arrived on the "Uptown Jews" – who in turn emphasised their social distance from the new immigrants – that has survived to this day.<sup>26</sup>

The distinction between "German" and "Russian" in Chicago was not fixed. A number of the pre-1880 Eastern European immigrants became part of the higher status "German" group, sometimes even as prominent representatives, although "Russians" and "Poles" were nonetheless on occasion stigmatised and excluded. On the other hand, as Barkai has stressed, Jewish immigration from Germany did not come to an abrupt end in 1880. In Chicago, the number of Jewish immigrants from Germany in the care of Jewish welfare associations was significant into the 1890s. Many of these Jews, though, were probably transmigrants from Eastern Europe and were perceived as "Russians" by the established community.<sup>27</sup> In time, the meaning of "Germanness" extended beyond those who had arrived before 1880, and for the newly arrived Jews from Eastern Europe "Germanness" conferred social status. Observations made by the young urban sociologist Louis Wirth, who studied the residential mobility of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Chicago in the 1920s, confirm this point. In the beginning of the 1920s a growing number of immigrants moved from the area of first settlement, the so-called "Ghetto" near the city's downtown, to a slightly upscale West Side neighbourhood called Lawndale. The Jews in the "Ghetto" referred to Lawndale in Yiddish as *Deutschland*. Wirth points out that for the "Ghetto" residents, many of whom were orthodox, *Deitchuk* (Yiddish for "the German") represented the image of assimilated Eastern European Jewish immigrants who had succeeded economically, moved out of the Ghetto and no longer strictly adhered to *Halakhah*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Robert Rockaway, 'Ethnic Conflict in an Urban Environment: The German and the Russian Jew in Detroit, 1881-1914', in *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 60 (1970/71), pp. 133-150. The difficult relationship between established immigrants and newer arrivals is a classic theme of studies on migration and, therefore, of Jewish history. A possible explanation is provided by the sociologist Norbert Elias's model of "established vs. outsiders", which points to the uneven distribution of power (and thus status) between these socially constructed groups. See Norbert Elias and J. L. Scotson, *Etablierte und Außenseiter*, Frankfurt am Main 1990.

<sup>26</sup> See especially the influential book on the complicated relationship between "Germans" and "Russians", Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870-1914*, Cambridge, MA 1962, pp. 95-98.

<sup>27</sup> Brinkmann, *Von der Gemeinde zur "Community"*, pp. 331-382.

<sup>28</sup> Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto*, Chicago 1928, pp. 246-249.

In her book, Hasia Diner candidly identifies herself with the Eastern European Jewish immigrants and concedes that from childhood “German Jews” were for her “the other Jews”. She understands “German Jews” primarily as a status group (i.e. the post-1880 meaning of the term) and links it mistakenly with geographic origin. She therefore neglects the important third layer, the strong cultural identification of American Jews as modern Jews; they regarded “Germany” and, even more importantly, German Jewry as the epitome of modernity and modern Judaism.<sup>29</sup> Many Central and Eastern European Jewish immigrants became modern, and thus in this specific sense “German”, only in the United States – for example when they joined radical Reform congregations in the 1860s and 1870s. In the eyes of many new immigrants after 1880, however, “Germanness” increasingly conveyed the image of Jews who had achieved social status and acceptance, often at the cost of their Jewishness and regardless of their origins in Europe. Indeed, in the American context “German Jews” corresponds with “Ostjuden”, a similarly loaded term.<sup>30</sup> If we decode the images to which the term “German Jews” refers, ensuring in the process that we pay due attention to the concrete historical context, we can begin to grasp its complex “cultural baggage”. The continued understanding of “German Jews” primarily as “established Jews”, even among scholars, reinforces the necessity of handling this multi-layered term with caution. All the more so if we consider the differences between self-ascribed identities and identities ascribed by ethnic leaders, or from outside of the group – a complex topic indeed, even if one focuses only on the conflict between “German Jews” and “Russian Jews” within the Jewish group in the United States.

### *“German Jews” and American Exceptionalism*

The discussion of the term “German Jews” in the American context demonstrates that the term is linked to complex images and perceptions of “Germany” and “America”. From the other side, so to speak, the normalisation of the legal and social status of German Jewry resulted in an increasingly negative German Jewish view of “America” and American Jewry.

<sup>29</sup> Diner, p. xv.

<sup>30</sup> Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness 1800-1923*, Madison 1982.



Examining the German Jewish perception (in Germany) of both American Jews and America, Steven Lowenstein has pointed out that during troubled periods Jews in Germany praised "America" as a land of freedom and equality. One of the best-known examples of this was the so-called "On to America!" movement. As a consequence of anti-Jewish riots in the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the early stages of the 1848 revolutions, Bohemian-Jewish writer Leopold Kompert published several stirring articles calling upon Jews to depart immediately for the United States, which for Kompert was a synonym for freedom. Only a handful of Bohemian Jews heeded his call and Kompert himself remained in Europe. With the progress of emancipation policies in the late 1850s, papers such as the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* took an increasingly critical line towards "America", and to some extent even towards American Jewry. Reports on anti-Jewish incidents or the system of slavery implicitly questioned positive images of "America" in Europe.<sup>31</sup>

A good early example of criticism of "America" and American Jewry is the booklet *Deutsch-Amerikanische Skizzen für jüdische Auswanderer und Nichtauswanderer* (German-American Sketches for Jewish Immigrants and Non-Immigrants), published in 1857 in Leipzig, and sponsored by – among others – the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Ludwig Philippson. Writing during a period of strong Jewish and general migration from the German states to the United States, the author, an anonymous German-Jewish traveller who eventually returned to Germany, set out to convince potential Jewish migrants not to pack their bags. His acerbic descriptions of "America" as a land of materialism and superficiality, and of American Jewry as having assimilated to this "America", echoed contemporary views of the New World in Germany in the late 1850s.<sup>32</sup> After the ebbing of Jewish migration from Germany to America, Lowenstein has convincingly argued, "America" lost its importance for Jews in Germany. The propensity of German Jews to migrate was low and, at the same time, with the mass-immigration from Eastern Europe

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<sup>31</sup> Lowenstein, pp. 22–27. On Kompert, see Guido Kisch, 'The Revolution of 1848 and the Jewish "On to America" Movement', in *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 38 (1948/49), pp. 185–231; Lothar Kahn, 'German Jewish Writers and the Image of America (1820-1840)', in *LBI Year Book XXXI* (1986), pp. 407–439.

<sup>32</sup> *Deutsch-Amerikanische Skizzen für jüdische Auswanderer und Nichtauswanderer*, Leipzig 1857; Gershon Greenberg, 'A German-Jewish Immigrant's Perception of America, 1853-54', in *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 67 (1977/78), pp. 307–341; Jonathan D. Sarna, 'A German-Jewish Immigrant's Perception of America, 1853-54: Some Further Notes on Mordecai M. Noah, a Jewel Robbery, and Isaac M. Wise', in *American Jewish History*, 68 (1978/79), pp. 206–212.

American Jewry entered a prolonged period of transformation that distanced it from its German origins.<sup>33</sup>

American Jews, on the other hand, were aware early on of their exceptional status and, like non-Jewish German-Americans, were prone to praise German *Kultur* and look down upon American “materialism”. The writings of Jewish reformers shows a close relationship between images of “Germany” as a synonym for *Kultur* and *Bildung*, and not least as the birthplace of modern Judaism, and “America” as a culturally underdeveloped but politically comfortable home for Jews. In the late 1850s, a small group of German-educated reformers associated with Baltimore reformer David Einhorn challenged other American reformers who had called for external reforms and superficial Americanisation of religious ritual. Their preference for a ‘Germanisation’ of Judaism in the United States can, however, only be understood in its American context.<sup>34</sup> Bernhard Felsenthal, for example, who emerged in the late 1850s as spiritual leader of the Reform movement in Chicago, published a theological programme in 1859 in which he argued that reform-minded American Jews should adopt the principles of the German-Jewish Reform movement (in Germany).<sup>35</sup> Since Felsenthal’s concept of reform went far beyond calls for external modifications of Jewish ritual, he and like-minded reformers often called themselves “radical reformers” – in order to distance themselves from ‘moderate’ reformers who strove for external changes only. Felsenthal’s call for the ‘Germanisation’ of Jewish theology was synonymous with the thorough modernisation of Judaism and met with a mixed response from reform-oriented Jews in America and Germany.<sup>36</sup> David Einhorn reacted enthusiastically, immediately reprinting portions of Felsenthal’s work in his German-language monthly *Sinai*. In contrast, Isaac Mayer Wise, rabbi at Cincinnati’s Bene Yeshurun congregation and the leading proponent of modest external Americanisation of Jewish ritual, ridiculed Felsenthal’s program.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Lowenstein, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> On the broader context, see Meyer, ‘German-Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century America’, pp. 256–258.

<sup>35</sup> Bernhard Felsenthal, *Kol Kore Bamidbar: Ueber jüdische Reform. Ein Wort an die Freunde derselben*, Chicago 1859.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

<sup>37</sup> David Einhorn, ‘Felsenthal’s Kol Kore Bamidbar’, in *Sinai* (Baltimore), May 1859, p. 115. For reprints, see also the March and April issues of *Sinai* in 1859 and American Israelite (Cincinnati), 13 January 1860. Wise described Felsenthal as “a pedantic and fantastic man” and a “shipwrecked egoist”. For a German review see *Der Israelitische Volkslehrer* (Frankfurt am Main), vol. XXXVII (1859), p. 197.

Felsenthal and Einhorn have been described as prototypical "German Jews", as romantic and elitist "Germanisers" who looked down on American culture and exalted German *Bildung*, and this is partially true.<sup>38</sup> But it is problematic to analyse Felsenthal's cultural enthusiasm for Germany out of context, particularly since he readily acknowledged what "America" offered to Jewish reformers. A startling passage in his 1859 treatise illustrates that these leading "German Jews" were in one crucial respect – the composition of the Jewish congregation – extremely American, more so in fact than the self-proclaimed Americaniser Isaac Mayer Wise. In a key paragraph Felsenthal declared, addressing the reformers within his traditional congregation and their attitude towards more traditionally inclined members:

[D]o you want to expel them [traditional Jews]? ... Do you – and we are speaking to American Israelites – do you want to dictate to the consciences of others how they ought to praise their Lord? ... Let us not fight, we are brothers! Let us separate!<sup>39</sup>

These remarks appear somewhat paradoxical, and they were hardly comprehensible to German Jews in Germany. But for "American Israelites" in 1859 the call to separate and yet remain united made sense. Felsenthal realised that the German-style *Einheitsgemeinde* could not be sustained in the United States. With the rise of Reform, Jews would separate in the synagogue but could and would reunite outside of it, for example in B'nai B'rith. In Europe, Felsenthal claimed,

State-Judaism rules, there bureaucrats are directing religious movements ... But what hinders we American Israelites from building a free Judaism not just as a theoretical concept but in reality? What hinders us? Nothing! Nothing!<sup>40</sup>

The composition of Jewish communities was (and is) a crucial aspect of American Jewish exceptionalism. In America, neither the state nor the *kehillah* but rather every individual Jew determined his or her relationship to Judaism, to other Jews and to a Jewish community. The strong emphasis on freedom of the individual and, more importantly, the constitutional separation of religion and state brought into question traditional modes of organising the Jewish *Gemeinschaft*. As a consequence, American Jews developed new forms of *Gemeinschaft*. In 1800 less than 3,000 Jews had

<sup>38</sup> Diner, p. 221.

<sup>39</sup> Felsenthal, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

settled in the United States and the first ordained rabbi did not arrive until 1840. Almost all Jews belonged to a number of small and close-knit “synagogue-communities” along the Eastern seaboard.<sup>41</sup> When thousands of Jews migrated to North America with the strong surge of European transatlantic migration following the Napoleonic Wars, the weak tradition of the Jewish “synagogue-communities” was literally swept away.<sup>42</sup> “Synagogue-communities” were, as Jonathan Sarna has argued, replaced with “communities of synagogues”.<sup>43</sup> But the impact of the migration went beyond the synagogue: Jews also founded secular Jewish associations, of which some, notably burial and welfare societies and sewing-associations, had strong roots in the traditional Central European *Gemeinde*, while others like fraternal lodges and literary societies for young men and women were genuinely new. Even before the middle of the nineteenth century it was apparent that especially in large cities with sizeable Jewish populations like New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati and Baltimore new ways of organising Jews under one roof were needed.<sup>44</sup> In Central Europe, especially in large cities, Jewish *Gemeinden* also faced social upheaval but the institutional framework as such remained intact. In the United States, Jewish elites, hierarchies or traditional institutions did not exist and the state did not regulate or control religious bodies. Therefore, grass-roots community building on the local level in the second half of the nineteenth century was necessary in order to provide the basis for national Jewish organisations and thus for the emergence of an American-Jewish ethnicity.

Felsenthal’s remark that Jews were “brothers” who would unite outside the synagogue clearly echoes the rhetoric of B’nai B’rith, founded in New York in 1843. Although it was explicitly concerned with Jewish tradition, B’nai B’rith constituted an early Jewish response to the unique conditions prevailing in America. Its founders declared that its task “was to overcome the geographical differences, to unite the German and the Pole, the Hungarian and the Dutchman, the Englishman and the Alsatian on one platform; it must extinguish narrow stereotypes and the misguided belief

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<sup>41</sup> Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 235–236.

<sup>42</sup> Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 15–39.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Sarna, ‘The Evolution of the American Synagogue’, in Robert M. Selzer and Norman J. Cohen (eds.), *The Americanization of the Jews*, New York 1995, pp. 218–219.

<sup>44</sup> For a general overview, see Diner, pp. 86–89.

in divided sections and provinces."<sup>45</sup> Its agenda, however, went beyond uniting Jewish immigrants with different backgrounds. The founders wanted to revive the spirit of Jewish unity – they used the term "*das gemeinschaftliche Verständnis*" (common identity), which had weakened over the centuries in the diaspora. They invoked the powerful image of America as a free, inclusive and virgin land without tradition, as opposed to a Europe choked by medieval tradition, an image that carried implicit notions of anti-Jewish persecution. In the free United States, B'nai B'rith would reunite Jews from all over the diaspora, fostering through the "sons of the covenant" a new group that, although forward-looking, would reconnect with the pre-diasporic tradition.

In a period when most Jews outside of the United States were treated as second-class citizens, the B'nai B'rith founders wanted to open a new chapter in Jewish history. From the outset, the order explicitly integrated American values into its agenda. The early B'nai B'rith constitutions show that the order intended to shape the interrelated processes of Jewish ethnicisation and Americanisation. While in European nation-states, not least in Imperial Germany, Jewish ethnicity was considered to conflict with, or even contradict, national identity, B'nai B'rith promoted Americanness and Jewishness as convergent identities. The constitution of 1851 expressed a relationship between the unique history of the Jewish people, a people that had endured in the diaspora, and the unique destiny of the United States. This relationship, the founders of the order hinted, would open the way to a glorious future for Jews in the United States.<sup>46</sup> Reformers like Felsenthal and Einhorn often professed that while Germany was the motherland of Reform, with the favourable conditions in the New World America would eventually become the centre of true Reform. In his 1859 work, Felsenthal even coined the term "wir amerikanisch-deutsche Juden" to express the two poles of reference for Jewish reformers in the United States: Germany as the home of modern Judaism and still "the foremost people of culture in the world", and America, where Jews were equal citizens and where the state did not interfere with religion, as the land of destiny for the Jewish Reform movement.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in: Herman Eliassof, 'The German-American Jews', in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter* 14 (1914), p. 336.

<sup>46</sup> The "Constitution" of 1851 was published in an "English-German" version: *Constitution des Unabhängigen Ordens Bnai Brith, Constitution of the Independent Order Bnai Brith*, New York 1851.

<sup>47</sup> Felsenthal, p. 4, p. 25.



Jewish immigrants in the United States did not only compare their unique status with that of their coreligionists in Europe but also connected the exceptional history of the Jewish people with the theme of American exceptionalism. Shortly after the Civil War, the oldest Jewish congregation in Chicago published a number of sermons Rabbi Liebmann Adler had given in 1865 on the occasion of Jewish and national holidays. In these strongly patriotic sermons, which were delivered in German, the moderate reformer Adler praised the United States and linked the unique history of the Jewish people with the unique destiny of the United States by comparing the emancipation of the black slaves with the Exodus. In particular, he lauded American democracy while strongly condemning European monarchies.<sup>48</sup> Adler reminded his congregation:

Most of us who have come together here, are strangers; as strangers did we step ashore ... encountering the Mosaic law of welcoming the stranger. ... Look at your wealth, your success, your peace, undisturbed and unmolested by obtrusive state officials and the servants of local rulers. Look at your sons, your daughters, well-fed, well-clad and well-educated. ... Look at your comfortable and protected homes where you live like kings ... Do you want to love this country and its institutions, institutions which are ruled by the spirit of Moses more than any other empire on earth that was or is except for that of Moses?<sup>49</sup>

Adler's sentiments were typical. I have cited Felsenthal and Adler because of their closeness to German *Kultur*, yet their writings demonstrate how quickly Jewish immigrants integrated the image of "America" as an "exceptional" experiment into the likewise "exceptional" history of the Jewish people. Adler's sermon served as a reminder to his Jewish listeners not to take "normality" for granted. The normal status of the Jews in United States was exceptional and Jews should be both proud and grateful to be American citizens. Images such as these, linking Jewish history, especially anti-Jewish persecution, with redemption and destiny in America were common. Indeed, the link between a negatively-tinged view of the Jewish historical experience and the positive image of the American exception to this experience remains one of the most important characteristic features of American Jewish life to this day.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Liebmann Adler, *Fünf Reden: Gehalten in der Israelitischen Gemeinde Kehilas Anshe Maarab hierselbst an wichtigen nationalen Gedenktagen der Ver. Staaten*, Chicago 1866.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Sarna, 'Introduction', in *idem* (ed.), *The American Jewish Experience*, New York 1997, p. xviii.

As long as German Jews in Germany were striving towards "normality" they looked towards America and its unique opportunities. But with the improvement of their legal and social status, and thus with the achievement of relative "normality", most German Jews increasingly distanced themselves from the New World, eventually losing interest – until "normality" came to a sudden end in 1933. While Jews in Central Europe moved towards "normality", Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe in the United States had already achieved it. They realised and acknowledged that their status was indeed exceptional when compared with the legal and social situation of Jews in Europe at the time and with the often precarious Jewish historical experience in the diaspora. Jewish immigrants bound for America left as second-class citizens and literally emancipated themselves by crossing the Atlantic. Although Jewish leaders, especially Reform Rabbis, proudly emphasised their cultural relationship to Germany, they often proclaimed in the same breath the potential of the unique American experiment for Jews. For this reason the term "German Jews" should be employed with due care.

The term "German Jews" was in fact rarely used before the mass immigration from Eastern Europe after 1881. By then, however, the term had lost most of its original content and had become a code word for a status group of Jews who had established themselves in America. In this context, "Germanness" conveyed highly charged images of assimilated American Jews, potent images which continue to have an impact to this day. Hasia Diner, for example, reflects in the beginning of her book about the "German Jews": "As the child of eastern European Jewish immigrants, I subscribed to the notion of 'us' and 'them'. 'They' were stiff and formal, afraid to assert their ethnic identity, and their primary goal, apart from achieving economic wealth, was to be accepted and to blend into America. The task of writing about a group of people I basically did not like was not easy." Diner emphasises that her research did not in fact demonstrate "how different they were from the later immigrants, whom I knew, but rather how similar". She does not, however, elaborate on the lingering image of the German Jews among American Jews as a small, elite group striving towards "normality" at the cost of their Jewishness.<sup>51</sup> In recent decades, American Jews have done extraordinarily well in many arenas and enjoy a higher degree of acceptance in society at large than ever before. But at the same time the cohesion of the Jewish collective

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<sup>51</sup> Diner, p. xv. A widely read popular history of the "German-Jewish" elite of nineteenth-century New York reinforced this image of over-assimilated Jews: Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York*, New York 1967.

has weakened significantly.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the image of an over-assimilated German-Jewish elite living “uptown”, detached from their own tradition in the Ghetto and from the vibrant Jewish life in the immigrant neighbourhoods “downtown”, may also serve as a warning to contemporary Jews in America not to shed their Jewishness.

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<sup>52</sup> Paul Ritterband, ‘Modern Times and Jewish Assimilation’, in Norman J. Cohen and Robert M. Seltzer, (eds.), *The Americanization of the Jews*, New York 1995, pp. 377–394.

MITCHELL B. HART

## Towards Abnormality: Assimilation and Degeneration in German-Jewish Social Thought

George Mosse has written that “the age into which a minority is emancipated will to a large extent determine the priorities of its self-identification”.<sup>1</sup> The same holds true for the age in which a minority’s emancipation and integration come to be seriously questioned and challenged both by its own members and those of the outside society and culture. Central European Jewry was emancipated into an era in which Enlightenment values and ideals still held sway. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, this era and its ethos were under attack. Jewish social science emerged in this era, and was infused – at the outset at least – with an anti-emancipatory, anti-assimilatory ethos. Zionist social scientists, with whom I am chiefly concerned here, developed a highly ambivalent relationship to the central principles of German enlightenment and emancipation: *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit*, self-improvement or formation, and manners and morals. In this essay I want to explore this challenge to the emancipatory discourse on the part of Jewish social scientists and show the role the notion of abnormality played in early Zionist social thought.

An organised Jewish social science developed in Central Europe in the first years of the twentieth century, though its intellectual and ideological roots can be located in the nineteenth. If for much of the nineteenth century the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* served primarily as a handmaiden to Liberalism and integrationism, Jewish social science was organised in the first years of the twentieth century to serve the needs of Jewish nationalism. (Jewish historiography also began to broaden its categories and themes in the early twentieth century, concerning itself with economic

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<sup>1</sup> George Mosse, ‘Jewish Emancipation between “*Bildung*” and Respectability’, in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover, NH 1985, p. 1.

and social issues, and accommodating a nationalist or Zionist perspective.)<sup>2</sup> The institutional center of Jewish social science was Berlin, where the *Verein für jüdische Statistik* set up its main bureau, and where the official journal of the statistical movement, the *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*, began publishing in 1905. The *Verein für jüdische Statistik* and the *Bureau für jüdische Statistik* were made up, initially, almost exclusively of Zionists, mainly adherents of the Cultural Zionism that had formed around the figure of Ahad Haam. Working within the paradigm of the European social sciences, Jewish social scientists and their proponents argued that recent developments in Jewish life necessitated new methods of analysis. These would provide Jewish scholars with the capability to grasp conditions and changes at the mass level – dramatic shifts in population numbers, in migration and settlement patterns, in levels of health and disease, and in social and economic conditions.<sup>3</sup> In the words of one Jewish social scientist, statistics, broadly defined, offered “the ability to measure and produce knowledge about mass phenomena”; they provided “rhythm, measure, and order” to the confusing multiplicities of social life.<sup>4</sup>

Central to this social scientific project were the notions of normal and abnormal as categories of analysis and judgement. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the notion of normality came to assume increasing significance. This occurred in conjunction with the growing importance of statistics as a means of knowledge. In the words of the philosopher of science Ian Hacking, “society became statistical. A new type of law came into being, analogous to the laws of nature, but pertaining to people. These new laws were expressed in terms of probability. They carried with

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<sup>2</sup> On this see David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past : European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, Oxford 1995; David Sorkin, “Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History” *LBI Year Book XXXV* (1990), pp. 24–25.

<sup>3</sup> The secondary literature on the history of the European social sciences is enormous. On the history of statistics, and its relation to the development of the social sciences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Alain Desrosières, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*, transl. by Camille Naish, Cambridge, MA 1998; Theodore Porter, *The Rise of Statistical Thinking 1820-1900* (Princeton, 1986); Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, Cambridge 1990. For more general analyses see Woodruff Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920*, Oxford 1991; Anthony Oberschall, *Empirical Social Research in Germany 1848-1914*, Paris 1965; *idem*, ‘The Two Empirical Roots of Social Theory’, *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, vol. 6, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Cohen, ‘Statistik und Judenfrage’, *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* (henceforth *ZDSJ*), vol. 1, no. 3 (1905), p. 11.



them the connotations of normality and of deviations from the norm. The cardinal concept of the psychology of the Enlightenment had been, simply, human nature. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was being replaced by something different: normal people.”<sup>5</sup> More specifically, normality came to be defined in terms of proximity to the middle or the statistical mean; abnormality was indicated by distance from this middle. Unsurprisingly perhaps, this was quickly translated into the language of social class: the bourgeoisie became the model of normality, and both the aristocracy and the poorer, lower classes were defined, each in their own way, as abnormal or diseased. Paradoxically, Zionist social scientists embraced this method, and the set of images accompanying it, that defined normal as that which fell in the middle, and hence set up the bourgeoisie as socially and culturally normative. At the same time, they shared in the Jewish nationalist belief that assimilation into this European bourgeois society was the very mechanism of Jewish decline. Paradox or not, the notion of Jewish abnormality served their overall ideological purposes, and social science allowed them to take an assertion or principle – the abnormality of Jewish life in the Diaspora – and demonstrate it, at least to their own satisfaction, scientifically. Paradoxically, again, Zionist social scientists were the products – intellectually and ideologically – of Europe, and were profoundly indebted to European scholarship and universities for the conceptual tools with which they went about negating Jewish integration into Europe.

Zionists, of course, were not the first to speak of the Jews in terms of abnormality and degeneration. The discourse of Jewish emancipation and assimilation that had developed since the late-eighteenth century had posited the condition of the Jews as abnormal, and held out civic equality, together with self-improvement through education and integration, as the mechanisms by which to attain normality. In other words, emancipation and acculturation were both the means and the signifiers of normal collective Jewish life. As historians of Central European Jewry have demonstrated, scholarship or *Wissenschaft* was one of the crucial components of the struggle for emancipation.

By the end of the nineteenth century, it was no longer the struggle to achieve these ends, but rather their impact that preoccupied many Jews and non-Jews. Germany’s Jews, Peter Pulzer has written, “had left their marginal status behind; they were now predominantly middle-class, edu-

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<sup>5</sup> Hacking, p. 1.

cated, and relatively secularised.”<sup>6</sup> What transformations had been effected upon the Jews by these new conditions? How had increasing freedom and tolerance, economic, social and cultural advancement worked changes on the Jews as a collective entity? How successful had assimilation been and what were its effects? Just as the disciplines of history and philology had earlier been placed at the service of the emancipationist ideology, so now the social sciences – lent a greater power by Darwinism and recent developments in biology and medicine – were invoked in debates over national and racial identity, and assimilation and its effects.

Antisemites, of course, insisted on the Jews’ lack of genuine *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit*, on their inability truly to acquire the characteristic attributes of genuine *Deutschtum*.<sup>7</sup> The growing importance of statistics on phenomena such as criminality, prostitution, alcoholism and the assertion that Jews suffered in higher proportions from these and other “pathologies” seemed to lend credence to the image of Jewry as deformed and abnormal, despite the decades-long struggle for reform and regeneration. For antisemites, the nature of the Jew precluded true *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit*. Hence, emancipation and integration were a sham. Liberal Jews maintained a belief in acculturation and integration, in the power of European culture to transform or improve. By the end of the century this improvement was aimed at those Eastern European Jewish immigrants who had been arriving in “the West” since the 1870s; assimilation remained a reality and ideal, though this by no means implied, as their opponents claimed, that liberals or “assimilationists” desired the disappearance of Jewry.<sup>8</sup> Liberal Jewish social scientists – defined here as those who maintained a belief in the viability of collective Jewish life in the Diaspora – certainly participated in the discourse of decline, and at times cast contemporary Jewry as abnormal or pathological. Yet their diagnosis of the cause(s) of German Jewry’s illness, and the cure offered, differed from those of Jewish nationalists. For instance, Jakob Segall, a demographer, and editor of the *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*, argued in 1911 that Jewry’s decline was attributable in large measure to the new-found economic and social freedom enjoyed by Jewish women: “The pace at which this entry into economic life is occurring, the rapid development of Jewish women taking part in the workforce, is dis-

<sup>6</sup> Peter Pulzer, ‘Introduction’, in Michael A. Meyer and Michael Brenner (eds.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, New York 1996, vol. 3, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Mosse, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> For the Austrian Empire see David Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War*, London 2001, esp. pp. 32–46.

concerting, arouses our concern....This phenomenon is most alarming and deserves at least as much serious attention as the decline in the number of births – which is, in fact, intimately related to it. In our opinion, we need to initiate a healing process here if the modern Jewish condition is to begin a process of recovery.”<sup>9</sup>

For Zionists, on the other hand, the monumental effort undertaken by Jewry at self-reformation, with the goal of integration and assimilation, had resulted in the deformation of Jewry. Emancipation and integration into European society had indeed succeeded, but this could hardly be understood as progress. As the founders of the Democratic Faction formulated it in 1902, assimilation is the solution to the Jewish Question in a negative sense. It denies the individuality of nations, while it encourages individual desire over collective need. It is unnatural and abnormal, even as it denies the abnormality of the Jewish condition.<sup>10</sup> According to Arthur Ruppin, arguably the most important Jewish social scientist of the early decades of the twentieth century, *Bildung*, acting as the agent of assimilation, produced a “de-nationalisation process” by eliminating all particularities. Ruppin used an analogy drawn from chemistry: “Just as in the fermentation process, when numerous bodies, once united, break up into different elements and then reconstitute themselves in new relations, so too the Jews, who in the ghetto were one homogeneous group, through a fermenting *Bildung*, now break up and re-combine in various different cultural classes with Christians.”<sup>11</sup>

Without challenging the fundamental import of *Bildung* for much of German Jewry into the twentieth century, it is nonetheless true that in

<sup>9</sup> Jacob Segall, ‘Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage der Juden in Deutschland’, *ZDSJ*, vol. 7 (1911), p. 102, transl. and quoted in Monika Richarz, ‘Jewish Women in the Family and Public Sphere’, in Michael Meyer (ed.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 3, New York 1998, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Program and Organisation Statutes of Democratic Faction’, MS in Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, A126/24/6, pp. 2–3. The Democratic Faction emerged in 1901, at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basle. Led by Leo Motzkin, Chaim Weitzmann, Martin Buber and Berthold Feiwel, the Faction insisted on the democratisation of the Zionist movement. Its members opposed Theodor Herzl’s purported authoritarian control over Zionist policy, and sought – in defiance of Religious Zionist wishes – to promote nationalist cultural and educational activities in the Diaspora, or what they termed *Gegenwartsarbeit*. See Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement, 1882-1904*, transl. by Lenn J. Schramm, Philadelphia 1988, pp. 150ff.; Jehuda Reinharz, *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Zionist Leader*, Oxford 1985, pp. 65–91; Israel Klausner, *Opazitsiah le-Herzl*, Jerusalem 1960. On *Gegenwartsarbeit*, see Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History*, transl. by Ina Friedman, New York 1987, chap. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart*, 2nd rev. edn., Cologne 1911, p. 10.

some circles the concept came to be overtaken and undermined. I would argue that this occurred within Zionist circles, and that it began to occur before the Weimar Republic, already in the first decade – at the latest – of the twentieth century. It occurred among those influenced by ideas and theories which explained individual and collective traits and behaviors as the product of forces beyond the subjective, beyond the control of individual will. *Bildung*, as self-formation, assumed an individual or subjective will as a principle mechanism of enlightenment and progress. In Steven Aschheim's formulation, "*Bildung* envisaged a gradual, unfolding process of self-formation that applied not only to the life of individuals but eventually to its realisation for all humanity." *Bildung* assumed "the unity and continuity of the self", and viewed this self as an individuality capable of a willed transformation whose effect would be not only on the self but ultimately on the world at large.<sup>12</sup>

The repudiation of this classical ideal of *Bildung* may, as Aschheim and others argue, have witnessed its full flowering during the Weimar Republic. However, as Aschheim himself states, the process began already during the *Kaiserreich*. A significant element of this repudiation was the intellectual force with which extra-individual explanations of individual and collective change captured the imaginations of many thinkers: the growing impact of biological theories of evolution and the development of social thought, and the challenge to the ideal of progress which accompanied certain variations of these theories. Sociological visions infused with biological and medical theories challenged the concept of individual, subjective will as determinative, replacing it with mechanisms or forces beyond the will of the individual: the social, national, and/or racial.

Yet this was not a complete repudiation of classical *Bildung* idealism. Regeneration in the future depended upon the will of individual Jews, and Jewry as a whole. For Zionists, this meant a re-nationalisation of Jewish consciousness. The *Bildung* belief in improvement, achieved through self-formation or re-formation, remained. Yet there were important shifts. The "self" was a collective self to a far greater extent: the nation, *Volk*, race. These were to be reformed through the efforts of nationalism.

Although my focus in this essay is on the nexus of the notions of *Bildung* and abnormality in the writings of Jewish social scientists, it ought to be noted that this repudiation was not limited to social scientists.

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<sup>12</sup> Steven Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and other Crises*, New York 1996, pp. 36–37.

One of the most startling examples comes from the diary of the young Gershom Scholem, writing in 1914 in, as Steven Aschheim describes it, “Nietzschean tones of wrath”:

To my People (*Volk*). It is the voice of a summons. Woe to those ... that bring *Bildung* to their *Volk* and ruin and kill their brothers ... Woe to the *Volk* that seeks re-birth through *Bildung* ... For they rob my people of their creative powers ... No peace with the *Gebildeten*, saith my Lord ... You people and nations who want to remain healthy, keep far away from the palaces of culture. Your ways are not our ways and a holy war shall be kindled against you. For this is your death-illness, you from the House of Israel, that you have too much *Bildung* and have adopted too many of the evil ways of your lands. Become what you were, that is, become natural, for that alone is your cure and salvation.<sup>13</sup>

Scholem’s denunciation of *Bildung* is clearly different from that of the social scientists in so far as it is cast in the Nietzschean-like mode of a prophet or seer. Yet the same key elements of the social scientific discourse of *Bildung* and decline are present: the Jews as a distinct *Volk* or People; *Bildung* as a destructive force, and as both a cause and symptom of assimilation; the repudiation of *Bildung* and assimilation as necessary for collective health and salvation.

The language of health and disease that is so evident in Scholem’s denunciation of *Bildung* was characteristic of Zionist discourse as a whole. The condition of the Jews was described in medical and biological terms, and Zionism itself often referred to as a “cure” for Jewish illness. (Jewish social scientists referred to themselves on a number of occasions as “physicians” whose intervention, through analysis, would facilitate the desired national regeneration.) The notions of decline and degeneration, normality and abnormality were drawn directly from the medical, scientific literature of the day. The power of such notions derived in large measure from this link with science, with the descriptive and proscriptive language of realism, rather than with metaphor and poetry.<sup>14</sup> Decline and degeneration were the conceptual “antipodes” of progress and reform, the “corrective” in the minds of many to the exaggerated optimism of the nine-

<sup>13</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Tagebücher* 1, p. 61, entry for 26 November 1914, transl. and quoted in Steven Aschheim, *Scholem, Arendt, Klemperer: Intimate Chronicles in Turbulent Times*, Bloomington 2001, pp. 16–17.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of these themes, as well as for a general introduction to the notion of degeneration, see the essays in J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander Gilman (eds.), *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, New York 1985. Also, Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, 1848–1918*, Cambridge 1989.



teenth century.<sup>15</sup> The language of the social sciences, given as it was to an emphasis on the collective, the social and bio-medical, provided impetus and contour to a regenerative effort through the identification of the degenerative and abnormal. The social sciences offered a set of concepts and categories with which to define contemporary problems, and to offer a vision of future regeneration. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the notions of abnormality and degeneration were commonplaces within European and North American social scientific discourse. And central to the understanding and explanation of decline for Zionist social scientists was the idea of the detrimental effects on the Jews of emancipation and assimilation into non-Jewish society.

Statistical and social scientific studies, which had been accumulating over the course of the nineteenth century, seemed to reveal that the Jews, especially in the West, suffered increasingly from a myriad of physical, psychological and social pathologies, everything from cancer, intestinal diseases and venereal disease to alcoholism, criminality and suicide. The rates among Jews were higher both in relation to contemporary Christian groups and to rates among Jews in the past. In other words, statistics allowed Jewish social scientists to chart a course of degeneration and decline as the Jews moved into the twentieth century. Social scientific studies, constructed in large measure out of the medical and biological sciences, were instrumental in helping Zionists define contemporary Jewry as unhealthy, abnormal and degenerate, and imagine a healthy, normal alternative.

Statistics indicating declining birth rates, combined with those showing dramatic increases in intermarriages and conversions since the 1870s, served as clear proof of the decline and imminent disappearance of Western Jewry. "Decline" was both quantitative and qualitative: the number of Jews was diminishing, and their physical and intellectual natures, bodies and minds, were changing. Looking back on over three decades of research on the subject, Arthur Ruppin wrote in 1930 that "the stark decrease in the Jewish birth rate marks a departure from the great fertility which characterised Jewry over the centuries. It is the most prominent feature of Jewish population statistics in the present period."<sup>16</sup> The sense of a quantitative diminishment and danger was articulated through the publication of statistics and social scientific analysis. The official organ of the Zionist movement, *Die Welt*, printed excerpts from official gov-

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<sup>15</sup> Chamberlin and Gilman, 'Introduction' to *Degeneration*, p. x.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *Die Soziologie der Juden*, Berlin 1930, p. 168.

ernment statistical studies on a regular basis. It reported in 1904, for instance, that according to the *Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt*, the Jewish percentage of the population dropped from 1.3% to 1% between the years 1871-1900. Even if one accepted these figures as indicative of a genuine decline, there was no single, clear explanation for this phenomenon. But in the view of the newspaper's editors, the high rates of intermarriage and the "fact" that 76% of all children born to mixed marriages were raised as Christians were responsible for Jewish numerical loss. In a widely discussed and debated work titled *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden*, Felix Theilhaber constructed an extensive narrative of Jewish decline and degeneration around natality statistics. Between 1875-1914 Jewish births decreased dramatically, so much so that even the French – known in the scientific literature as the most "child-poor" nation in Europe – showed higher numbers than Prussian Jews.<sup>17</sup> Theilhaber berated the official representatives of the German Jewish community who, he claimed, continued to ignore the serious problem facing German Jewry. They were naive optimists, handing out warm reassurances of Jewry's well-being, ignoring his own work and what it signified. "German Jewry is not yet conscious of the deadly germs which infect it."<sup>18</sup> Theilhaber reserved some of his most pointed sarcasm for the already mentioned Jakob Segall, a fellow Munich-based Jewish social scientist and the head of the Bureau for Jewish Statistics in Berlin. Segall had repeatedly attacked Theilhaber and his work, accusing him of gross ignorance of contemporary statistical methods and of misrepresenting the causes of Jewish demographic decline. According to Theilhaber, Segall wanted to account for low Jewish birth rates by reference to large emigration. Demographic decline, in this view, was the product not of Jewish disease and degeneration but of a far more benign population movement. This, Theilhaber insisted, was "scientifically nonsense."<sup>19</sup> Rather, Jewish decline was due to a host of collective pathologies – abnormal sexuality, later marriages, intermarriage, alcoholism, venereal disease – that, in turn, could be traced back to the Jewish

<sup>17</sup> Felix Theilhaber, *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden*, Munich 1911, 1921, pp. 87–88.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21. Theilhaber's hostility to the German Jewish communal élite was the product in part of the attacks levelled at him and his book. After the 1911 edition was released, for instance, Theilhaber's ideas were publicly condemned at a meeting of the *Verband der deutschen Juden*. Theilhaber reproduced a number of these attacks on his work, and his own responses, at the beginning of the 1921 edition of the book.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 93. For a fuller discussion of the debate between Segall and Theilhaber, see Mitchell Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity*, Stanford 2000, pp. 140–143.

encounter with modernity. "The way from full fertility to a poverty of reproduction, from endogamy to mixing, from the martyr-like willingness to sacrifice for the community to the cowardly disavowal of this duty and an irresolute negligence, these are symptoms and stigmata of a larger process ... Emancipation opened the gates and allowed the storm of new ideals into the ghettos. Modern economic life, the period of interlocking capital, of factories and technology have produced economic revolution." And this, in turn, produced a whole set of other transformations in every realm of life.<sup>20</sup>

For Theilhaber, just as for other Zionist social scientists, the regeneration of the Jews would come about not through the negation of modernity *per se*, but through the negation of the idea that Jewry could survive in the Diaspora. This translated into the idea that Jewry could not hope to withstand the challenge of its condition as part of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. If the Jews were to be a healthy *Volk*, they required normality ("Normalität"). This necessitated a renewed national consciousness, a recognition of the need for a unity of land, speech, customs and culture, political and economic interests.

Indeed, in precisely the years in which the decomposition (*Zersetzung*) of European Jewry is occurring, there has emerged a national movement which can free the Jews from the influences of Europe and renew the normal social structure and Jewish culture in the land of their fathers, and there secure with certainty the Jewish character (*jüdische Art*).<sup>21</sup>

Jewish decline, as social scientists viewed it, was due, first of all, to quantitative loss, to a drop in the number of Jewish births as well as the loss of Jewish children through intermarriage and conversion. But decline and degeneration could also be explained by, and embodied in, purported qualitative changes. These were due, like the quantitative changes, to the same shift in the patterns of marriage, social relations, economic or occupational structures brought about by larger forces such as capitalism and democratisation. Thus, an increase in rates of intermarriage meant not only a drop in the numbers of Jews, but a transformation in the physical and mental character of Jewry. In a 1902 article published in the prestigious *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, Ruppin summarised the data on Prussia (chiefly Berlin) from a survey taken in 1895 that showed the decrease over time of Jewish numbers, and the increase in

<sup>20</sup> Theilhaber, p. 157.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 159.

Christian. “Christians are reproducing at twice the yearly rate as Jews. Naturally, we must stress this notable fact again: the chances of the Jews remaining undamaged as a race with relation to Christians grows ever slighter.”<sup>22</sup> The damage to which Ruppin referred here was qualitative as well as quantitative; it concerned the character of Jewry. This was a racial type of argument, even though Ruppin rejected the antisemitic notion that Jews and Christians, or Aryans, were racially antipathetic, and hence resisted racial mixing. Nonetheless, he – like most other Jewish social scientists at the time – took racial theory and science seriously, engaged with it, and made the debate over the racial identity of the Jews a critical part of their work. Assimilation, in this regard, was so dangerous for the Jews because it allowed not only for social and cultural interaction but for what was referred to at the time as “*Rassenvermischung*”. “*Rassenvermischung*”, Ruppin wrote, “has decidedly increased over the last two decades. The strong increase in mixed marriages, and particularly marriages between Jewish men and Christian women – in which pecuniary interests played no role – is an argument against the oft-heard claim from many quarters about a deep instinctive racial antipathy between Christians and Jews. This *Rassenvermischung* does enormous damage to Judaism. The children of these marriages will not be half and half, but the overwhelming power of the Christian population acts as a centripetal force drawing children to it. These children are lost not only to the Jewish religion but to the Jewish race. Once baptised, they marry only Christians, and Jewish blood is lost over generations.”<sup>23</sup> Ruppin rejected the notion that mixed marriages lead to lower fertility rates, and less healthy offspring, as was oftentimes claimed by racial theorists. As far as experience and research revealed, racial mixture between Christians and Jews “appears to have yielded positive results. We have, particularly in Germany, but also in other lands, individuals who, their forefathers having mixed Jewish with non-Jewish blood, have achieved remarkable things in art and science.”<sup>24</sup> At the collective level, however, Judaism and Jewry suffered. He repeated these arguments in his later full-length work *Die Juden der Gegenwart*, writing of Jewish decline and “dissipation” through intermarriage as a biological as well as demographic threat. When Jews mixed with non-

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur Ruppin, ‘Die sozialen Verhältnisse der Juden in Preussen und Deutschland’, *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, vol. 78, pt. 1, Jena 1902, p. 383.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pt. 2, p. 762.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 763.

Jews, there was a change in the typological or racial character of the *Volk*.<sup>25</sup>

Ruppin's argument about fertility, and mixed marriage as *Rassenvermischung*, operated at a number of levels or in a number of different directions. In the first place, it was a response to the antisemitic claim, backed up with numbers, that Jews were increasing at alarming rates vis-à-vis Christian Germans. Ruppin's figures countered this assertion. And his discussion of the increasing prevalence of mixed marriage contradicted the racial antisemitic assertion that Jews and Aryans were biologically and racially antagonistic. Second, the statistical proof of the decline and eventual disappearance of the Jews, their danger as a people and race, helped sustain a Zionist claim to the unfeasibility of Jewish life in Europe. And, third, this in turn served as a response to Liberals and their faith in modernity and progress. In an advanced economy and culture, the Jews succeeded in improving their material conditions as individuals; yet they lost collectively. Ruppin's work, echoed by all other Zionist social scientists, offered proof that "progress" was an illusion, that "success" really meant degeneration and eventual death.

The explanatory key to the pathological condition of modern Jewry was the "emancipation-assimilation" process. The two concepts, emancipation and assimilation, were not, historically, equivalent or coterminous. As David Sorkin has pointed out, "assimilation" as a category of "status and self-definition" followed "emancipation", emerging only in the 1870s as a key component of post-emancipation German Jewish identity.<sup>26</sup> Before 1871 the process of "assimilation"—the regeneration of Jewry through social-economic, cultural and religious reforms, and its integration into the German nation-state—was folded into "emancipation", the granting of civil rights with the expectation of Jewish reform and regeneration. After 1871, emancipation was folded into assimilation, the latter term now coming to stand for the complex process of Jewish re-formation that was either an ideal or anathema.<sup>27</sup> For Zionists, of course, assimilation was the latter, the chief symptom and cause not of Jewish reforma-

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<sup>25</sup> Ruppin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (1911), p. 178. Ruppin also believed that this racial mixing had its impact on the dominant *Volk* and its culture. "For example, it is perhaps not too bold or foolhardy an hypothesis, that the greater vivacity and proverbial cunningness which characterises the Berlin population, as well as the predominance of dark-haired types, can be traced back to the introduction of Jewish blood." *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Sorkin, pp. 17–33.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 19–20.



tion and regeneration – as Liberals would have it – but of deformation and degeneration.

More specifically, it was the embourgeoisement of the Jews – at the heart of the earlier, and on-going efforts at respectability as well as economic betterment – which Zionist social scientists identified as the mechanism of collective dissolution: improvement, success, material and cultural comfort and ease. These were the true enemies of the Jewish *Volk*, for they imbued the Jew with a strong individualism, a sense of freedom from the collective and its needs and demands. We can see this clearly at work in a lecture, titled “The Physical Formation and Degeneration of the Jews”, delivered at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 by the physician and medical anthropologist Karl Jeremias. Jeremias sought to demonstrate the pathological identity of both Eastern and Western Jewries, in contrast to those within the movement who retained a maskilic or enlightenment model of degeneration, and posited degeneration as a product of incomplete modernisation or westernisation. Jeremias found convincing evidence for Jewish degeneration in declining fertility rates, but also in the Jews’ diminished body size. He cited military recruitment statistics from both Russia and Germany. “Every authority recognises their [the Jews’] lower chest circumference and weakened muscular system; their propensity for flatfootedness and hernias, varicose veins and haemorrhoids.”<sup>28</sup> As Sander Gilman has shown, the connection between the underdeveloped Jewish body and statistics on low military recruitment and service among Jews was a well-developed theme in European social scientific literature. It served to demonstrate for many the inability of the Jews as a whole to participate fully in the modern European nation-state.<sup>29</sup> The incomplete integration of the Jews into the European body politic, signalled by their physical inability to serve in the military, offered further justification for anti-emancipationist arguments.

Zionists agreed with those detractors of the Jews who linked Jewish degeneracy with a failure to serve militarily. Since within the discourse of degeneration the loss of military strength and numbers was taken as a sure sign of national and social decline, this purported lack of martial tal-

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<sup>28</sup> Karl Jeremias, *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des V. Zionisten-Congresses*.

<sup>29</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jews’ Body*, New York 1991, p. 40 and *passim*; *idem*, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle*, Baltimore 1993, pp. 113–168.

ent reinforced more general notions of Diaspora Jewish weakness.<sup>30</sup> Yet Zionists rejected any notion of a racial antipathy on the part of the Jews to fighting. The pathology of the Diaspora, rather, had produced the degenerate Jew and made him unable to serve. For instance, Ruppin contended that the disproportionate involvement on the part of Jews with trade, industry and the intellectual professions, together with their high rates of urban settlement, led to their unfavourable physical development; this stood in contrast to the “muscular, free-breathing” Christians. This milieu had produced, *inter alia*, the smaller chests of Jews, which in all countries signified an unfitness for the military.<sup>31</sup> (The “military Jew” later becomes, of course, one of the primary symbols of the successful regeneration of Jewry achieved by Zionism.)

More than muscular weakness, Jews were said to suffer from an assortment of nervous and mental disorders. Jeremias attributed this in part to their “intellectual over-activity”. Older, maskilic analyses of this abnormal condition had placed the blame on the cheder and yeshivah, that is on the culture of orthodox religious education. Yet, since Jeremias’ focus was on modern, i.e. Western, Jewry the terms were in need of redefinition. Intellectual activity was no longer the study of Torah and Talmud, as in the East. Mental and nervous disorders were now the product of too great an engagement with modern, secular learning (as well as with the institutions of capitalism, or “the life of trade” as Jeremias put it). Jews “sacrifice their youth to the ‘Moloch’ of science and learning (*Wissenschaft und Bildung*)”. As proof Jeremias presented educational statistics on the overrepresentation of Jews at German and Austrian universities. In 1890, for instance, among the total German student population, 9.6 per cent were Jews, sevenfold more than the percentage of Jews in the general population. Between 1860-80, the number of Jews in Austrian universities doubled. Little wonder, Jeremias concluded, that there existed extraordinary levels among Jews of degeneration of the nervous system. The numbers suffering from neurasthenia, blindness, deafness, muteness

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<sup>30</sup> On the loss of military strength and the discourse of degeneration, see Robert Nye, ‘Degeneration and the Medical Model of Cultural Crisis in the French Belle Epoque’, in *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of George L. Mosse*, New Brunswick 1982, pp. 24–28; Richard Soloway, ‘Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 18 (1982), pp. 137–164.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart*, Cologne 1904, p. 112.

and assorted mental illnesses – hysteria, idiocy, madness – far surpassed those of Christians.<sup>32</sup>

Martin Engländer, a Viennese physician and Zionist, insisted in a 1902 work that the greater susceptibility among Jews to mental and nervous diseases (in addition to other illnesses such as diabetes and glaucoma) was due directly to their socio-cultural and economic pursuits. Jews were highly concentrated in urban, “unhealthy”, “nerve-shattering vocations”. They spent “too little time relaxing, too little time in nature, too much time in coffee-houses, at lectures, at the theatre, concerts, ballets”. After sketching out the definition and symptoms of diabetes, Engländer explained the Jewish predisposition to the disease with reference to occupation: “One finds among diabetics primarily many academics, musicians, poets, schoolteachers, politicians, big businessmen and stockbrokers.”<sup>33</sup> As Engländer’s list makes clear, the Jewish academic appears as one of the more likely candidates for degeneration. Arthur Ruppin referred approvingly to the argument put forth by another Zionist social scientist, Hugo Hoppe, who claimed that western Jewish academics in particular had taken to assimilating the harmful drinking habits of their non-Jewish environment, thereby forfeiting the healthy traits which accompanied moderation.<sup>34</sup>

*Bildung*, of course, signified “education” in the narrow sense, but also far more.<sup>35</sup> Education was only one component of the “assimilation complex” which Zionists had identified as disintegrative of Jewish collective identity. So when these social thinkers linked *Bildung* not with normality and progress but with abnormality and decline, implicating it in the disintegration of Jewry as a *Volk*, they had in mind the whole complex web of western culture and society.

The Zionist relationship to *Bildung* and respectability was complex. On the one hand, they repudiated these ideals, at least insofar as these ideals had come over the decades to express a universalism that transcended national and ethnic (even racial) differences. As Mosse and Paul

<sup>32</sup> Jeremias, p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Engländer, *Die auffallend häufigen Krankheitserscheinungen der jüdischen Rasse*, Vienna 1902, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> See Ruppin’s review of Hoppe’s work, *Alcohol und Kriminalität* in *ZDSJ*, vol. 2, no. 12 (1906).

<sup>35</sup> In Steven Aschheim’s words, “*Bildung* – or self-cultivation – combined what we conventionally understand as formal education with that of character formation and moral and aesthetic refinement.” Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe*, p. 32. For another extended discussion of this point see Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity*, New Haven 1999, p. 26 and *passim*.

Mendes-Flohr have pointed out, for Jews committed to *Bildung* in the “Enlightenment mode”, it was precisely the transcendence of differences that mattered. In Mosse’s words, “Jewish commitment to the humanistic ideal of *Bildung* was based on the correct perception that only through transcending a German past, which the Jews did not share, could Jews meet Germans on equal terms. Historical roots had played no part in Humboldt’s concept of *Bildung*, and the classics upon whose knowledge the concept so largely depended were considered a universal heritage. Similarly, the concept of respectability was based upon a moral order and not dependent upon shared historical roots.”<sup>36</sup> For turn of the century Zionist social thinkers, abnormality and decline were the products or results of the fierce embrace of these earlier ideals. Jews had renounced their historical ties to their own *Volk* or nation; they had enthusiastically embraced the mores of the German *Bildungsbürgertum*. In other words, they had assimilated. However, the Zionist repudiation of *Bildung* focused on the effects of this ideal, effects that had everything to do with the context (Germany, Europe, the Diaspora). The ideals of classical *Bildung*, especially its universalism, could be accepted and integrated into a Zionist framework within a different context (i.e. an autochthonous Jewish state or society), since then these ideals would not be serving assimilationist ends. In other words, *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit* came increasingly under suspicion because they were crucial components of the chief mechanism of modern Jewish decline and degeneration: assimilation.

Assimilation – the biological, social, economic and cultural mixing of Jews and Gentiles – was undoing Jewish identity. The Austrian physician and Zionist Ignaz Zollschan argued that the disintegrative process caused by assimilation was the chief feature of modern Jewish history. Statistics on intermarriage and conversion, from every country in Central and Western Europe and the United States, demonstrated that quantitatively and qualitatively Jewry was in decline. Only in Eastern Europe, and in the Eastern European “ghettos” such as the Lower East Side of New York and the East End of London, did one find a “healthy” Jewry in nationalist terms. “The ghetto acts, as it did in the past, as the means for the conservation of Jewry, and the elimination of foreign influences.” Modern education (*Bildung*), according to Zollschan, was deadly for Jewry. It killed tradition, killed the “specific Jewish intellectual and spiritual life (*Geist-*

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<sup>36</sup> Mosse, ‘Jewish Emancipation’, p. 14. Cited in Mendes-Flohr, p. 17.

*esleben*) of Jewry".<sup>37</sup> For Zionist social thinkers, this process of decline and disappearance on account of assimilation was inevitable, at least so long as Jews remained in the Diaspora. It was precisely in those lands where Jews enjoyed the greatest degree of legal equality and respect that their connection to the Jewish *Volkstum* declined, while their feeling of belonging to the *Volkstum* of their homeland rose. As Ruppin wrote in 1904:

The areas of contact between Jews and Christians are becoming ever greater. This has occurred because of the rising living standard of the Jews; on account of their ascent to the better educated classes and their strong attraction to the big cities, which, characterised as they are by a high degree of interconfessional interaction, constitute the dynamic centers of assimilation; and through their ever more intense participation in the modern economy, science and art, and at the same time their sinking birth rates.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, Jewish abnormality was seen as the product of structural, increasingly global forces identified with capitalism, and the social and political relations that emerged out of these altered conditions. The growth of what Ruppin referred to as "world capitalism", accompanied as it was by the triumph of Western culture, ensured the ever-increasing integration of the Jews into the dominant Christian society. The process, Ruppin wrote, "seems unavoidable. The fate of the Jews is sealed." And he offered an organic metaphor for the death of the Jewish community: "Like the tree whose roots are dead, but which continues to stand for years although its death must come, so too the Jews. They will survive for some time, but as a community (*Gemeinschaft*) they are declining, not ascending."<sup>39</sup>

What was the relationship between the concepts of normality and abnormality? European social scientists – most notably the French sociologist Emile Durkheim – had argued that abnormality, in the collective, was "normal" insofar as it was an inevitable product and component of modern social relations. In identifying contemporary Jewish life in Europe as either actually or potentially abnormal, and pointing to disproportionate levels among Jews of distinct pathologies, social scientists were not holding open the possibility of the disappearance of such pathologies in

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<sup>37</sup> Ignaz Zollschan, *Das Rassenproblem unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der theoretischen Grundlagen der jüdischen Rassenfrage*, 5th edn. Vienna and Leipzig 1925, p. 472.

<sup>38</sup> Ruppin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (1904), p. 266.

<sup>39</sup> Ruppin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (1911), p. 28.



some utopian future. "Normal" did not mean the absence of crime, suicide or any number of physical and mental or nervous disorders. "Abnormality", as I have tried to suggest here, indicated an unprecedented level of assimilation or acculturation into non-Jewish society; "normality" would be the end or reversal of that process. Jews, as a collective, were not abnormal because they committed crimes or drank hard liquor or suffered from physical and mental illnesses. Certainly, such phenomena were of concern to Jewish social scientists because these sorts of pathologies negatively affected Jewry, producing quantitative decline and qualitative degeneration. Ultimately, however, such pathologies were significant because they were the signs or symptoms of the true disorder: assimilation, and the consequent loss of Jewish consciousness, Jewish identity.

In a period of intense concern with national and racial identity and difference, it was this loss or absence of Jewish "ethnicity" that Zionists in particular identified as abnormal. It was the decline of Jewish national consciousness and purpose, brought about, so it was argued, by the complex forces of civic emancipation and socio-economic bourgeoisification that marked the Jews as a "degenerate" people.

Abnormality was both a condition and a category of analysis. For antisemites it was an essential, permanent condition of the Jews, one descriptor among many of their religious, political, racial difference and inferiority. For liberal Jews, who continued to believe in the progressive, meliorative idea of assimilation, abnormality was a condition that would be overcome or transcended once the Jews had successfully integrated into general society. Jewish nationalism, as is well-known, repudiated this integrationist or "assimilationist" faith in the name of a more fundamental, even essential Jewish difference or distinctiveness. The repudiation of *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit*, and the condition of abnormality, were not of course conceived as essential or immutable. The Jews moved towards, or already suffered from, abnormality only in so far as they remained subject to the forces of modernity within the context of the Diaspora. The myriad physical, mental, and social pathologies that social scientists documented were the inevitable products of such modern forces: capitalism, emancipation, assimilation. Once the conditions of exile came to an end, and an autochthonous culture was created, then national health or normality would follow.

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