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Salvation through Spinoza

A Study of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany

By

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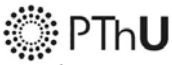

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For Arif Ephraim

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PREFACE

Weimar Jewry longed for salvation, and to find it, it turned to Spinoza. From the beginnings of the era of Jewish emancipation, German Jews had started to take interest in their renegade ancestor, whom contemporary Jewish authorities had hoped would be erased from Jewish memory. As time progressed, their interest altered into admiration, and during the turbulent times of Weimar, German Jews from many different ideological and religious backgrounds united in celebration of Spinoza, establishing definitively his place in the pantheon of Jewish heroes. In those troubled years, Spinoza's thought, and also the stories of the way he had led his life, offered consolation, redeeming Jews from the social and ideological storms in the midst of which they found themselves thrust. In some cases Spinoza became nothing less than a substitute for the messiah as a focus of Jewish hopes.

Spinoza's massive Jewish popularity was remarkable for many reasons. First, because of the person concerned: Spinoza was a heretic, he had been banned from the Jewish community during his lifetime and in his works he had uncompromisingly distanced himself from all organized religion, both Christianity and Judaism. Now he was embraced as a source for Jewish inspiration and as one of Judaism's most cherished sons. Second, because of its timing: Weimar Germany had put Jews in the eye of a hurricane. The Interwar Period was marked by great economic, political and cultural turmoil caused by the explosive mix of the social changes of modernity, a lost war and an unstable republican government. It was also an extraordinary period in Jewish history in which German Jews rose to an unprecedented level of cultural, even political, public prominence, which was at the same time fiercely contested by powerful social forces. It came at the tail end of a 150-year long era of hope, where German Jewry left the Ghetto, obtained legal emancipation, and flourished in extraordinary cultural prosperity. At the same time it was the prelude to the shattering of these hopes as the impending danger that would put an end to this era of prosperity could already be perceived, albeit, perhaps, not in all its enormity. Third, because Spinoza virtually united a divided Jewish community: The disappearance of unchallenged religious authority had created sharp ideological and religious divisions. Jews differed on their national allegiances, the nature and relevance of

their religion and ultimately on their historical destiny. They hardly differed, however, in their admiration for Spinoza.

Our aim will be to investigate the reasons why so many German Jews had united in drawing their inspiration from such a figure at such a time. In doing so this book professes, – as is made clear from the title – besides being a study of the reception of Spinoza, to be also a study of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany. It will, however, not be a study of culture in the "classic" sense, which deals with a wide range of German Jewish cultural expressions in art, science, literature, etcetera, but a study of culture through the prism of Spinoza's Jewish reception, dealing with the ways German Jews discussed, debated and wrote about Spinoza. It has been written from the conviction that the answer to the question of why Spinoza was celebrated so massively among those Jews in that era, cannot but reveal something elementary about the way German Jews perceived themselves, the world around them and their innermost beliefs on the course they had to follow.

It is fitting that this study is published in a series on Jewish and Christian perspectives. The integration of Jews in a primarily Christian society was one of the major challenges throughout Modern German Jewish History. Weimar Jewry needed to address this problem in an era that saw new attitudes toward religion, from the secularism of communism to the utilization of religion by both Jewish and Christian nationalism. The love for Spinoza – whom some German Jews likened to Jesus – flowered in this complicated field of forces. In some sense neither a Christian nor a Jew, and in another both a Christian and a Jew, Spinoza served as a modern redeemer bringing opposites together in this respect as well.

This book could never have been written without the help of a number of institutions. Firstly, I want to express thanks to the financial support of the OGC, NWO, the Rothschild Foundation and the Menasseh ben Israel Institute. Then, I am indebted to a great many people who helped me in my research and I would like to specifically thank some of them. Many years ago, when I was put on the track of the subject of German Jewish reception of Spinoza, I started with the help of Theo Verbeek, Wiep van Bunge and Steven Aschheim. During my research I received much help from Wijnand Mijnhardt, David Myers, Ido de Haan, Piet Steenbakkers, Jeroen Koch, Inger Leemans, Babette Hellemans, and Lawrence Dubrovich. I would also like to thank Theo van der Werf for graciously permitting me to publish a letter by David ben Gurion from his private collection. Finally I want to thank Ariane, whose unflinching and continuing support, in many ways, was the most indispensable. It can only be matched by that of the irresistible smile of our son Arif, to whom this book is dedicated.

CHAPTER ONE

CELEBRATING SPINOZA

One of the many reasons Weimar Germany has become a source for nostalgia were the capital's coffee houses. A *Berliner* sitting in one of those cafés at the end of November 1932 had momentous events to discuss. The young democratic Republic, of which his city was the capital, was on its last legs. It seemed that the attempt at German democracy, the outcome of the loss of the Great War, was, only fourteen years after the signing of its Constitution in Weimar, bound to fail. Politics had reached a stalemate. A few weeks before, on the 6th of November, there had been elections for the *Reichstag*; it was the fifth time in one year the citizens of the Weimar Republic had been asked to go to the ballot. These elections had been important, as the threat to the Republic by Adolf Hitler was becoming ever more serious. Negotiations with his anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, National-Socialist party, had been going on since he had been invited to join the Cabinet in the preceding summer. The only reason he was not yet in Government was that he had refused the invitation. After the elections, on November 19th, Reich-President Hindenburg again asked Hitler to join the Government.[1] The prime enemy of the Republic, however, only used these invitations to further undermine the stability of Weimar's fragile political system. While some politicians hoped to use his success for their own purposes, Hitler himself used these politicians to gain respectability. It was a game he had been playing since the elections of 14th September, 1930, when, with 18.3% of the vote, he became too big to be ignored.[2] However, the outcome of the elections of November 6th made this period critical also for Hitler, whose party's triumphal advance in the polls had come to a halt. For the first time since the sudden electoral success of 1930, the party failed to increase its percentage of votes; it even dropped a few percentage points from 37,3% to 33,1%. Momentum and growth were essential for the appeal of the National-Socialist movement; the

[1] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936, Hubris* (London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999), 393.
[2] Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (London: Unwin Hym, 1988), 113, 94–95.

disappointing results of this election caused a crisis in Hitler's party. We now know that Hitler succeeded in stalling the negotiations until two months later, when he was awarded the Chancellorship, which he used to bring the Weimar Republic to an end. At that time, such a scenario was only a possibility.

If our Berliner happened to be Jewish, it is likely he would have worried about the possible consequences these events could have for him. The Government, in theory, protected the Jewish minority as never before but, in practice, seemed not capable of the task. If he read some of the many Jewish newspapers published in Germany at the time, he would certainly have found articles on debates within the Jewish community on how to deal with the challenges facing the Republic. He would read about the question of how dangerous a threat Hitler was, and on the growing number of anti-Semitic incidents taking place at the time.

Sipping his coffee and reading his paper, however, he would notice that the subject covered most extensively in all the Jewish press was not news on the struggle for life of the Republic in which he lived, nor on the implications of this struggle for the Jews. Instead, the papers were dominated by a figure who lived three centuries before the Weimar Republic. A figure who had been fiercely rejected by the Jewish community when he lived, but who now appeared to be warmly embraced by the Jews of a new era. On November 24th, 1932, 300 years had passed since the birth of the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Almost all the Jewish newspapers had chosen to make this event their main "news"; they devoted the largest and most prominent sections of their pages to the celebration of this jubilee.

Let us assume that our Berliner read the *CV-Zeitung*. This is a likely guess, as this weekly was one of the most widely read Jewish newspapers at the time. It was estimated that it had some 60,000 subscribers in 1931.[3] Although as a Jewish newspaper it was aimed at a Jewish audience, it spread a message of Jewish integration into German society. This newspaper was published by the *Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens* (Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith), which aimed "to cultivate Jewish life and to counsel the Jews living in Germany on spiritual, legal and economic matters,

[3] Margaret T. Edelheim-Muehsam, "The Jewish Press in Germany", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* I (1956): 167.

as well as to cultivate loyalty to Germany."[4] This meant that the organization considered German Jews first as German citizens, loyal to their German fatherland, and second as Jewish, a quality described in guarded terms, specifically with the phrase "Jüdischen Glaubens" (of Jewish Faith). On the day of the jubilee, the newspaper published an entire supplement devoted to Spinoza. The Head of the *Centralverein* himself, Ludwig Holländer, wrote the main article of the supplement, entitled "*Was ist uns Spinoza*?" (What is Spinoza to us?). This edition also contained a list of quotations from Spinoza's *magnum opus*, the *Ethica*; a story on the house in which Spinoza had lived in the Dutch town of Rijnsburg; and a review of a book on Spinoza's "*Gesinnungsverwandt[er]*" (soulmate): Uriel da Costa.

It is also possible that our newspaper reader belonged to those Jews who did not like the *CV-Zeitung*, because of its continuous apologetic emphasis on Jewish loyalty to the country in which they lived. Perhaps he believed that Jews should not attempt to integrate into German society, but agreed with Zionists who believed Jews should look ahead, and work towards the creation of their own independent state in Palestine. In that case, he would probably have read the main German Zionist newspaper, the *Jüdische Rundschau*. With almost 20,000 subscribers, this newspaper was also quite large, and its readership was growing with Hitler's rise.[5] Nonetheless, here too he would have read about Spinoza. This newspaper devoted part of its front page, and almost its entire second page to three articles on Spinoza. Besides a review of a new biography on Spinoza, there was an article by the Jewish philosopher-theologian Martin Buber, and an article by the philosopher David Baumgardt.

Perhaps our Jew was a member of the largest Jewish Synagogue in Berlin, which belonged to the *Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin*. As such he would have received its *Gemeindeblatt*. This monthly publication also had a large circulation; one estimate puts it at 90,000 in 1931.[6] Even though a *herem*, a formal religious excommunication, had been imposed upon Spinoza in his lifetime, this newspaper still participated enthusiastically in the Spinoza celebrations. On the cover of the November 1932 issue was a picture of Mark Antokolski's marble

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 173.
[6] Ibid., 174.

statue of Spinoza, and its first seven pages contained articles solely about Spinoza. Even if we imagine an Orthodox Berlin Jew – though, admittedly in this case, it is unlikely that such a Jew would visit a non-*kosher* café – he would still have had the opportunity to read about the Spinoza celebrations. Such a Jew would probably have bought the newspaper of the Orthodox *Aguda* organization, and read how this newspaper denounced the Jewish celebration of Spinoza, because it still considered Spinoza to be a heretic.

This was the second time in five years Spinoza had been the focus of attention of the German Jewish community, giving rise to shared enthusiasm in the Jewish press. In February 1927, 250 years had passed since Spinoza's death. Just as in 1932, in 1927 a mix of hope and fear pervaded the social context, although compared to 1932, there may have been more reasons for hope than fear. The 1927 jubilee fell in the middle of the Golden Age of Weimar, when, under the rule of Stresemann, the Republic seemed to consolidate, treaties were signed with neighboring countries, and the economy was recovering. However, the Republic was also weak in those days; anti-republican forces – which were almost always also anti-Semitic – had achieved some major successes before 1927 and were never far away. In 1922, an anti-Semitic hate campaign had resulted in the murder of the Jewish minister of Foreign affairs, Walther Rathenau. Two years before the 1927 Spinoza celebration, Hitler had been prematurely released from his prison sentence given for staging a coup. Right before the 1927 Spinoza celebration, Saxony also became the first large German State to lift the ban forbidding Hitler to speak in public. Hitler had begun staging his first rallies, such as the Weimar Rally of July 1926, to which some 8,000 people attended.[7] Given this context, even if the situation in February 1927 was relatively hopeful in comparison to November 1932, German Jews could not have failed to notice the existence of a very serious threat to their arduously won social position. In both celebrations, the Jewish press took a leading role. Apart from the major newspapers already mentioned, many others celebrated Spinoza, including a great number of regional German Jewish newspapers.

In both 1927 and 1932, German Jews were reminded of Spinoza's death and birth anniversaries in other ways. Several Jewish organizations arranged events to mark the occasion. One such event was a so-

[7] Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936, Hubris*, 278, 92.

called "literary court" involving Spinoza. It took place in Berlin in 1932, and was organized by *Beth Am Iwri*, a meeting point for Hebraists. During this literary court, prominent Spinoza researchers were asked to give their judgment on the behavior of Spinoza, on the rabbis who imposed his ban on him, and on twentieth century Jewry. Some spoke in Spinoza's defense, others took the role of prosecutor. Among the participants, were big name speakers, such as Julius Guttmann, who had written a classic work on the history of Jewish philosophy, and Jacob Klatzkin, who had translated Spinoza's *Ethica* into Hebrew.[8]

Many more lectures were held to mark both jubilees, not only in Berlin, but also elsewhere in Germany.[9] The German Jewish philosopher David Baumgardt even gave a lecture over the radio in celebration of Spinoza.[10] Jewish publishing houses also published books on Spinoza to mark the occasion. One of these books was published as a true collectors item, in a limited, numbered edition on special paper, for the bibliophile Jewish Soncino organization.[11] In the light of the controversial image of Spinoza in Jewish history, it is noteworthy that his celebration was discussed at least once in a sermon during a service in a Synagogue.[12]

In 1932, perhaps the most central event of the celebration was the large "Spinoza exhibition" held in the community building of the famous Synagogue on 29, Oranienburgerstrasse, in Berlin. The exhibition opened on the 15th of December, 1932, with lectures and international guests.[13] The organizers managed to assemble a good number

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[8] "Das Herbstprogramm des Beth Am Iwri", *Jüdische Rundschau* 37, no. 85 (1932).

[9] "Vortrag im jüdischen Kulturverein über Spinoza", *Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt: Offizielles Organ der Israelitschen Gemeinden Mannheim und Ludwigshafen/ Badisches Gemeindeblatt* 10, no. 10 (1932); "Ankündigungstafel der Berliner Logen U.O.B.B.", *Monatschrift der Berliner Logen U.O.B.B.* 6, no. 8 (1927); "Ankündigungstafel der Berliner Logen U.O.B.B.", *Monatschrift der Berliner Logen U.O.B.B.* 12, no. 8 (1932); "Vermischtes", *Jüdische Rundschau* 32, no. 9 (1927).

[10] "Spinoza im Rundfunk", *Jüdische Rundschau*, 29-11-1932 1932.

[11] Kurt Freyer, *Spinoza Führer der Irrenden; Gedenkschrift zur 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages* (Berlin: Horodisch & Marx, 1927); David Baumgardt, *Spinoza und Mendelssohn; Reden und Aufsaetze zu ihren Gedenktagen* (1932); Hans Rosenkranz, *Baruch Spinoza, zum 21 Februar 1927, Aufsatz für die Teilnehmer des Spinoza-Abends, den die Soncino-Gesellschaft Berlin, anläßich der 250. Wiederkehr von Spinoza's Todestag veranstaltete* (1927); Hermann Meyer, "Bibliographie Spinoza", *Soncino-Blätter; Beiträge zur Kunde des jüdischen Buches* 2 (1927): 177.

[12] Freudenthal, "Spinoza – Pestalozzi – Beethoven", *Nürnberg-Fürther Isr. Gemeindeblatt* 7, no. 7 (1927).

[13] S. Rawidowicz, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung in Berlin", *Israelitisches Familienblatt, Ausgabe für Gross-Berlin* 52, no. 34 (1932); Josef Meisl, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung

of valuable pieces for display. Visitors could see autographs of Spinoza, first editions of his works, portraits and sculptures of Spinoza, and original manuscripts on Spinoza by figures such as Goethe and Leibniz. Furthermore, a reconstruction was made of Spinoza's library, based on the inventory of his books.[14] The pieces on display during the exhibition came from several German collections, including that of the brand new Jewish museum of Berlin, and also from non-Jewish institutions. Some were brought from Amsterdam, The Hague and Copenhagen. The fact that a Jewish community organized such an exhibition[15] indicates the relative importance of celebrating Spinoza for German Jews.[16] The Jews were not alone in celebrating Spinoza. Spinoza was also occasionally celebrated among non-Jewish Germans, but these celebrations did not take such a popular and extensive form as they did among Jews. In short, it is not an exaggeration to argue that, despite the pressing political developments of the beginning of the winter of 1932–1933, German Jewry turned itself massively towards the seventeenth century sage.

The Spinoza celebrations of 1927 and 1932 present an intriguing problem. Why did German Jews almost unanimously commemorate a philosopher who had lived in seventeenth century Amsterdam, at a time in history when concerns for the future would seem to have been much more appropriate? Why did German Jews pause, at that hour, to celebrate Spinoza? Already in 1929, the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig hinted that an answer to such questions would reveal much about the era. He commented, on the 1927 celebration, that:

> *Die Signatur der Zeit und inbesondere der Jüdischen Zeit wurde bei der Spinozafeier des Jahres 1927 sichtbar: mit Ausnahme einiger weniger orthodor Stimmen war vom extremsten Religions-Judentum bis zum extremsten National-Judentum einhellige Begeisterung für den 'großen Juden'*. (The signature of the Era, in particular of the Jewish Era, became visible with the Spinoza celebrations in the year 1927; with the exception of a few orthodox voices, there was unanimous enthusiasm from the

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der Gemeindebibliothek", *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin* 23, no. 1 (1933).

[14] A similar reconstruction of Spinoza's library was made for the Spinoza house in Rijnsburg and this reconstruction is still on display there.

[15] It was the only exhibition on Spinoza in Germany marking the 1932 jubilee. Rawidowicz, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung in Berlin".

[16] Some non-Jews contributed for example to Siegfried Hessing, ed. *Spinoza-Festschrift Zum 300. Geburtstage Benedict Spinozas (1632–1932)* (Heidelberg: 1932).

> most extreme religious Judaism, to the most extreme national Judaism, for the "great Jew").[17]

Rosenzweig made this comment in the introduction of a posthumously published article by one of the most influential Jewish philosophers of the Wilhelminian era, Hermann Cohen. This article was very hostile to Spinoza. We should therefore assume that Rosenzweig's words are not devoid of a cynical undertone. However, despite Rosenzweig's apparent reservations as to the Jewish celebration of Spinoza, this quotation also reveals why it is valuable to investigate the German Jewish reception of Spinoza in the Weimar era. To him this had been a significant event, as he believed it said something elementary about Jewish culture at that time. Rosenzweig's hunch is also mine. It is for this purpose that this study shall investigate Spinoza's extraordinary popularity among the Jews of Weimar Germany that manifested itself so clearly during these Spinoza celebrations. Our goal will be to take up Rosenzweig's challenge and make visible "*Die Signatur der Zeit und inbesondere der Jüdische Zeit*" (the signature of the era, in particular of the Jewish era), of the interwar period in Germany.

The Signature of the Era

The "signature of the era" of the Weimar Republic has always been the subject of much debate. Its decadence during the roaring Twenties, the avant-garde culture of the era, and the exuberance of Berlin nightlife – all just before Germany would throw Europe into a self-destructive war – have prompted fascination, but also horror. As a result, the last years of the Weimar Republic gained a tainted reputation. Literary descriptions, such as those of Christopher Isherwood made Weimar Germany a paradigmatic example of dancing on the edge of a volcano. It is tempting to also formulate such an argument for the Spinoza celebrations. Of course, the Spinoza celebrations were not decadent in the ordinary sense of Berlin nightlife. But, the accusation of decadence might still be made for its reflection of blindness or even unwillingness to face the tangible issues of the day. After all, these celebrations were

[17] Hermann Cohen, "Ein Ungedruckter Vortrag Hermann Cohens über Spinozas Verhältnis zum Judentum; Eingeleit van Franz Rosenzweig", in *Festausgabe zum zehnjährigen Bestehen der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums 1919–1929* (Berlin: 1929), 43.

held at a time when, with hindsight, there did not seem to have been much cause for celebration.

The impression that German Jews somehow failed to see the danger right in front of them colored much of the historiography on the Jews of Weimar Germany. Zionists have given these German Jews a reputation of blindness to the problems facing them, sometimes in fierce polemical terms.[18] George Mosse gave a more positive variety of the view that Jews had blinded themselves to the reality of their age, which may help us explain the remarkable Jewish interest in Spinoza's jubilees in the late Weimar years.[19] Mosse believed Jews had been blinded to reality by their adamant adherence to liberal values that most others considered outdated. He believed that the attitudes of German Jews during the Weimar era had been an inheritance from the historical circumstances of their emancipation. This emancipation had taken place "in the autumn of the German Enlightenment."[20] At the time, Jews had become adepts of the original ideal of *Bildung*, as it was developed by figures such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Goethe and Herder. This early version of *Bildung* – described by Mosse as a combination of the English word "education" with notions of character formation and moral education[21] – incorporated many ideals of the Enlightenment. It was humanist and tolerant, entailed an interest in high-culture and the Classics, and aimed at the development of individual character. Most of all, it was universalist because it transcended differences in nationality and religion. In principle, everyone could become *gebildet*. This was, Mosse argued, also the reason why Jews embraced it. In his words it was "an ideal ready made for assimilation."[22]

Things went wrong, according to Mosse's theory, when, in the course of the nineteenth century, the meaning of *Bildung* changed for most Germans. While its original meaning made it open to all, it gradually became the exclusive domain of a "self-perpetuating elite"

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[18] Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million; the Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 181. Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 70.

[19] Mosse's best statement of this theory can be found in: George Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); George L. Mosse, "Jewish Emancipation: Between *Bildung* and Respectability", in *Confronting the Nation, Jewish and Western Nationalism* (London: Brandeis University Press, 1993).

[20] Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 3.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

consisting of "the mandarins – the full professors at the university and (…) the professors at secondary schools."[23] Fichte and Schleiermacher had given it a new philosophical justification not in the Enlightenment, but in nationalism. Mosse believed that this erosion of the classical concept of *Bildung* gained its full momentum only after the First World War.[24]

In Mosse's theory, the problem for Jews was that, whereas the meaning of the *Bildungsideal* changed for most Germans to an antidemocratic ideology that was far removed from the Humanist values of Humboldt, they clung to the old Humboldtian meaning of *Bildung*, which connected it with the Enlightenment and had made it the vehicle of their emancipation. Jews had benefited from this outdated humanist *Bildungsideal* because it had been indispensable for their emancipation and integration into German society; but now it backfired. As virtually only Jews adhered to this kind of *Bildung*, Mosse argued, it gradually came to constitute the essence of their Jewishness, which could now be defined as "beyond religion and nationalism." The result of the Jews' clinging to the early humanist version of *Bildung* during the Weimar era was that they had put themselves in an impossible position: "What seemed the realization of full and equal citizenship, the dream of previous generations, proved to be a decisive stage in the increasing isolation of the Jews in Germany."[25] Thus Mosse analyzed the blindness of Jews to political reality, and to their subsequent isolation, by pointing to their adherence to the original meaning of *Bildung*, as a culture deeply ingrained in liberalism and Enlightenment. Whereas Zionist interpretations often criticized German Jewry for its blindness to the threats surrounding them, Mosse detected in this also a certain heroism, since he viewed Weimar Jewry as the last custodians of liberalism in this era.

However, Mosse's ideas have attracted opposition from a younger generation of historians less concerned with the question of why German Jews had been blind to their impending fate. For example, Michael Brenner, Anson Rabinbach, Steven Aschheim, Shulamith Volkov, David Myers and Michael Löwy, have, both explicitly and

[23] Ibid., 12.
[24] Ibid., 14.
[25] Ibid., 21.

implicitly, attacked Mosse's views.[26] These authors, who were less concerned with trying to understand why German Jews harbored "dangerous illusions about the nature of the German people and the imperatives of modern politics",[27] generally focused on a movement that was not a continuation of the pre-Weimar *Bildungsbürgertum*, but rather a new movement typical of the Weimar era. This movement is known as the Jewish Renaissance or the Weimar Jewish revival. It aimed at a regeneration of Jewish culture and a new Jewish self-awareness that in many respects contradicted the liberal elements of the *Bildung*-culture.

This movement may be traced back to Martin Buber, who called for a renewal of Jewish culture as early as in 1901, and invented the term "Jewish Renaissance".[28] Although in that sense this current had its origins before the Weimar era, the experience of the First World War gave it broader support. There were two main reasons for this. First, for many Jews, the First World War resulted in the deception of their hope for complete acceptance as Germans. The War started with nationalist enthusiasm and a *Burgfrieden* that seemed to unite all Germans. This aroused the hope that Jews, as participants in the War, would finally be totally accepted in and by German society. However, as the War progressed, Jewish soldiers fighting at the front discovered that anti-Semitism had in no way disappeared. As one Jewish soldier wrote in October 1914: "Bei Kriegsbeginn schien jedes Vorurteil verschwunden, es gab nur noch Deutsche. Nun hört man wieder die alten verhaßten Redensarten. Und plötzlich ist man einsam inmitten von Kameraden, deren Not man teilt…mit denen man für die gemeinsame Sache marschiert." (With the beginning of the war, all

[26] Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Steven E. Aschheim, "German Jews Beyond Bildung and Liberalism", in *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered: A Symposium in Honor of George L. Mosse*, ed. Klaus L. Berghahn (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); Shulamith Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation, *Ostjuden* and German Jews", in *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hannover: 1985); David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past; European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Brandeis University Press, 1995); Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia; Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[27] Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 73.

[28] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 24.

prejudiceses seemed to have disappeared, there were only Germans. Now one hears again the old cursed ways of speech). Suddenly one is lonely in the middle of comerades who share your agony, and with whom you march for a common cause).[29] This distrust subsequently led many Jews to take a renewed interest in their Jewish background. For many, a definite turning point was reached when the Government decided to hold a census, in 1916, to investigate whether enough Jews participated in the war effort.[30] This token of distrust caused many Jews to give up hopes for recognition of their efforts to assimilate into German society.

The second reason behind support for the Jewish Renaissance, was the confrontation between German Jewish soldiers fighting on the Eastern front and Eastern European Jews. Eastern European Jews, who lived mainly in Poland and Russia, were very different from German Jews. They had not adjusted their lifestyle to assimilate into German culture, and had remained visibly Jewish. As refugees flooding German cities, these *Ostjuden* had in the course of the nineteenth century been a source of constant embarrassment to acculturating German Jews. But now German Jews discovered, as Rosenzweig put it, "richtigen Rassenstolz" (genuine racial pride)[31] in these Eastern European Jewish communities.

The Weimar Jewish Renaissance has also been conceived as a conflict between assimilated Germanized parents and their children, who regarded their parents as having lost their dignity as a result of their drastic efforts to assimilate.[32] The children's rejection of assimilation did not, however, lead them to return to Orthodoxy, therefore this movement has also been called "dissimilation".[33] This can be conceived

[29] Avraham Barkai and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Deutsch-jüdische geschichte in der Neuzeit, Aufbruch und Zerstörung*, ed. Fred Grubel, iv vols., vol. iv (München: Beck, 1997), 20.

[30] Werner T. Angress, "The German Army's 'Judenzählung' of 1916", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* XXIII (1978).

[31] As quoted in: Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *Deutsch-jüdische geschichte in der Neuzeit, Aufbruch und Zerstörung*, 22. See also: Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 215–245.

[32] Two examples that are illustrative of the generational element in this debate are Gershom Scholem's autobiography and Franz Kafka's letter to his Father. Gershom Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem: Jugenderinnerungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994); Franz Kafka, *Brief an den Vater* (München: Piper, 1960). See also: Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 3.

[33] Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation, *Ostjuden* and German Jews".

of as a manifestation of a wider generational conflict that took place in Weimar Germany – named "the revolt of the son" by Peter Gay – in which younger generations claimed authority over older generations.[34] It is a conflict that manifested in the mushrooming of youth leagues, and the constant call for revival and renewal of Jewry, from the Left to the Right of the political spectrum.

Unlike Mosse, Brenner in *The Renaissance of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany*, argues that Jewish culture in Weimar Germany did not cling to nineteenth century values of emancipation, assimilation and Enlightenment, but rather embodied a new Jewish self-awareness. This new form of self-awareness could have led to the adoption of the Jewish nationalist movement of Zionism, as can be seen, for example, with Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber. However, it would be mistaken to consider Zionism as a direct product of the Jewish Renaissance. For example, other figures, like Franz Rosenzweig and Walter Benjamin, who are considered to have epitomized the Jewish Renaissance in Weimar Germany perhaps even more so than Buber or Scholem, were ambivalent towards the Zionist movement. They liked Zionism's emphasis on Jewish self-awareness, but did not believe the destiny of Judaism should be of a political nature.

Brenner and others viewed this process as a parallel path, rather than as a divergence from set patterns in larger German society.[35] Moreover, these authors showed that many aspects of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany stood in opposition to the liberalism and humanist values of the original concept of *Bildung*. In Brenner's words, "Whereas rationalist thought and individual faith had been the principal characteristics of nineteenth-century Liberal Jewish ideology, in the Weimar period mysticism, Romanticism, and the collective experience became increasingly significant."[36] This implies the existence of illiberal patterns, such as "the quest for community, the synthesis of knowledge

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[34] Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture; The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 102, 13–16; Derlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 16.

[35] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 6; Klaus Schreiner, "Wann kommt der Retter Deutschlands?"; Formen und Functionen von politischen Messianismus in der Weimarer Republik", *Seaculum, Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte* 49 (1998); George Steiner, "Heidegger Again", *Salmagundi*, no. Spring Summer (1989).

[36] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 7.

and the search for authenticity."[37] Löwy, Rabinbach and Aschheim further stressed the rejection of Enlightenment values among Weimar Jews by pointing to the messianism of a number of Weimar Jewish intellectuals. Rabinbach wrote, on the Weimar Jewish revival: "This new Jewish spirit, a product of the 'post-assimilatory Renaissance' can be described as a modern Jewish messianism: radical, uncompromising, and comprised of an esoteric intellectualism that is as uncomfortable with the Enlightenment as it is enamored of apocalyptic visions – whether revolutionary or purely redemptive in the spiritual sense."[38] Aschheim explicitly opposed this to Mosse's ideas. He argued that the Jewish Renaissance in Weimar Germany reflected a "post-*Bildung* sensibility",[39] which he detected in a "theological sensibility" rather than in a secular worldview, a "messianic mode of thinking" rather than "optimistic notions of progress."[40] Therefore, Aschheim concluded that the makers of the Weimar Jewish revival "were rendered possible, assumed their peculiar vitality and found their resonance precisely by proceeding well beyond the calmer worlds of classical liberalism and *Bildung*."[41]

This disagreement shows the difficulty in understanding a unified "*Signatur der Zeit*" of Weimar Jewry. Were German Jews still under the sway of the liberalism of their *Bildung* ideology? Was the Jewish Renaissance in Weimar Germany the work of a small network of avant-garde Jewish intellectuals, or did figures like Buber, Rosenzweig, Benjamin and Scholem have a larger influence in the rest of Weimar Jewry? If this was the case, Mosse's ideas are indeed in need of revision; it should be acknowledged that the Jews of Weimar Germany, like so many other elements in Weimar Germany, had not isolated themselves, but instead had a share in the typical post-First World War reaction against republican liberalism.

Given the variety of the many political and denominational Jewish organizations and newspapers quarreling with each other on religious and political subjects in Germany, it may seem impossible to speak

[37] Ibid., 6.
[38] Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*, 28.
[39] Aschheim, "German Jews Beyond Bildung and Liberalism", 43.
[40] Ibid., 38–39, 43.
[41] Ibid., 44.

only of one "*Signatur der jüdische Zeit*". But when it came to celebrating Spinoza, almost all these differing Jewish groups united in, as Rosenzweig put it, "einhellige Begeisterung" (unanimous enthusiasm). What Rosenzweig seems to have felt instinctively was that Spinoza offered something essential to the Jews of Weimar Germany that cut right through almost all of their ideological differences.

This book will investigate how the popularity in Jewish circles of Spinoza in Weimar Germany could function in such a way. This will help us understand to what extent it indeed reflected blindness to present dangers, or is to be understood, in contrast, as a response to such dangers. It will do so, by placing the Jewish admiration for Spinoza in the context of the debates Jews conducted on the ways they had to position themselves in the historical setting of the Weimar Republic. More specifically, the investigation will show how Spinoza's Jewish followers developed what may be called a "Spinozist alternative" to negotiate the different choices the times seemed to force them to make, which displayed the characteristics of both liberalist *Bildung* ideology, which also had dominated the Wilhelminian era, and the less than liberal Jewish revival typical of the Weimar era.

The Legends of Spinoza

In order to carry out such an investigation, it will first be necessary to obtain some idea of what Weimar Jews could have known about Spinoza. After all, the facts of Spinoza's life and philosophy were the building material for the images of Spinoza that were created. It would therefore not be helpful, here, to provide a summary of up-to-date scholarship on Spinoza,[42] nor would it to give my interpretation of who Spinoza was and what he stood for. Apart from the fact that we know precious little about Spinoza's life with any degree of certainty,[43]

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[42] The existing literature on Spinoza is immense. The best up-to-date introduction into Spinoza's life and work: Steven Nadler, *Spinoza a Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Other recent introductions to Spinoza: Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza et le spinozisme* (Paris 2003); Richard H. Popkin, *Spinoza* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004).

[43] We have almost no sources on Spinoza from before his ban. Apart from his letters and works the most reliable source on his biography is the biography in his posthumously published *Opera Posthuma*. Another important source about Spinoza's life that survived is the *herem*. Gemeente Archief Amsterdam, archives of the Amsterdam Portugese community (archive 334) the *Mahamad* minute (inv. no. 19) p. 408,

it should also be emphasized that what contemporary scholars consider to be true or false with regard to Spinoza – about which there is much debate – is not relevant for how Spinoza was viewed in Weimar Germany. Therefore, what follows is merely an attempt to describe the most important information that existed about Spinoza at the outset of the Spinoza celebrations.[44] This information consisted of a mix of Spinoza's surviving works, scholarship on Spinoza (some of which is considered valuable to this day), and literary accounts of Spinoza's life, such as the unreliable "Spinoza novels" of Berthold Auerbach or Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer.[45] As such, the following sketch may better be viewed as the legend, or legends, about Spinoza that existed during the Weimar Republic.

The legends usually begin in 1492, with the – undisputed – fact that Spain expelled its Jews. All Jews either had to leave Spain or choose to be baptized. Many of the Jews that were baptized continued to profess Judaism in secret. In the sixteenth century, the *Marranos*, as these "Jews in secret" were called, became the subject of harsh persecutions during the Inquisition, and many tried to escape the Iberian Peninsula. Some of them went to Amsterdam, where they were allowed to establish a separate Jewish community. At the time, Holland was freeing itself from Spanish rule and experienced a Golden Age in commerce, philosophy and art, drawing great minds to the Republic. Descartes had lived there for most years between 1628 and 1649, and Rembrandt

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6 Ab 5416. For an English translation of the *herem*: Paul Mendels-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World. A Documentary History*, ii ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 57.

[44] In Weimar Germany all preserved writings of Spinoza were readily available. The most authoritative source for Spinoza's writings was the critical edition published by Carl Gebhardt in 1925. German translations of Spinoza's works existed too. Spinoza's *Ethica* had already been translated into German in 1744. The first German translation of his complete works had already been published by Berthold Auerbach in 1841. Berthold Auerbach, *B. v. Spinoza's sämtliche Werke Aus dem Lateinischen mit dem Leben Spinoza's* (Stuttgart 1841). Some available scholarship on Spinoza's biography was ———, "Das Leben Spinoza's", in *B. v. Spinoza's saemtliche Werke Aus dem Lateinischen mit dem Leben Spinoza's*, ed. Berthold Auerbach (Stuttgart 1841); Jacob Freudenthal, *Spinoza, sein Leben und seine Lehre* (Stuttgart: F. Frommann, 1904); Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski, *Der Junge de Spinoza* (Münster: Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1910); K.O. Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring* (The Hague 1896); Jacob Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften, Urkunden und Nichtamtlichen Nachrichten* (Leipzig 1899).

[45] Berthold Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein historischer Roman. 2 Bde.* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1837); E.G. Kolbenheyer, *Amor Dei. Ein Spinoza-Roman* (München: Langen/Müller, 1912).

even lived in the Jewish Quarter. This so-called "Sephardic" Jewish community prospered and became a source of pride for later generations, with the famous Portuguese Synagogue, built during Spinoza's life, as symbol of its strength. This community also produced famous rabbis, such as the printer Menasseh ben Israel or the Cabbalist Isaac Aboab da Fonseca. But it was also a community prone to heresy. It became victim of messianic fever, when rumors spread that the Jewish community of Gaza, including its rabbi, followed Shabbetai Zevi from Smyrna, who on the 17th of Sivan (31st of May, 1665) proclaimed himself to be the Messiah. This fever only receded when news came that Shabbetai Zevi converted to Islam. There was also the tragic case of the unfortunate Uriel da Costa (1585–1640). Da Costa was born in Portugal, where he had become a *Marrano* church official. When he came to Amsterdam, where he could freely profess his Judaism, he publicly questioned the eternity of the Soul. Twice, he was punished with a ban and, twice, he repented. The second time he was forced to undergo a cruel punishment to have the ban lifted; he was whipped and had to lie down on the threshold of the synagogue, the entire entering congregation stepping on his body. This so upset him that he later shot himself in the head.

The most famous son of this Amsterdam Sephardic community would be Spinoza, the boy the painter Samuel Hirszenberg once painted, symbolically, sitting on Da Costa's lap. According to the legend, Spinoza proved to be a smart boy, and his rabbis hoped he would use his intellect to serve the community, but this soon turned out not to be Spinoza's destiny. Spinoza's horizon proved to be wider than the Jewish community, and what he learned in rabbinic school did not satisfy his curiosity. Slowly, Spinoza distanced himself from the Jewish community. He befriended non-Jews in Amsterdam, such as the freethinker Franciscus Van den Ende, who taught him Latin. According to some stories, he also stopped visiting the synagogue on a regular basis.[46] One of his earliest biographers, Jean-Maximilien Lucas, narrated how Spinoza voiced his doubts about religion to two Jewish friends, who subsequently betrayed him to the rabbis.[47] In any event, a conflict with rabbinic authorities became inevitable. According to

[46] Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften*, 40.

[47] Ibid., 6; Jean-Maximilien Lucas and Dominique de Saint-Glain, *La vie de Spinosa* (Hambourg 1735); A. Wolf, ed. *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1992; reprint, 1992).

Pierre Bayle, the rabbis tried to keep Spinoza within the community by offering him money for at least pretending to the outside world that he was an observing Jew. Spinoza refused and, eventually, the authorities in the Jewish court, the *Mehamad*, imposed the great ban upon him; he was cursed "with all the curses that are written in the Law." Nobody was to "communicate with him orally or in writing, or show him any favor, or stay with him under the same roof, or come within four ells of him, or read anything composed or written by him."[48] Unlike Uriel da Costa, Spinoza did not show any remorse. He left Amsterdam, and lived a quiet life in Rijnsburg, where he earned his living grinding lenses. He had an extensive circle of – non Jewish – friends who were interested in his thoughts, wrote to him, or came to visit him to ask him about his philosophy; but he was careful in whom he confided. The only books he published during his lifetime were the *Renati Des Cartes Principia Philosophae*, with its appendix *Cogitata Metaphysica*, which dealt with the thoughts of Descartes rather than his own, and the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* (TTP), which he published anonymously. He also showed his caution by including the word *caute*, "prudence", in his seal. Later, Spinoza moved to Voorburg and then to The Hague. He died on 21st of February, 1677, aged 45.

The known facts about his biography permit different interpretations. Two interpretations deserve special attention here. One portrays Spinoza as a forerunner of Enlightenment secularism and liberalism, and the other as a deeply religious soul. In both cases, the key event of his life was his expulsion from the Jewish community in Amsterdam. The first interpretation explains Spinoza's excommunication as being the result of doubts about religion. Spinoza is seen as one of the founders of a secular worldview, and as a father of Enlightenment. The second interpretation explains Spinoza's conflict with the *Mehamad* as being the result of an abuse of religion by the Amsterdam rabbis. This interpretation maintains that it was Spinoza's religious attitude, rather than his secularism, that brought him into conflict with the Jewish community.

Both interpretations are supported by Spinoza's work. The interpretation that sees in Spinoza a father of Enlightenment finds most

[48] Mendels-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World; a Documentary History*, 57.

of its basis in the TTP. It is the only book Spinoza published where he expounded his own ideas, albeit anonymously. It is easy to see an early statement of liberal values in this treatise. It is a plea for the freedom to philosophize, which is based upon making a sharp distinction between philosophy and theology. In the process, Spinoza presented a number of amazingly unorthodox ideas that generated centuries of debate, not only in Jewish circles. Foremost among these ideas was his unorthodox reading of the Bible. In the TTP, he gave rational explanations for prophecies and miracles.[49] He also put in doubt the notion that Moses wrote the *Pentateuch*, and took a number of arguments from the Scriptures to support this view, such as the fact that Moses could never have written about his own death.[50] For this reason, Spinoza is often considered as being one of the founders of modern Bible criticism. What also made the TTP notorious was Spinoza's attack on the legitimization of the power of clerical authorities. For Spinoza, the State should always be sovereign over religious authorities: "God has no kingdom over men save through the medium of those who hold the sovereignty."[51] Particularly important for Spinoza's Jewish recipients, was that, in the TTP, Spinoza denied the universal validity of the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses, he argued, was a political law, only relevant for a certain age (the Biblical age) and a certain people (the Israelites).[52] None of the rules of rabbinical Judaism made any sense after the destruction of the Temple, and certainly not in seventeenth century Amsterdam.

Spinoza's other main work, the *Ethica*, also contained elements supporting the view that he had been a philosopher of Enlightenment secularism. Whereas Spinoza published the TTP with a political aim and ultimately dealt with the question how a society should be organized, the *Ethica* is a contribution to the metaphysical debate of his time and an exposure of Spinoza's philosophical system. It dealt with metaphysical notions such as God, Free Will, Good and Evil, the Eternity of the Soul, and, ultimately, the Path to Happiness. The most striking aspect of the *Ethica* to anyone attempting to read it, is the geometric form in which Spinoza chose to present his ideas. This is a form Spinoza bor-

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[49] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2002), 394–415, 44–56.
[50] Ibid., 474.
[51] Ibid., 559.
[52] Ibid., 418.

rowed from Euclid's *Elements*, where the text consists of axioms and definitions, and of a list of propositions deduced from these axioms and definitions. The rationalism this method of writing reflected also led to the association of Spinoza with Enlightenment rationalism.

Central in the *Ethica* is Spinoza's notion of God. With this notion, Spinoza attempted to break from anthropomorphic and anthropocentric definitions of God. To Spinoza, God is not an actor who created the universe out of nothingness. Instead, the universe *is* God. God is a substance that exists in an endless number of manifestations (Spinoza calls these *attributes*), two of which can be perceived by men: the physical and the mental world. Here, we can see both Spinoza's debt to his predecessor in Western philosophy, Descartes, and his departure from Cartesian thought. Descartes distinguished between the realm of extension and the realm of souls. Descartes saw these spheres as two distinct substances that were each created by God. For Spinoza, however, these spheres were only different manifestations of a single substance, which he called God; all the particular things in the world that we know of, Spinoza named *modi*. In the end, all things in the universe (*modi*) are manifestations of God (or of nature, or of the one substance), either through spiritual or material attributes. Spinoza phrased this equation in his famous formula: *Deus sive natura*.

This notion of God led the entire *Ethica* to be permeated with notions that were threatening to Judeo-Christian tradition. For Spinoza, Man was not put on the world primarily to care for other people. Man's primal motivation is caused by what Spinoza called the *conatus*. This is the impulse "with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being."[53] This theory inspired Spinoza's notions of Good and Evil. Good and Evil were not metaphysical notions, nor were they derived from authorities in the Scriptures, such as the Ten Commandments; they were simply those things that helped Man in his struggle for the persistence of its own being (Good) and those that obstructed him in this struggle (Evil). A notorious example of this was Spinoza's condemnation of pity as "pain arising from another's hurt."[54] It fell under his definition of Evil, as feeling pity is suffering because someone else is suffering, which hinders Man in his struggle for persistence; as a form of suffering it obstructed the *conatus*. Another Judeo-Christian

[53] Ibid., 283. Ethica III prop. 7.
[54] Ibid., 290. Ethica III prop. 22.

notion Spinoza assailed was the belief in an Eternal Soul. Spinoza's ideas on this issue were complicated and open to interpretation.[55] It is clear, however, that he refuted the idea that after the death of the body a Soul remains that corresponds to this body, and that this Soul can be rewarded or punished in an afterlife.

The *Ethica*, however, also contained support for the other interpretation of Spinoza, as a religious soul. For all its early or Radical Enlightenment secularism, the *Ethica* also harbored notions that could be viewed as profoundly religious. Spinoza's *Deus sive natura* could be read not only as a denial of the existence of God, but also as a statement of the religious feeling that God was present in Nature. A further powerful argument for Spinoza's religiousness can be found in his Theory of Knowledge. For Spinoza there are different levels of knowledge. There is experience, and knowledge of adequate ideas, but the highest degree of knowledge – and at the same time the most difficult to obtain – is a direct intuitive knowledge of God. Such knowledge of God enables Man not only to see the world from an eternal perspective, or, as in another famous phrase of Spinoza, *sub specie aeternitatis*.[56] This highest form of knowledge also leads to what Spinoza called, in yet another famous phrase, the *amor dei intellectualis*: the intellectual love of God. According to Spinoza, this is what the philosopher ultimately should strive for. With this notion, it is therefore quite possible to attribute a religious core to the *Ethica*.

Nineteenth century scholarship provides further ammunition to consider Spinoza not only as a religious person, but also as a religious Jew. Some researchers argued that Spinoza's works were inspired by medieval Jewish philosophy, including the Cabbala. Although such "discoveries" are highly controversial in contemporary Spinoza scholarship,[57] many authors took them seriously during the Weimar era.

These two interpretations of Spinoza caused two different currents in the history of Spinoza's reception. The first current associated Spinoza with Enlightenment,[58] appearing as negative critique in the

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[55] On this subject see: Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

[56] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 374. Ethica V prop. 22.

[57] Wiep van Bunge, "Spinoza's Jewish Identity and the Use of Context", *Studia Spinozana* 13 (1997).

[58] A strong case for such an interpretation of Spinoza has recently been made by Jonathan Israel: Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment, Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

earliest reception of Spinoza. During the seventeenth and a great deal of the eighteenth centuries, Spinoza was generally considered an atheist to be refuted, and at best not be read at all. For example, the Dutch States General forbade the publication of the TTP in 1674. Spinoza and Spinozism became derogatory terms that were used to discredit all kinds of criticism against religious beliefs. By the middle of the eighteenth century, an accusation of Spinozism could still have serious consequences.[59] The attacks by religious authorities against Spinoza – including those of Jews during his lifetime – forged his reputation as a secular thinker that anticipated Enlightenment secularism. Until the late eighteenth century, Spinoza was supposed to be part – or even the center – of an underground movement of freethinkers. From the late seventeenth century up until deep into the eighteenth century, there existed underground literature on Spinoza which, usually, fiercely attacked institutionalized religion. The best example of this is the widely circulated *Traité des trois imposteurs*, in which the three great impostors were Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. It was often published together with a biography of Spinoza.[60] Later, this underground movement was called the Radical Enlightenment, suggesting that it anticipated the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.[61]

As long as all rationalism could be discredited with the charge of Spinozism, it was very difficult for German adherents of the Enlightenment, the *Aufklärer*, to make their case for their Enlightenment values such as rationalism and religious tolerance. The dilemma was perhaps best stated by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819). Jacobi believed that all rationalistic thought led to what he considered its ultimate philosophical consequence: Spinozism. And to him, Spinozism was immoral atheism, because of its consequent rationalist denial of Free Will, which, in his eyes, necessarily led to fatalism. To Jacobi, the only solution was what he described as a *salto mortale*: a complete rejection of reason and a leap of faith, a wholehearted embrace of irrationalism.

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[59] Christian Wolff had to move to another city after having been accused of Spinozism. Ibid., 545.

[60] Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza et le spinozisme*, Que sais-je, 1422 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 9.

[61] Leo Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinoza's als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft, Untersuchungen zu Spinoza's theologisch-politischem Traktat* (Berlin: Akademieverlag, 1930), 2; Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981); Israel, *Radical Enlightenment, Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*.

By taking such a position, Jacobi unwillingly triggered the second current in the history of Spinoza's reception. This current was the outcome of a wide intellectual debate on Spinoza that Jacobi sparked, after having made public a private conversation he had had with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, generally considered the father of German Enlightenment. Jacobi maintained that, in this conversation (which took place on Lessing's deathbed and of which there were no other witnesses), Lessing confided in him that he was a Spinozist at heart. Lessing's friend, the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), vehemently denied this charge. Mendelssohn's defense of Lessing sparked a heated controversy that put Spinoza's thought in the center of the German intellectual debate of the late Enlightenment.

This *Spinozastreit* or *Pantheismusstreit*, as it debate came to be known, marked the beginning of the other current of Spinoza's reception in the German-speaking world. Most people believed Jacobi's claim that Lessing was a Spinozist, but they did not agree that Lessing was immoral. Similarly, they also refused to believe that Spinoza's philosophy was immoral. On the contrary, they argued that Spinoza had been completely misunderstood by those who called him an atheist. Now, with the advent of German romanticism, Spinoza-the-former-atheist became an example in the romantic perception of religion. He came to exemplify a religion that was personal and that stood above all forms of organized religion. It was an opinion that could be found in many important German thinkers including Goethe, Herder and Novalis.[62] Schleiermacher could also be counted among them. He viewed in Spinoza a predecessor of his romantic theology, and perhaps best stated the way these thinkers felt about Spinoza when he wrote: "voller Religion war er und voll heiligen Geistes" (he was full of religion and full of holy spirit).[63]

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[62] Different studies have been written about Spinoza's reception in Germany. Max Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland. Gekroente Preisschrift* (Berlin 1898); David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1984); Detlev Pätzold, *Spinoza – Aufklärung – Idealismus: Die Substanz der Moderne* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1995).

[63] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin 1799), 55.

A Jew beyond Judaism?

The Spinoza celebrations of 1927 and 1932 were the culmination of a long history of German Jewish interest in Spinoza, which, starting in the mid-eighteenth century, ran parallel to the long and arduous process of German Jewish emancipation. During that time, many key figures among German Jews expressed their admiration for Spinoza, including Moses Mendelssohn, Berthold Auerbach, Moses Hess and Heinrich Heine.[64] German Jews had also celebrated Spinoza in 1832 and 1877, albeit not as massively as in 1927 and 1932.[65] Although, to date, there have not been any studies of German Jewish celebrations of Spinoza in 1927 and 1932, attempts have been made to account for Spinoza's popularity among German Jews in this era. Before turning to the Weimar era, it is worthwhile noting how such studies made sense of the popularity of Spinoza among German Jews.[66]

The literature tends to view German Jewish interest in Spinoza as a direct consequence of the process of Jewish emancipation. Accordingly, it belongs to the current that considered Spinoza, foremost, as a philosopher of liberalism and of the Enlightenment. These studies generally regard Spinoza as the forerunner of Jews who had cut their ties with traditional Judaism, but remained Jewish in a non-religious way. We could say that they saw Spinoza as, what Mosse called, a "Jew beyond Judaism".

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[64] For a good overview of Spinoza's German-Jewish reception before the Weimar era: Ze'ev Levy, *Baruch Spinoza – Seine Aufnahme durch die jüdischen Denker in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001).

[65] Auerbach, Berthold. "Nalezing Op Spinoza" *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1880, no. 39 (1880): 310. Cohn, Rabbiner Dr. Tobias. *Spinoza Am Zweiten Säculartage Seines Todes. Vortrag in Der "Litterarischen Gesellschaft" Zu Potsdam*. Potsdam, 1877. Philippson, Ludwig. "Baruch Spinoza (Eine Skizze)" *Sulamith, eine* Zeitschrift zur Beförderung der Kultur und Humanität unter den Israeliten VII, no. 5 (1832): 327–336.

[66] Isaak Deutscher, *The non-Jewish Jew* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Adventures of Immanence*, II vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); ———, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Carsten Schapkow, *"Die Freiheit zu philosophieren", Jüdische Identität in der Moderne im Spiegel der Rezeption Baruch de Spinozas in der deutschsprachigen Literatur.* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001); Steven B. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Some authors have also emphasized the Jewish impopularity of Spinoza in this era: Levy, *Baruch Spinoza*; Menachem Dorman, *Wikochei Spinoza beespekularia Yehudit [The Spinoza Dispute in Jewish Thought]* (Tel-Aviv 1990).

A good example of this is the Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher's perception of Spinoza as a "non-Jewish Jew". In an article criticizing Jewish aspirations for national sovereignty, Deutscher called attention to the existence of Jews that rose "in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations";[67] these views in effect arose as a consequence of their being Jews. Therefore, Deutscher named these people "non-Jewish Jews". He maintained that these non-Jewish Jews "dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions and national cultures",[68] and this was a reason that the thinking of "non-Jewish Jews" transcended the limits of their time and place. Deutscher named a number of non-Jewish Jews, including Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and Trotsky. His earliest example of a non-Jewish Jew, however, was Spinoza. Deutscher believed that, because Spinoza was brought up under the influences of Spain, Holland, Germany, England and Italy, he lived "on the borderlines of various civilizations." Deutscher – revealing himself a true Marxist – also emphasized that Spinoza's native Holland "was in the throes of the bourgeois revolution."[69] According to Deutscher, all this made Spinoza into an independent thinker who recognized the contradiction within Judaism between a universal God and the Chosen People.[70] This contradiction combined with the ban imposed on Spinoza as a result of it made him the first non-Jewish Jew.

In 1989, the idea of Spinoza as a non-Jew who was also recognizable as a Jew, was given renewed impetus by Yirmiyahu Yovel's two-volume work *Spinoza and other Heretics*, where an attempt is made to understand Spinoza as a *Marrano*. In the first volume, called *the Marrano of Reason*, Yovel tried to display the "marrano patterns that, transformed, were preserved in his [Spinoza's] thought."[71] Yovel summarized this Marrano experience as "a this-worldly disposition; a split religious identity; a metaphysical skepticism; a quest for alternative salvation through methods that oppose the official doctrine; an opposition between inner and outer life, and a tendency toward dual language and equivocation."[72] Yovel found a transformed version of all

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[67] Deutscher, *The non-Jewish Jew*, 27.
[68] Ibid., 271.
[69] Ibid., 28.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Marrano of Reason*, 38.
[72] Ibid., x.

these aspects in the work and the life of Spinoza. It explained what Yovel considered to be Spinoza's main philosophic contribution: the introduction of the so-called philosophy of immanence, a radically new philosophical principle.[73] In the words of Yovel, this philosophy of immanence viewed "this-worldly existence as all there is, as the only actual being and the sole source of ethical value."[74] Immanence, for Yovel, also meant that "God himself is identical with the totality of nature, and God's decrees are written not in the Bible but in the laws of nature and reason."[75] This theory brought Yovel to ask the question in an epilogue, whether Spinoza can be called the first secular Jew. Notably, Yovel only raised this question, and did not answer it. Still, it shows that, also for Yovel, Spinoza's significance was his secular side. In the second volume, titled *The Adventures of Immanence*, Yovel elaborated on this point in a discussion of the reception of Spinoza by a number of German Jewish thinkers, such as Heine, Hess and Marx.[76]

Carsten Schapkow further investigated the consequences of Yovel's ideas for the Jewish reception of Spinoza in Germany. His book, *Die Freiheit zu Philosophieren, Jüdische Identität in der Moderne im Spiegel der Rezeption Baruch de Spinozas in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, reviewed the importance of Spinoza for a great number of German Jews in the era of emancipation, from Mendelssohn and Auerbach to Gustav Landauer and Elias Canetti. Schapkow summarized Spinoza's importance in his plea for "the freedom to philosophize." Following Yovel, Schapkow argued that the Marrano experience of his parents had influenced Spinoza. This Marrano experience gave him the identity of a "universal alien". The freedom to philosophize became a philosophical manifestation of Spinoza's Sephardic background. To Schapkow, this made Spinoza into the founder of a Jewish identity based upon Spinoza's intellectual independence and on the ideal of loneliness, and had nothing to do with Jewish religious tradition.[77]

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[73] Ibid., ix. In another place Yovel writes that the principle of immanence had been also existed in ancient times among pre-Socratics, Epicurians and Stoics: ———, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Adventures of Immanence*, 167.

[74] Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Marrano of Reason*, ix.

[75] Ibid.

[76] ———, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Adventures of Immanence*. Yovel also discusses Spinoza's influence on non-Jewish thinkers as Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche.

[77] Schapkow, *"Die Freiheit zu philosophieren", Jüdische Identität in der Moderne im Spiegel der Rezeption Baruch de Spinozas in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, 183.

Steven B. Smith made the most unambiguous case for linking an interpretation of Spinoza as the father of liberalism to Spinoza's relevance for emancipating Jewry. In his book, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity*, Smith traced Spinoza's importance as a model for modern secular Jewish identity back to the TTP, which, to Smith, was "an ongoing dialogue with the Thora."[78] Still, according to Smith, the importance of the TTP is that it was the first modern work that dealt with what he calls the "theologico-political problem" – the problem of whether religion should rule politics, or politics religion – in a way that accorded a central place to the "question of Jews and Judaism."[79] Spinoza formulated his answer – which, in Smith's words, led to the creation of a new kind of liberal polity with a new kind of liberal citizen – as a general answer to the Jewish Question. Smith described the Jewish Question in terms of the problem by which Jews, after centuries of separation and ghettoization, would be granted the rights of membership in, or admission to, the polity.[80] For Smith, Spinoza's great contribution had been that he had grounded liberalism in an answer to the Jewish Question.

In short, existing literature on the Jewish reception of Spinoza tends to emphasize the Spinoza of the radical Enlightenment; a man born a Jew who lost his Jewish faith, but did not replace it with Christianity; the secular Bible critic, who was reputed to be an atheist, and was the father of liberalism. Consequently, the existing literature portrays Spinoza as the father of (a) secular Jewish identity. This seems to support the Mossean thesis that celebrating Spinoza was just one more way in which Jews looked for an attractive definition of "Jewishness", "beyond religion and nationalism."[81] Deutscher and Yovel's descriptions of Spinoza as the "non-Jewish Jew", the "first secular Jew", or "the marrano of reason", are in line with Mosse's own "Jew(s) beyond Judaism."

One aim of this study is to show that these terms are not always accurate descriptions of Spinoza's meaning to Weimar Jewry. The way German-Jewish authors wrote about Spinoza in this era and the way he was celebrated in the German Jewish press in 1927 and 1932 show that these celebrations also included the other side of Spinoza: the Spi-

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[78] Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity*, xiii.
[79] Ibid., xii.
[80] Ibid., 13.
[81] Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 20.

noza who always denied that he was an atheist, who developed the notion of the intellectual love of God, and who, as such, had become the hero of German romanticism. This is also the Spinoza who never broke with Judaism, but whose philosophy was deeply influenced by the Jewish thought Spinoza must have studied in his youth. The Jewish popularity of Spinoza cannot be understood without an awareness of this other religious, or romantic side, of Spinoza. Such an awareness will alert us to the fact that, besides the values of the liberal humanist concept of *Bildung* (such as rationalism, secularism and universalism), the Spinoza celebrations also encompassed values typical of Weimar anti-liberal thinking. As it will become apparent, these values manifested in the praise of Spinoza as having been deeply religious or even "urjüdisch" (primordial Jewish), for his authentic religiosity, and sometimes even in his depiction as a Messiah. The incorporation of tendencies not normally associated with the liberalism and humanism of the *Bildungsideal* will show that Weimar Jews, through their celebrations and popularizations of Spinoza developed a particular kind of "Spinozist alternative." This alternative for existing ideological options looked towards Spinoza for a worldview that combined Enlightenment values such as rationalism, tolerance and equality with Romantic values such as religiosity, authenticity and irrationalism. Most of all, it provided Jews as well as other defenders of the Republic with an ideological basis to support the fragile German democracy and gave Jews in Weimar Germany a way-out of the social and intellectual dilemmas they were facing.

To the current Spinoza scholar this "Weimar Spinozism" may look like an inaccurate exploitation of Spinoza. To anyone aware of what happened in the years after the Weimar era, it may be dismissed since, obviously, it did not help the survival of the Republic nor of German Jewry. It was, nevertheless, a serious attempt to answer questions that were very concrete in Weimar Germany, and of which the fundamental nature has caused them to remain existent up to the present day. The questions have returned in the ideological problems facing the post-war project of building a Jewish State, where keeping true to the requisites of both Jewish independence and humanist values has proven to be one of the most difficult challenges, and in the dilemmas facing modern immigrants in Western Europe, who must answer to fears of Muslim fundamentalism and are asked to adjust to Western values, but do not want to abandon their cultural background or

religious convictions. The way German Jews thought about Spinoza should therefore not be dismissed too easily. As long as the issues with which the Jews of Weimar Germany struggled have not disappeared, their "Spinozist alternative" deserves to be studied, remembered and appreciated for the original answer it provided to the difficulties of the modern world.

The Politics of Remembering Spinoza

German Jewish celebrations of Spinoza mostly took place in the German Jewish press. For that reason, the core of the *corpus* of sources used in this study consists of articles about Spinoza written in the Weimar Jewish press, particularly in the years of the Spinoza jubilees 1927 and 1932. These articles are complemented by a number of Jewish books published mostly in the last years of the Weimar Republic, which include novels, biographies and other popularizations of the philosopher's life and work. The Jewish reception of Spinoza has not been taken here to mean everything that was written on Spinoza by Jewish authors, but rather all that was published on Spinoza in newspapers and journals, or by publishers and authors that explicitly professed to be Jewish. This includes Gentile authors who published in a Jewish platform and excludes Jewish authors who did not publish in a Jewish context such as a Jewish newspaper or a professed Jewish publishing house.[82] It is for this reason that the Spinoza reception of Jewish authors such as Albert Einstein, Gustav Landauer and Fritz Mauthner, who admired Spinoza, but did not do so in an explicit Jewish way, have largely been left out of this study.

In all these sources, the journalists, newspaper editors, and book authors or publishers made a conscious choice that Spinoza was worthy of remembrance. This was particularly the case for Spinoza's jubilees. The jubilee of Spinoza's death, for instance, was only news if

[82] This means that I have not selected authors for criteria like their paying membership of Synagogues or the question whether they were Jews according to Jewish Law. To find a representative number of sources use has been made of the collections of the Rosenthaliana library in Amsterdam, the Germania Judaica library in Cologne, the library of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and the library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It has been possible to thus view 65 periodicals of the more than 100 German-Jewish periodicals that appeared in Febrary 1927 and November 1932. Most of the journals that have not been seen were small local Jewish newspapers. The seven journals with the widest circulation have all been viewed.

Spinoza was believed to have ideological value, if there were some lessons to be drawn from his memory.

In attempting to get to the ideology behind Spinoza's popularity and looking in particular at Spinoza's relevance for a number of the most pressing ideological questions Weimar Jews faced, this study draws from many insights from the field of Memory Studies. Various authors have distinguished many various types of memory, such as "collective memory", "cultural memory", "communicative memory", "sites of memory", "prosthetic memory", "shared memory" which underlined the ways societies and the individuals that make up these societies remember the past, sometimes by "imagining", "constructing" or "inventing" it in accordance with their social, moral or other needs.[83] As such it has presented itself, in particular in the context of postmodern theory, in the last few decades as a critique of and sometimes even an alternative to traditional historiography. To the cultural historian, who does want to make an attempt in reconstructing a historical culture, such insights, however, have, perhaps paradoxically, also provided invaluable tools. James Frentes and Chris Wickham argued that "[no] human group is constituted, no code of conduct promulgated, no thought given form, no action committed, no knowledge communicated, without its [memory's] intervention."[84] If this is so, an analysis of a particular memory of a particular community may shed light on all these elements, otherwise difficult to identify, but that together make up a culture. The remembrance of Spinoza among the Jews of Weimar Germany may therefore display how they constituted their groups, promulgated their codes of conduct, gave form to their thoughts, committed their action and communicated their knowledge.

The memory and celebration of Spinoza turned out to have the power to bridge many Jewish internal divisions of the era of emancipation in general and of the Jews in Weimar Germany in particular. The next three chapters will each deal with such a division, and the way Spinoza

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[83] Jan Assmann and Rodney Livingstone, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Lewis A. Coser, *Maurice Halbwachs: On Collective Memory* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992); Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: the Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1998 (1998).

[84] Ibid., viii.

served as a bridge. The following (second) chapter will deal with the ideological rifts between separatists and integrationalists. Spinoza's popularity is here shown to bring together Weimar Jews, who differed on the fundamental question Jews faced as to which social group they belonged. Ever since their emancipation, German Jews had wrestled with the question of how much of their "particularity" they should concede to be accepted into German society. The denominational lines along which Judaism became divided largely came from diverging answers to this question. Were the Jews in the first place Germans or in the first place Jews, and were these two categories mutually exclusive, as the Zionists came to think, or a natural allegiance as assimilationalists thought? One of the defining aspects of Spinoza no one could ignore was the fact he had been excommunicated. This, of course, went to the heart of the issue, as excommunication, in itself, leads to a redefinition of social allegiances. Spinoza was officially cast out of a social group, the Jewish community, and this could not but give a certain meaning to his writings. How, then, was Spinoza's "Jewishness" appreciated? Should he be considered a Jew, a Christian, or as a secular person beyond religious divisions, unique to his era? Were the Spinoza celebrations intended as an exclusively Jewish affair, or as both Jewish and German? In Weimar Germany, such choices became more and more intertwined with the heated political situation, and were directly linked to estimations of what the course of events would be. Would the infant Weimar democracy survive and perpetuate the progressive evolution of Germany towards a liberal state? Or was it doomed, and was the eventual victory of Nazism inevitable? The Jewish *Bildungsideal* focused on integration, whereas the Jewish Renaissance tended towards separatism (whether in a Zionist guise or not). We will see that Jews constantly emphasized the influence of Spinoza on German culture, such as his presumed influence on Goethe and even Bismarck, but also stressed Spinoza's Jewish essence. Spinoza was turned into a natural German as well as a natural Jew. This led Jewish authors to draw both integrationalist and separatist conclusions, sometimes simultaneously.

Another – related – divide mediated by Spinoza was the one between religious Jews and unreligious Jews. Here too we see that both religious Jews and secular Jews were united in the celebration of Spinoza. This shows that Spinoza played a role in another dilemma basic to the Jewish experience in Weimar Germany: the moral issue that lay behind the question whether to be German or Jew. The third chapter will therfore deal with the questions of whether Jews thought they ought to assimi-

late or be authentic, whether to reject traditional beliefs in favor of a German or at least universalistic worldview to enable a smooth integration, or be true to their Jewish heritage. Both options derived from the pressures exerted on Jews by the paradox inherent in the political culture of the Weimar Republic. The Republic was essentially liberal and required of the Jews adaptation to modernity, while the nationalist right in Weimar Germany constantly accused the Jews of infecting German culture with liberal in-authenticity, blaming them for the democratization and atomization of society. Jews were thus pressured into adopting German and liberal values, and yet at the same time the anti-republican and anti-Semitic Right denounced their liberal behavior as "parasitic", admonishing them to remain true to their authentic nature. German Jews saw Spinoza as an example of the reconciliation of these two poles. His philosophy was praised as groundbreaking for Enlightenment values like rationalism, tolerance and indifference to religious truths. The way Spinoza led his life and devoted it entirely to his thought, however, was also praised as a perfect example of the value of authenticity. Jews thus used Spinoza to show that such Enlightenment and Romantic values could go hand in hand.

As Spinoza was a figure from post-biblical Jewish history, the Jewish admiration of Spinoza contributed to the well-researched[85] Jewish preoccupation with critical history based upon the "Wissenschaft des Judenthums" (Science of Judaism) tradition of the post-emancipation era. At the same time Spinoza was a favorite subject of Weimar Jewish intellectuals who embodied the rebellion against the historicist interest typical of emancipationist Jewry in favor of an anti-historicist and even messianic worldview (described by historians like Rabinbach, Aschheim and Myers).[86] The fourth chapter will therefore deal with the way Spinoza was positioned in debates about the historical destiny of Jews and the world in general. We will see how both the historical fact of Spinoza's presence during the messianic fever surrounding the false messiah Shabbtai Zevi in Jewish Amsterdam of the 1760's was used to come to terms with the Jewish messianic tradition in the context of

[85] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Wagenbach, 1989); Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

[86] Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*; Aschheim, "German Jews Beyond Bildung and Liberalism"; David N. Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

modern Germany and how Spinoza was compared to Jesus, and made into a messianic figure beyond Judaism and Christianity. Although Jews at that time were secularizing rapidly, the increase of threats to their social position made a return to messianic dreams attractive. The study of these interpretations of Spinoza show how the admiration of Spinoza finally united Germany Jewry on this third level by reconciling historicist and messianic trends in Weimar Jewish culture.

In the fifth chapter we will meet the exceptions to the rule. Here, those persons – some orthodox Jews, but not all – who did not join in celebrating Spinoza and regretted that Spinoza had won the hearts of so many of their coreligionists, will be discussed. Some of them believed it to be their duty to fiercely oppose the celebration of Spinoza. We will look at what arguments led them to do so, and how these arguments had fit in the wider debates among Jews in Weimar Germany. The sixth chapter will draw conclusions on the nature of the "*Signatur der Zeit*" and answer the question of what it was in Weimar Jewish culture that made Jews so receptive to Spinoza. Some final thoughts will be devoted in this chapter as well to Spinoza himself and to the way his use of double meanings and contradictions made him a particularly interesting figure to Weimar Jews.

The uniqueness of the Weimar Republic consists in the fact that it embodied the best and the worst of the modern liberal state. Its constitution protected equal rights, its politics were cosmopolitan rather than aggressive and it saw booming culture and economics. At the same time, it was defenseless against its internal enemies, and saw harsh capitalism, decadence and economic depression. As a result, the German experiment with a liberal democratic state eventually produced a ferocious anti-liberalism. Since Jews – rightly or not – were identified with the Weimar Republic, this anti-liberalism turned against them. The individual issues that will be discussed in this book should therefore be understood as emanating from the general question facing Weimar Jews: whether to continue Jewish attitudes of the emancipation era based upon this liberalism or comply with the anti-liberalist trend and break with them. The historians of Weimar Jewry have stressed both aspects. George Mosse has described the German Jews as the last guardians of the liberalism of the republic, while Michael Brenner and others have stressed anti-liberal trends in the Weimar Jewish Renaissance. The Jewish popularity of Spinoza shows that Jews sought to unite both these elements. Spinoza's thought and life exem-

plified liberalism, but it also stood for many values that critics of the Weimar Republic believed liberalism destroyed. Admiring Spinoza signaled that liberalism and modernity would not disrupt such cherished values but that a "Spinozist alternative" existed beyond liberalism and anti-liberalism, which combined the belief in integration and emancipation with a sense of community, authenticity and respect for history. By celebrating Spinoza, Jews could simultaneously be proud of their Judaism and of the German homeland. They could assimilate and, at the same time, argue that this did not make them inauthentic. Finally, German Jews could believe that historical progress would put an end to their divine punishment of exile, and that they could still hope for redemption.

CHAPTER TWO

JEW AND GERMAN

"Können Rassen einander Verstehen?" (Can Races Understand Each Other?)[1] This was the opening headline used by the *CV-Zeitung* for one of its issues in 1925. The reason this leading Jewish newspaper asked the question was its belief that it was a concise summary of one of the most important problems Jews in Weimar Germany needed to deal with: To what degree could Jews hope to participate in, cooperate with, and belong to the German nation? According to the non-Jewish author of the article, the biologist and philosopher Hans Driesch, the answer was simple: if races could understand each other, there was a basis for cooperation; if races could not understand each other, there was no such basis. In the former case, the project of assimilation and emancipation could be a success. In the latter, this whole project had to be abandoned and, if the Jewish condition was to be improved, replaced by another project based on the realization that races could not understand each other. A contemporary reader might smile at the naivety of the racialist thinking that seemed to underlie such a question. Yet, for all its racialism, the example of a major Jewish newspaper headlining its front page in such a way clearly illustrates the urgency of the question.

At the time of the publication of this article, this question had occupied German Jews since the late 18th century when Enlightened spirits had spread the idea that the walls of the Ghetto, dividing Christians and Jews, needed to be torn down. From then on, German Jewish history had been marked by steps to the realization of the ideal of German Jewish mutual understanding, but also drawbacks. Jews had gained more rights, with the conquest of the Napoleontic troops, but often lost such rights again with Napoleon's defeat and the restoration of the German princely states. Only in 1871, with the establishment of the German Empire, were all German Jews finally given full equal

[1] Hans Driesch, "Können Rassen einander Verstehen?", *C.V.-Zeitung* iv, no. 41 (1925).

rights. In the course of the nineteenth century the process of Jewish emancipation had provoked several waves of anti-Jewish sentiment, and even riots. Jews were constantly required to attest to their loyalty to the German state, as a condition of their acceptance as equal citizens. And this led to much internal Jewish debate on how far Jews should, could, and needed to go in becoming Germans. Should they compromise on their Judaism, to be better Germans, or were they to take pride in their Judaism at the expense of their loyalty to Germany? All these questions depended on the question whether there was a common ground upon which Jews and Christian Germans could meet. At first these questions were debated in the field of religion, which made the issue one of conversion: Did Jews need to become Christians to earn their equal treatment? Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, race became part of the equation and and this brought with it the new problem whether Jews, even baptized ones, could ever become German at all.

By the end of the First World War, there existed among the non-religious-orthodox Jews of Weimar Germany a whole spectrum of ideological positions on their social status, which could all be interpreted as answers to these problems. To begin, there were radical universalist Jews, such as communistst, socialists or liberals, who believed Germany and all other nations to primarily consist of equal members of humanity. These were Jews that could write, like the socialist Jew Rosa Luxemburg: "I have no corner in my heart for the Ghetto: I feel at home in the entire world wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears."[2] These Jews would have answered the question of whether or not races could understand each other with a firm "Yes!" For them, all human beings could understand each other, which implicitly meant that races could understand each other. Their voice is somewhat lacking in the Jewish press, as the whole idea of a Jewish press did not make sense to them. They did not want to emphasize their Jewishness, rarely wrote about it, and, if they did, it was usually with reluctance.

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[2] Mendels-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World; a Documentary History*, 262. In the same letter (to Mathilda Wurm) in which Luxemburg made this statement she also wrote: "at least make a point of reading *good* books, not *kitsch* as the Spinoza novel you have just sent me. Why do you come with your particular Jewish sorrows?" ———, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World; a Documentary History*, 261. Apparently, Luxemburg associated Spinoza with "particular Jewish sorrows."

However, not all the Jews with universalist ideals adopted such a radical position; among them, there also was a large group of "integrationists". These integrationist Jews believed that even though they were Jews, they were justified in considering Germany as their homeland. As such, they expected non-Jewish Germans to embrace them as fellow Germans, but this also implied that Jews, on their side, had a responsibility toward the German nation and that they had to show their loyalty to it. As a consequence, there were integrationists who completely focused on their being German, and became fierce propagators of German nationalism. One example is Jewish theatre expert Julius Bab, who mused: "Ich steh und fall mit Deutschland, das ich bin." (I stand and fall with Germany, which I am).[3]

Yet another group of integrationists took a less assimilationist position on the matter. These Jews considered themselves German, but believed in a universalist ideal that national differences could be bridged and, therefore, saw no contradiction between their adherence to Germany and their Jewish identity. Often, such an argument was justified with the belief that, in spite of their differences, Germans and Jews formed a kind of mystical unit, not two distinct nations. In later discussions on Weimar Jewry, this principle is often referred to as the principle of German Jewish symbiosis.[4] There were many ways in which Weimar Jews defined this symbiosis, some of them emphasizing the German element in this unity, and others the Jewish element. Good examples of the former were the philosophical ideas of Hermann Cohen, which he formulated at the end of the Imperial era and remained very influential in Weimar Germany. Cohen, of the neo-Kantian school of philosophy, attempted to draw attention to similarities between Kant's philosophy and Judaism. Such similarities convinced him of the fact that "der jüdische Stamm erst in dem deutschen Volke wieder ein universales Kulturleben entfaltet" (the Jewish tribe unfolds, only in the German people, again a universal cultural life).[5] Accordingly, all Jews (even non-German Jews!) were connected intimately to the German people. The *Centralverein deutscher*

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[3] Julius Bab, as quoted in: Stefanie Oswalt, "Julius Bab", in *Metzler Lexikon der deutsch-jüdischen Literatur*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000).

[4] Enzo Traverso, *The Jews & Germany; From the "Judeo-German Symbiosis" to the Memory of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Weissbort (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 11–22.

[5] Hermann Cohen, "Ein Bekenntnis in der Judenfrage", in *Hermann Cohens jüdische Schriften* (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924), 79.

Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, on the other hand, was more balanced. Indeed, when this integrationist organization founded a publishing house, it decided to name it after Philo Judaeus of Alexandria who, in Antiquity, merged Jewish and Hellenic cultures.[6] Again, giving the publishing house such a name entailed faith in the symbiosis between Jewish and German cultures in Weimar. A strong emphasis on the Jewish element can also be perceived in Rosenzweig's metaphor of Germany as a *Zweistromenland*. With this metaphor, Rosenzweig suggested that, like in Mesopotamia where the Euphrates and the Tigris gave birth to civilization, in Germany, the Jewish and the German streams jointly nourished a common culture. However, there were limits to the universalism of this position; it presumed equality between Jews and Germans, but it also often assumed the superiority of the unified German people over foreigners both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Thus the integrationist positions, even though they always supposed a certain degree of universalism to bridge the gap between the Jewish and the German race could lead to strong nationalist feelings, when it came to attesting loyalty to the German fatherland. This became evident with the outbreak of the First World War. Two days after Germany had declared war, all the German synagogues were full for a special service in which Jews prayed for their German Fatherland and sung patriotic songs.[7] Even one of the key figures of the Jewish Renaissance, Martin Buber, wrote, "Für jeden, der in dieser Zeit sich aufsparen will, gilt das Wort des Evangelium Johannis: 'Wer sein Leben liebt, wird es verlieren'" (For everyone who wants to spare himself in this era, the word of the gospel of John applies: "who loves his life, will lose it").[8] A louder cry to express Jewish loyalty to German but also Christian society can hardly be imagined. Here the father of a Jewish Renaissance paired a call to martyrdom with a quotation from the New Testament. It fell not on deaf ears. In subsequent years many Jews indeed paid with their life for their integrationism when they died in the trenches of the First World War, fighting for the German Emperor.

Somehow, the mainstream of Weimar Jewry held on to this optimistic view of the possibility of German Jewish unity. However, in

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[6] Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (New Brunswick: Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 100.

[7] Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *Deutsch-jüdische geschichte in der Neuzeit, Aufbruch und Zerstörung*.

[8] Martin Buber as quoted in ibid., 17.

opposition to this universalist movement, there also existed a smaller band of Jews who opposed the idea of German Jews merging into German society. These people did not assume that Germans and Jews – in the language of the *CV-Zeitung*, "races" – could truly understand each other; these Jews took pride in their Jewishness. They believed that Jews should seek their partners only among other Jews, even at the risk of being accused of disloyalty to Germany. As the Zionist Theodor Lessing wrote in his famous book on Jewish self-hatred: "wir sind verschieden und müssen verschieden bleiben" (we are different, and must stay different).[9]

Whereas the radical universalist and integrationist positions originated in the relatively quiet waters of the German Empire, where anti-Semitism seemed a marginal phenomenon and complete Jewish participation in German society only a matter of time, this separatism flourished in the wake of hyper-nationalist storms that came with the First World War. It was accompanied by a more political and popular kind of anti-Semitism, which indicated to many Jews that anti-Semitism was there to stay. This position led to the establishment of different Jewish cultural and political movements and organizations. The cultural organizations aimed at the revival of Hebrew, such as *Beth Am Iwri*; at Jewish adult education, such as the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*; or even at the creation of Jewish sporting organizations, such as the Jewish Gymnastics organization *Bar Kochba*. The political organizations aimed at the establishment of an independent Jewish state. The most important Jewish separatist political movement was Zionism, which aimed at the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine.

The existence of a spectrum between universalism and separatism had, to some degree, always been part of the Jewish process of emancipation, but the divisions had become particularly sharp with the increase in nationalist and anti-Semitic sentiments, and the rise of National Socialism. The more Germans wanted to exclude Jews from the German nation, the more acute became the need for Jews to take a position on the matter. This was clearest when it came to the question of how to fight anti-Semitism. The integrationists believed the best strategy to follow was to show Germans that there was nothing wrong with Jews, and to profess their German patriotism, for instance,

[9] Theodor Lessing, *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930), 11.

by taking pride in being veterans of the First World War. This, integrationists believed, would show Germans their value as German citizens. Separatist Jews, on the other hand, strongly objected to the integrationist point of view, and rejected it as naive. In their eyes, anti-Semitism could not be fought with attempts by Jews to prove their loyalty to Germany. They dismissed as naive fiction the beliefs that Enlightenment had put an end to the Jewish condition of pariah, and that progress would make all remaining manifestations of the hatred of Jews disappear. Separatists were, therefore, convinced that the dream of an inner bond connecting Germans and Jews was bound to end in disillusion. In their view, it had to be acknowledged that anti-Semitism would never disappear, and that Jews were better off stressing differences between them and the nation(s) they lived in, rather than their similarities with it.

As a consequence, German Jews in Weimar Germany were constantly involved in fierce debates about these issues. Integrationists were extremely unhappy with Zionists, whose open disloyalty to Germany they thought provided ammunition to anti-Semites, and rendered impossible attempts to show that Jews could also be loyal Germans. Zionists, on the other hand, believed that attempts to integrate blinded Jews to the danger of anti-Semitism.

Debates between universalists and separatists reflected a social aspect of the general tension that existed in Weimar Jewish culture between the liberalist culture of the original *Bildungsideal* and the anti-liberalist rebellion. The universalist ideal that races could understand each other, that there was a basis for the integration of Jews in German society, was a modern racialist phrasing of the ideology of emancipation, as it had developed in the nineteenth century. The separatist belief that races could not understand each other was a typical consequence of the rebellion against such universalism.

One reason why the Spinoza celebrations are worth investigating is that they reveal a certain position on these social issues; these celebrations were a form of collective remembering with social meaning. Ever since Maurice Halbwachs wrote about the existence of collective memory there has been an awareness of the social significance of memory.[10] Although Halbwachs' proposition that there exists such a thing as a collective memory (with its own ontological status and independent

[10] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*.

from individual memory) is now controversial, the assumption that social groups like families, tribes, nations or classes generate a "social memory" shared by the members of these groups has become generally accepted.[11] Social memory, however, does not come into existence by itself; there needs to be communication about the memory to make it social. As James Fentress and Chris Wickham stated, individual memory becomes social "by talking about it."[12] This is how the Spinoza celebrations gained social meaning. Celebrating Spinoza in this context is therefore an outstanding example of the making of social memory through an act of "talking about" individual memory.

We cannot, however, simply use the social meaning of the Spinoza celebrations as an example of the construction of a Jewish social memory. Many German Jews, even if they did write in or read the Jewish press, did everything they could to be considered as fully German. As a consequence, the message that Jews were fully German was the main message of a number of important German Jewish newspapers. In opposition, other German Jews believed Jews had to focus more on their Jewish background and accept the risks of not being considered true Germans for that. They too made Spinoza their hero. In fact the Spinoza celebrations had a role in conveying both messages. This meant that they could have been used not simply for the construction of a Jewish social memory, but also for the construction of a German social memory in which both Jews and Germans participated.

This meant that if celebrating Spinoza was an example of "talking about" memory to make memory collective, the question of who was "talked about" *with whom* in the course of the Spinoza celebrations, was open for debate. While united in their celebration of Spinoza, German Jews differed on the question of for which group the celebrations were intended. Were they only meant for Jews, or for both Germans and Jews? In another manner of speaking: there was a broad consensus on the fact that Spinoza deserved a party, but there was strong disagreement on who was to be invited.

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[11] As Paul Connerton writes: "it is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory" Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3. See also: John R. Gillis, ed. *Commemorations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[12] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", *New German Critique* 65, no. Spring-Summer (1995): 126; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, ix–x.

To this, we may add that the figure of Spinoza made these questions all the more inescapable. Some of the most important aspects of the figure of Spinoza relate to issues of social demarcation. Spinoza had been brought up in the exclusiveness of a Jewish environment, but, in his case, it was a Jewish environment that remembered well the Marrano experience of living simultaneously within different social groups. The *Herem* had ostracized Spinoza from the Jewish community, and ever since that excommunication Spinoza had operated within a non-Jewish environment. Despite his Jewish background, he initially acquired fame (and infamy) within the non-Jewish world, and he significantly influenced non-Jewish philosophy. Any celebration of Spinoza in a Jewish context needed to come to terms with these facts. This raised the questions of whether Spinoza should be celebrated as a Jew or a non-Jew. Should he be celebrated for his break with Judaism, or despite this break? Was the *Herem* a mistake or had it been justified? Could Jews claim the non-Jewish fame of Spinoza as their own? Examining the Spinoza celebrations, then, offers an interesting perspective both on how German Jewry defined the borders of its social allegiances and on the way Spinoza simultaneously helped transcend them.

Spinoza's Celebrators

To begin, Spinoza was widely celebrated in newspapers of the integrationist press, and one of the most emphatic articles celebrating Spinoza appeared in *Der Schild*, an important Jewish newspaper with an umistakable German nationalist signature. It was the organ of the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* (RjF). In the spirit of Jewish War veterans, the paper constantly fought to raise awareness about the loyalty of German Jews to the German nation, battling against those who held that Jews were an alien element in Germany. It is remarkable that a newspaper run by war veterans was so interested in a seventeenth century philosopher. Not only did the article in question cover the front-, second- and part of the third page of this edition of the newspaper, but the editor also emphasized the importance of the article by calling the "comrades" to distribute this Spinoza issue as widely as possible.[13] Other integrationist newspapers also paid attention to

[13] Jakob Fromer, "Spinozas Weltanschauung bildlich dargestellt", *Der Schild, Zeitschrift des Reichsbundes jüdischer Frontsoldaten* 6, no. 11 (1927).

Spinoza, and there were supplements devoted to Spinoza in both the *CV-Zeitung* and *der Morgen*, newspapers published by the integrationist *CV-Verein*. Finding separatists newspapers celebrating Spinoza is just as easy. For example, Spinoza was also celebrated in *Die Jüdische Zeitung für Ostdeutschland*, which saw itself as the organ of "positiv-aufrechtes Judentum" (positive-upright Judaism), and was sympathetic to the Zionist movement. The main Zionist newspaper in Germany, the *Jüdische Rundschau*, also paid attention to the Spinoza celebrations, publishing a number of articles, both in 1927 and 1932. Another example of the celebration of Spinoza by separatist German Jews were the Spinoza lectures organized by the Hebrew language society *Beth Am Iwri*, where Jewish distinctiveness rather than German patriotism was emphasized.

Therefore, if we want to come to a better understanding of the social message of the Spinoza celebrations, we cannot limit ourselves to investigating *who* celebrated Spinoza. We also need to see *how* Spinoza was celebrated. This means that we need to read and analyze the articles written in celebration of Spinoza. To be exact, we have to investigate how the celebration of Spinoza was justified in these articles, what image of Spinoza was created by their authors, and the reasons for which Spinoza was praised and deemed worthy of celebration. We will do so by identifying a number of topics in the German Jewish reception of Spinoza that appeared recurrently in articles that celebrated Spinoza. These topics are the celebration of Spinoza for his influence on German culture; his connectedness to German culture; his connectedness to Jewish culture; and Spinoza's own Jewishness.

Spinoza's German Resonance

The CV-Zeitung answered its question "*können Rassen einander Verstehen?*" (Can Races Understand Each Other?) with the help of Spinoza. Driesch reasoned that the Jewish Spinoza had been of great influence to all-German thinkers such as Goethe, Schelling and Haeckel. If a Jew like Spinoza could exert influence on such important German figures, surely, Driesch argued, Jews and Germans must at least be able to understand each other. In this sense, Spinoza served for the *CV-Zeitung* to represent the possibility of mutual understanding between non-Jewish and Jewish Germans. In the same manner, Spinoza's influence on important German cultural icons was constantly

invoked in articles celebrating Spinoza's anniversaries. The historical basis for such an argument, was that Germany had experienced a true Spinoza revival in the wake of the *Pantheismusstreit* at the end of the eighteenth century, when the father of German Enlightenment, Lessing, had been posthumously accused of being a secret Spinozist. Those wishing to defend Lessing had done so not by denying this accusation, but by arguing that there was nothing wrong with being a Spinozist. A remarkable number of the late German *Aufklärer* and early romanticists (including Goethe, Herder, Schellling, Hegel and Schleiermacher) who had professed their admiration for Spinoza had done so in the context of the Spinoza revival that had emanated from this intellectual debate on Spinoza. This was also the classical era of the German *Dichter und Denker*. The theory that Spinoza had been of great influence in this era, and that he was perhaps even responsible for it, was an important motivation for many Jews to celebrate the philosopher.

The topic of Spinoza's influence on German culture had been a favorite subject for investigation by German Jews throughout the era of their emancipation.[14] In fact, the origins of this topic can be traced back to both the very beginning of the Jewish reception of Spinoza, and the very beginning of Jewish emancipation in Germany. Indeed, the first instance of a positive Jewish reception of Spinoza since his ban was the pointing out of his significance for German philosophy. This instance can be found in Moses Mendelssohn's *Philosophische Gespräche*, which, incidentally, was also the first work the father of Jewish emancipation wrote in German. This pioneering Jewish reception of Spinoza immediately focused on Spinoza's significance for German thought. In an age that considered Spinoza a dangerous and evil heretic, Mendelssohn argued that Spinoza influenced Leibniz, then, the most important figure in the history of German philosophy. According to Mendelssohn, Leibniz's central philosophical concept of pre-established harmony was taken from Spinoza. Mendelssohn did not go so far as to commit himself to Spinozism, but he did argue that Spinoza had been an essential link in the process of philosophical progress: "Er war ein Opfer für den menschlichen Verstand; allein ein Opfer, das mit Blumen gezieret zu werden verdient, ohne ihn hätte die

[14] Manfred Walther, "Was/Is Spinoza a Jewish Philosopher? Spinoza in the struggle for a Modern Jewish cultural Identity in Germany: A Meta-Reflection", *Studia Spinozana* 13, no. 1997 (1997). Walther identifies some of the same themes in the history of the Jewish reception of Spinoza as are dealt with here.

Weltweisheit ihre Grenzen nimmermehr so weit ausdehnen können" (He was a sacrifice for human reason; a sacrifice, though, that deserves to be adorned with flowers; without him, worldly wisdom would have never been able to expand its borders as far as it did).[15] By emphasizing the Spinozism of Leibniz, Mendelssohn put Spinoza at the basis of the entire modern German philosophical tradition. Later, towards the end of the nineteenth- and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the topic of Spinoza's influence on German culture became a favorite subject for research, to the point that the Austrian Jewish weekly *Dr. Bloch's Oesterreichische Wochenschrift* held a competition to determine the best book on the subject of Spinoza's influence on German culture.[16] The competition was won by the German-born rabbi Max Grunwald. Interestingly, two other rabbis, Leo Baeck and Moses Krakauer, also wrote books on the subject.[17]

The theme of Spinoza's German reception turned out to be one of the favorite topics of the Spinoza celebrations. For instance, Max Grunwald and Leo Baeck both contributed to the celebrations with articles based on older studies they made on the subject.[18] Further, their earlier research influenced others, and a substantial part of the great exhibition on Spinoza held in the library of the Berlin Jewish community was devoted to the topic of Spinoza's influence on German culture. This exhibition revealed the Spinozism of a range of illustrious Germans, such as Frederick the Great, Hegel, Bismarck and Nietzsche. On display, were copies of Spinoza's works that were owned by Goethe, Leibniz and Schopenhauer; excerpts Goethe himself had copied from the *Ethica*; and a study on Spinoza written by Charlotte von Stein, based on notes from a lecture by Goethe. Many of the articles that appeared in the Jewish press during the Spinoza celebrations of 1927

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[15] Moses Mendelssohn, "Philosophische Gespräche", in *Moses Mendelssohn, Schriften zur Philosophie und Ästhetik*, ed. Fritz Bamberger, *Moses Mendelssohn, Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* (Stuttgart: 1971), 14.

[16] "Dr. Moriz Rappaportische Stiftung für Preisausschreibungen", *Dr. Bloch's Oesterreichische Wochenschrift. Centralorgan für die gesammten Interessen des Judenthums*, 15-5-1893 (1893).

[17] Moses Krakauer, *Zur Geschichte des Spinozismus in Deutschland waehrend der ersten Haelfte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Breslau 1881); Leo Baeck, *Spinozas erste Einwirkungen auf Deutschland* (1895); "Dr. Moriz Rappaportische Stiftung für Preisausschreibungen".

[18] L. Baeck, "Sein deutsches Echo", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 34, no. 49 (1932); Max Grunwald, "Spinoza's Wirkung Zu seinem 300. Geburtstage am 24 November", *Nürnberg-Fürther Isr. Gemeindeblatt* 12, no. 9 (1932).

and 1932 also discussed how "die besten Geister Deutschlands von ihm zeugen" (the best minds of Germany attest for him).[19] Sometimes, Spinoza was simply celebrated with the publication of quotations by German thinkers inspired by Spinoza.[20]

Such articles usually drew from a limited but convincing repertoire of Spinoza-quotations by the greatest of German minds. These included Hegel, who had written, "Wenn man anfängt mit philosophieren, muß man zuerst Spinozist sein. Die Seele muß sich baden in diesem Äther der einen Substanz" (When one begins to philosophize, one must first be a Spinozist. The soul needs to bath in the ether of that one substance), Novalis, who had called Spinoza a "gotttrunkender Mensch" (a man drunk with God), Schleiermacher, who wrote "voller Religion war er und voll Heiligen Geistes" (he was full of religion and of full of the holy spirit), and Nietzsche who had claimed to have surprised himself by discovering in Spinoza a predecessor. Five such topics in the German Jewish Spinoza reception deserve special attention, as they are particularly illuminating: These are, the popularity of the anecdote that Spinoza had once been offered and refused a Chair at the University of Heidelberg, Goethe's interest in Spinoza, Bismarck's interest in Spinoza, the connection made between Rembrandt and Spinoza, and Leibniz' visit to Spinoza.

Heidelberg

In February 1673, Spinoza was asked (on behalf of Karl Ludwig, Elector of Palatine, a German Imperial State) to accept a regular Professorship of Philosophy at the university of Heidelberg. Although Spinoza kindly refused the offer,[21] the invitation played on the imagination of many integrationist German Jews. This was keenly observed by the anti-integrationist Scholem. In a polemical article against the belief in the possibility of such a symbiosis he pointed to the significance of exactly this anecdote for its symbolic meaning as the beginning of harmonious German Jewish relations, writing: "I did not understand [the] thesis, according to which, from the invitation of Spinoza to the

[19] Freudenthal, "Spinoza – Pestalozzi – Beethoven".
[20] "Spinoza", *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Gemeinde Frankfurt am Main* 5, no. 6 (1927).
[21] Nadler, *Spinoza a Life*, 311–314; Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 887.

University of Heidelberg to the appointment of Rathenau as foreign minister, attempts were undertaken at a genuine integration, which [would be] "much more" than emancipation and assimilation. Is that not pure fantasy?'[22] To Scholem, it had been absurd to attribute such relevance to Spinoza's invitation to Heidelberg, but this quotation also shows that he recognized that it was given such relevance. Indeed, Scholem's assertion that this story was important for German Jewry is widely confirmed in the articles that were published to mark the Spinoza celebrations. Many authors mentioned the anecdote in their articles celebrating Spinoza, and at least three Jewish newspapers limited their celebration of Spinoza to the publication of his correspondence on the matter.[23]

The appeal of this story may be explained by the fact that, throughout the era of emancipation, Jews struggled to be nominated as professors in German universities, even after their legal emancipation. Almost all who managed to acquire a professorship had paid the price of baptism, and evens so it had proven a particularly hard struggle for Jews to obtain professorships in the humanities. At the time of Weimar Germany, Jewish professors existed, and some like Hermann Cohen, were highly respected, and contributed greatly to their disciplines, but even then many Jewish academics were confronted with anti-Semitic opposition to their positions at universities. Here, however, was an example from the seventeenth century where a Jew was not only allowed, but *invited* to become a professor in Germany. This showed not only that there had been German interest in Spinoza during his lifetime, but also that Germany had once been tolerant towards Jews.[24] Spinoza's invitation to Heidelberg could even be a source of German patriotism.

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[22] Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, 70.

[23] "Spinoza und die Heidelberger Universität", *Gemeindezeitung für die israelitischen Gemeinden Würtembergs* ix, no. 17, Beilage (1932); "Zum 300. Geburtstag Spinozas. Eine Professur in Heidelberg", *Allgemeines Jüdisches Familienblatt, Leipzige jüdische Familienblatt * Leipziger jüdische Zeitung, Wochenblatt für die Gesamten Interessen des Judentums* 13, no. 39 (1932); "Zum 300. Geburtstage Spinozas", *Zentralblatt für die Israeliten Hessens, unabhängige jüdische Monatsschrift* 1, no. 1 (1932). "Zum 300. Geburtstag Spinozas. Eine Professur in Heidelberg"; Gertrud Baumer-Berlin, "Der Gedanke der Toleranz in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte", *Blätter des Jüdischen Frauenbundes* 1, no. 5 (1924). Wilhelm Löwinger, "Spinoza: anläßlich der 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages 21. Februar 1677", *Menorah: Jüdisches Familienblatt für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur* V, no. 2 (1927); For an earlier example, see: Fritz Mauthner, *Spinoza Ein Umriß seines Lebens und Wirkens* (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1921), 48.

[24] Baumer-Berlin, "Der Gedanke der Toleranz in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte".

As Josef Meisl wrote in the newspaper of the Berlin Jewish community: "Deutschland darf wohl für sich einen besonderen Platz in der Geschichte des Spinozismus beanspruchen. Die einzige europäische Universität, die Spinoza berufen hat, war die Heidelberger." (Germany deserves to credit itself a special place in the history of Spinozism. The only European University to have invited Spinoza, was that of Heidelberg).[25] The newspapers publishing such articles accorded the celebrations a universalistic meaning by celebrating Spinoza in such a way. As the influence of a Jew like Spinoza on German thinkers and on the German University of Heidelberg showed that differences between Jews and Germans could be bridged.

Sometimes, the emphasis on Spinoza's influence on German culture was so strong that the universalism inherent in the celebrations resulted in an outright defense of German nationalist thought. This may better be understood when looking at the most outstanding example of Spinoza's alleged influence of German culture; his relation to Goethe.

"No Spinoza Without Goethe"

Already in the nineteenth century, Heinrich Heine reflected on Goethe's importance for the German appreciation of Spinoza, writing: "Die Lehre des Spinoza […] umflattert uns als goethesches Lied" (The teaching of Spinzoa flutters around us like a Goethian song).[26] The same sentence could apply to much of the Jewish reception of Spinoza in the Weimar era. In articles about the Spinoza celebrations, Goethe's Spinozism took a central place in the abundance of attention regarding the influence of Spinoza on German culture. Only a few of these articles did not mention Goethe's debt to Spinoza, and most articles began or finished with a quote by Goethe on Spinoza that underscored the theory that Goethe had been an ardent Spinozist.[27] At times, the admiration for Goethe almost overshadowed the celebration of Spinoza. For example, the article published by the *Mitteilungen der*

[25] Meisl, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung der Gemeindebibliothek".

[26] Manfred Windfuhr, ed. *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland; Die Romantische Schule Text*, 16 vols., vol. 8/1, Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke / Heinrich Heine (Duesseldorf: Hoffmann und Campe, 1979), 102.

[27] Moritz Spanier, "Zum 250. Todestag Spinozas", *Jüdisches Wochenblatt für Magdeburg und Umgebung* 2, no. 11 (1927); bm, "Spinozas Weltbild zu seinem 300. Geburtstag", *Jüdische Zeitung (jüdische Volkszeitung)* 39, no. 48 (1932).

Jüdischen Reformgemeinde zu Berlin on the occasion of the Spinoza celebrations is titled "*Goethes Stellung zur Religion*". This article appeared prominently on the first three pages of the November 1932 issue of the newspaper, and it was accompanied by an explicit remark that it was meant as a contribution to the 300th celebration of Spinoza's birthday. The article, however, only briefly deals with Spinoza. The editors of the newspaper took it as self-evident that an article about Goethe would automatically celebrate Spinoza.

In other cases, it seemed that the beauty of Spinoza could only be appreciated through Goethe's mediation. The *Jüdische Zeitung*, for example, held that the most beautiful aspect of Spinoza's metaphysics was "its rebirth in Goethe's pantheistic poetry."[28] Sometimes, however, it also happened that Goethe and Spinoza were simply associated with each other. One author argued that Goethe and Spinoza shared the same kind of eyes.[29] Others pointed out the coincidence of their jubilees, as Goethe died in 1832. Therefore, 1932 was a Goethe Year as well as a Spinoza Year. This provided an opportunity to celebrate these two figures at the same time. Consequently, the Berlin section of the Jewish fraternal organization *Bne Bris* published a short article on Spinoza by Leo Baeck, titled "*im Goethe und Spinozajahr*", together with a few quotations from Goethe and a short quote from Spinoza.[30] At the end of the double jubilee year of 1932, the same newspaper published, side by side, portraits of Spinoza and Goethe to bid them farewell together. Examples such as these suggest that, without Goethe, there would hardly have been a reason to celebrate Spinoza. As Max Grunwald wrote: "Ohne Spinoza kein Goethe. Ohne Goethe kein Spinoza" (Without Spinoza, no Goethe. Without Goethe, no Spinoza).[31]

We need to take into account Goethe's significance in Weimar Germany to appreciate the disproportionate interest in Spinoza's influence on Goethe. To many, the beauty of his literature and the profundity of his thoughts affirmed the potential of the German nation. Generations of German *Bildungsbürger* had read Goethe as an essential part of their education. He had become the focal point of the German

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[28] Bm, "Spinozas Weltbild zu seinem 300. Geburtstag".

[29] Max Grunwald, "Bismarck und Spinoza", *Frankfurter Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* 11, no. 3 (1932): 58.

[30] L. Baeck, "Im Goethe und Spinoza- Jahr", *Der Orden Bne Briss: Mitteilungen der großloge für Deutschland VIII U.O.B.B.*, no. 9 (1932).

[31] Max Grunwald, "Spinoza, aus einem Vortrage aus dem Jahre 1899 von Dr. Max Grunwald", *Die Wahrheit* XLIII, no. 9 (1927).

Kultur, in defense of which Germans fought and lost a world war, and he remained a source of national pride. Some historians have argued that the German love of Goethe amounted to nothing less than a substitute religion.[32] In any case, Goethe's importance for that era can hardly be exaggerated. The veneration of Goethe was also not limited to a single political view. Weimar was Goethe's birthplace, and the "Weimar Republic", therefore, referred to Goethe in its very name. As such, the Republic expressed the hope that Goethe's legacy would have the magical power to regenerate Germany. But this belief was not only held by liberal supporters of the Republic, but also by its nationalist enemies.[33] They too, looked to Goethe as a source of inspiration. For them, Goethe exemplified the superiority of the Germanic race, and they used him to support their feelings of Germanic superiority, which went hand in hand with their assaults on the Republic.[34]

The German nationalist right paired its belief in the superiority of the Germanic race to virulent anti-Semitism. That is why it was crucial for them to dissociate Goethe from Jews. As a result, a debate emerged in Weimar Germany on the topic of the relationship between Goethe and the Jews. Goethe had become an essential figure to the nationalist right, but its racist and anti-Semitic thinking made it difficult to admit Jewish influences on Goethe. A number of ultra-nationalist Germans, such as Victor Hehn, Houston Steward Chamberlain, and Max Maurenbecher argued that Goethe had never been willing to consider Jews as Germans.[35] Chamberlain made the most influential statement of this German nationalist position. In his to the National Socialists classic work *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*,[36] he defended the superiority of the Germanic race, and identified Jews as its main

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[32] Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism; Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 9,16.

[33] Frits Boterman, *Weimar revisited. Over het belang van cultuur in de moderne Duitse geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers UvA, 2004), 5–7.

[34] Houston Steward Chamberlain wrote that his biography of Goethe could serve as a remedy against the perversion of German culture that came as a result of losing the First World War. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Goethe* (München: Bruckmann, 1932).

[35] Max Maurenbecher, *Goethe und die Juden; Eine Zusammenstellung*, Deutschlands führende Männer und das Judentum (München: Mchn Dt. Volksverl, 1921); Victor Hehn, *Gedanken über Goethe* (Berlin: Gebrüder Borntraeger, 1909); Chamberlain, *Goethe*.

[36] Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, Volksausgabe*, 2 vols. (München: Bruckmann, 1909).

enemy. In 1912, he also wrote a lengthy biography of Goethe, which was reprinted for the fifth time in a special *Volksausgabe* (peoples edition) in the 1932 Goethe year.[37] There, he argued that Goethe was needed to restore the German nation, which, because of the Jews suffered from "systematische Vergiftung der Volksseele und Irreführung der Gebildeten" (systematic poisoning of the soul of the people and misleading of the cultured). Germans had been "verrückt gemacht", "ihrem besseren Selbst entführt", "ihres Deutschtums beraubt" (made crazy, their better selves abducted, robbed of their Germanness).[38] They could, however, still be called back to duty, regain their "Mannesstolz" (male-pride) and be taught that the highest form of *Kultur* was German. According to Chamberlain, Goethe was an immeasurable product of German greatness. As a consequence, Goethe's example was used to remind Germans they had been led astray from their true loyalties, and it could help them change the course Germany had taken. Thus, after the First World War, Chamberlain deemed the study of Goethe to be more pressing than ever, and he attributed particular urgency to the fifth edition of his book.[39]

From a Jewish perspective, this meant that Chamberlain recruited Goethe in his battle against Jews. After all, Chamberlain thought his *Goethe* could repair the losses Jews had inflicted upon Germany. This attack hurt especially since Goethe had always been an object of Jewish admiration. What was even more disturbing was that figures such as Chamberlain, Maurenbecher and Hehn had set out to demonstrate, with different citations of Goethe, that Goethe's own opinions of Jews were far from friendly.

For Chamberlain, Judaism was a matter of race, not faith. In order to sustain Goethe's disapproval of Judaism, Chamberlain had to disparage Goethe's relation with Spinoza who was, after all, of Jewish blood. As a result, Chamberlain came to a conclusion that was completely opposite to the idea that there was an affinity between the thought of Goethe and that of Spinoza. In *Goethe*, Chamberlain went to great lengths to demonstrate differences between the two thinkers. In his *Grundlagen*, he had already denounced Spinoza as a Jew by describing the *Ethica* as the "blutigste Ironisierung der Talmudmoral"

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[37] Chamberlain, *Goethe*.
[38] Chamberlain, *Goethe*, x.
[39] Ibid., xi.

(the bloodiest ironicizing of the ethics of the Talmud).[40] Chamberlain conceded Goethe's admission that he had been influenced by Spinoza, but he considered this just an episode in Goethe's "leidenschaftlich pulsierendem Geistesleben" (ardently vibrant spiritual life).[41] He also regretted that Goethe had been "hineingelockt" (lured) in Spinozism by his "in philosophischen Dingen so unzureichende" (in philosophical matters, so inadequate) friend Herder, and he was confident that Goethe would have realized his error if he had only listened to his anti-Spinozist friend Jacobi for a few hours.[42] To Chamberlain, the German *Kultur* Goethe represented was the complete opposite of what he saw as Spinoza's materialist Jewish philosophy. In a special footnote, he reinforced his point by writing on the distance he perceived between Spinoza's and Goethe's ideas: "Die astronomische Entfernungseinheit der Weite zwischen Sonne und Erde genügt nicht den Abstand auszudrücken." (The astronomical unit of distance between the Sun and Earth is not enough to express this distance).[43]

In this context, the Jewish hammering in of Spinoza's influence on Goethe obtained special meaning. It was not only inspired by love for Goethe's literary talents; it was also a fight over who had the right to appropriate Goethe. It was felt to be of the utmost importance to refute efforts by Chamberlain and others to completely dissociate Goethe and the *Kultur* he stood for from Judaism. Spinoza was a useful weapon in this battle, and those who wanted to do this could draw upon a number of historical facts. First of all, there was Goethe's personal testimony. In his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe acknowledged the influence Spinoza had exerted on him. There, he wrote that Spinoza had brought him rest from his emotions, and he argued that Spinoza stimulated his poetic soul.[44] In one of his letters, he wrote that he considered Spinoza "theissimum, ja christianissimum" (most divine, yes most Christian).[45] Utterances such as these opened the way for speculation about Spinozist influences on the rest of his work. It then became reasonable to argue that Spinoza's *Deus sive natura* stood behind Goethe's infatuation with nature, and

[40] ———, *Grundlagen*, 223.
[41] ———, *Goethe*, 709.
[42] Ibid., 129–130.
[43] Ibid., 324.
[44] Goethe, "Aus meinem Leben, Dichtung und Wahrheit", in *Goethes Werke* (Hamburg: Wegner, 1960), 35.
[45] Ibid., 599.

it became acceptable to argue that the desires of Goethe's Faust were Spinozist desires. Such interpretations were useful instruments in the fight against those who sought a confirmation of their anti-Semitism in Goethe and they explain the prominence of Goethe in the Jewish celebration of Spinoza.

We can then conclude that celebrating Spinoza by tracking his influence on Goethe was a highly political affair. Celebrating Spinoza for his influence on Goethe became a Jewish defense of the Jewish-friendliness of German culture. It was a typical attitude for Jews who believed Germany to be the place where they naturally belonged. If Goethe was anti-Semitic, their German culture, the culture they cherished, contributed to, and which was their home, would also be anti-Semitic. This clearly illustrates how the Jewish yearning for a symbiosis between non-Jewish Germans and German Jews could result in a celebration of Spinoza. The argument that Goethe's love for Spinoza refuted anti-Semitic allegations was well stated by the literary Jewish journal *Menorah* that celebrated Spinoza by writing that it regretted that the "ariomane dilettantische Schwätzer Chamberlain" (aryan-manic, dilletant chatterbox Chamberlain) had neglected the influence of Spinoza on Goethe.[46] The *C.V. Zeitung*, in response to Chamberlain approvingly citing Victor Hehn's opinion that the Jewish epoch had begun in 1832 when Goethe closed his eyes, wrote that it was actually Chamberlain who closed Goethe's eyes. After all, in his attempt to cleanse Goethe from Spinozist influences, Chamberlain denied Goethe his conversion to Spinozism.[47]

This was also the conclusion of an article in the issue of the *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung* celebrating the 1932 anniversary of Spinoza, but dated January 15th 1933, two weeks before Hitler's rise to power.[48] The article by Julius Michelson was entirely devoted to Goethe's relation to Spinoza and the Jews, which it argued, was of the warmest nature. Besides the usual quotations of Spinoza excerpts from Goethe's works and an enumeration of all of Goethe's Jewish friends, Michelson quoted a lecture by "Prof. Dr." Eugen Kühneman that had been held in the national theatre in Weimar. On that symbolic site, where the

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[46] Löwinger, "Spinoza: anläßlich der 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages 21. Februar 1677", 123.

[47] Arthur Cloesser, "Der geschundene Goethe", *C.V.-Zeitung* iv, no. 25 (1925).

[48] Julius Michelson, "Spinoza und unsere Zeit", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 34, no. 47 (1932).

Weimar constitution was signed, and opposite Riesser's famous statue of Goethe and Schiller, this philosopher from Breslau had argued that it was impossible to truly understand Goethe without recognizing the influence of Spinoza on his thought. In an obvious reference to the National-Socialists Michelson added that to enjoy true "Freude" (joy), one had to live in the spirit of the "Geiste" (minds) of these great men and not "im Ungeiste der modernen Jugend die mit tausend Klammern nach der Ungeistlichkeit greife" (in the anti-spirituality of modern youth, which clings with a thousand clamps to the rejection of spirituality). To counter those who would see in this sneer any treacherous cosmopolitanism, Michelson directly continued by emphasizing that both managed to combine their "weltumspannende Menschenliebe" (world-encompassing human love) with a patriotic love for their homelands. But in the end his entire argument was intended to fiercely reject, in the name of the true Goethe, those voices that tried to recruit Goethe for a German nationalism by arguing for a Goethe that resisted Spinoza and other Jews. He finished his article writing: "Alles, was mancher entartete Epigone in Bezug auf die Gesinnung und die Gedankengänge Goethes den Juden gegenüber in schlechtem Sinne auszudeuten bestrebt ist, kann mit Fug und Recht als Fälschung und eine Herabwürdigung des großen Genius Goethe gelten, den jetzt alle Kulturvölker feiern." (Everything, which some degenerated epigones are interested to negatively interpret concerning the disposition and thoughts of Goethe against the Jews, may rightly count as falsification and vilification of the great genius Goethe, who is presently celebrated by all cultured peoples).

It is also not surprising to find a much more reserved attitude to the alleged anti-Semitism of Goethe in the pages of the Zionist *Jüdische Rundschau*. Since Zionists did not dream of solidarity between German Jews and non-Jews, but of Jewish autonomy and independence, their *Jüdische Rundschau* worried a great deal less about Goethe's legacy. In an article on the Goethe celebrations[49] – which even this Zionist paper covered – the *Jüdische Rundschau* discussed the growing literature relating to Goethe and Jews. Like others, it dismissed Chamberlain's attempts to make Goethe a "breeding ground for *völkisch*-nationalist ideology" and, like others, it referred to Spinoza's influence on Goethe to show the absurdity of such an attempt. Yet, there was a different

[49] "Zum Goethe-Tag", *Jüdische Rundschau* 37, no. 22 (1932).

tone in this newspaper than in others. The *Jüdsiche Rundschau* also asserted that Zionists should not try to obscure the fact that Goethe approached Jews always as "ein neues Problem für sich" (a new problem in itself), with a clear "Fremdheitsgefühl" (feeling of alienation). The *Jüdische Rundschau* made it clear that Zionists did not look at Goethe as an example of German-Jewish friendship, even if they did find Chamberlain's ideas ridiculous. On the contrary, Goethe's *Fremdheitsgefühl* confirmed Zionist ideology, which presumed that Jews would be considered alien as long as they would not have an independent state.

"Patriae Inserviendo Consumor"

Goethe was not the only German cultural icon whose Spinozism gave a reason to celebrate Spinoza. Another intriguing example is Otto von Bismarck. Interest in Bismarck's Spinozism is rare in comparison with the abundance of attention paid to Goethe's. However, here and there, Bismarck was also remembered for his presumed Spinozism. This subject was dealt with in the Spinoza exhibition of the Berlin Jewish community in a special section devoted to "Spinoza in Deutschland" (Spinoza in Germany).[50] More importantly, Max Grunwald, one of the most prominent specialists on the subject of Spinoza's reception by Germans, chose to celebrate Spinoza by devoting an article, in the main newspaper of Frankfurt Jewry, on the Spinozism of this political German hero.[51]

Grunwald was a patriotic German-born rabbi, who lived in Vienna at the time of the Spinoza celebrations. In 1897, he published *Spinoza in Deutschland*, a book still regarded as a pioneering work on Spinoza's reception by Germans.[52] A confidence in good relations between Germans and Jews resonates in his memoirs written in 1951, even though, by then, he had witnessed the collapse of such relations and had escaped to Palestine, later Israel. This experience did not prevent him from describing with nostalgia how, during his childhood, "ein noch nicht vom modernen Judenhass angefressener Offizierstand" (an

[50] Rawidowicz, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung in Berlin".
[51] Grunwald, "Bismarck und Spinoza".
[52] It was reprinted in 1986.

officer-class, not yet infested with Jew-hatred) helped to make relations between Jews and Christians harmonious.[53] Nor did his experiences stop him from describing how his High School teacher was a philo-Semite, who reprimanded Jewish students who went to school during *Yom Kippur*.[54] His German patriotism even led him to political action. At the time of the plebiscite on Upper Silesia, in the aftermath of the First World War, he became a member of the *Oberschlessier Comitee* of *der Verband der Reichsdeutschen* (the Upper-Silesian committee of the union of German citizens) in Vienna. This organization contributed to the campaign to have Upper Silesia become part of Germany and not Poland. Grunwald motivated this political activity in a way typical of many integrationists, writing that, although he had been reluctant to enter into political matters, he found it necessary to oppose anti-Semites in Austria by showing that Jews also stood for the German cause.[55]

Grunwald's interest in Bismarck may be understood within the context of this German patriotism. Jewish admiration for the statesman, whose clever politics had unified Germany was not uncommon. Indeed, the *Kulturkampf*, Bismarck's fight against Catholics in the German Empire, made the Chancellor very popular among Jews, as the Catholic leaders Bismarck was fighting were opponents of Jewish emancipation.[56] Grunwald's admiration for Bismarck went even further and was also caused by his conviction that Bismarck exemplified the connectedness between Jews and Germans.[57]

Grunwald's article on Bismarck and Spinoza, then, was again an attempt to demonstrate the link between German and Jewish culture. According to Grunwald, the Jewish philosopher had been of great influence to Bismarck, and he went to great lengths to assert Bismarck's debt to Spinoza.[58] Grunwald underscored his arguments with

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[53] Max Grunwald, "80 Jahre Meines Lebens", in *Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People* (Jerusalem1951), 2.

[54] Ibid., 3.

[55] Ibid., 13.

[56] Albert S. Lindemann, *Esau's Tears, Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 122–123.

[57] Grunwald once met Bismarck personally. Grunwald, "80 Jahre Meines Lebens", 44–45.

[58] Here, Grunwald probably relies on: Mauthner, *Spinoza Ein Umriß seines Lebens und Wirkens*, 126n. Bismarck's Spinozism was also treated in the Berlin Spinoza exhibition of 1932: Rawidowicz, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung in Berlin". The theory of

much speculation. The only direct evidence Grunwald had for Spinoza's influence on Bismarck, was a letter by Bismarck where the Chancellor wrote that, as a student, he found "Beruhigung über das…was menschlichem Verstande nicht fasslich ist" (appeasement of that that which human intellect cannot grasp) in Spinoza's almost mathematical lucidity. However, Grunwald's other evidence was circumstantial, to say the least. His argument that Bismarck's teacher was Schleiermacher, who, as Grunwald put it, had been "der begeisterte Verehrer" (the ardent worshipper) of Spinoza, was still somewhat concrete. However, Grunwald also found evidence in the fact that Bismarck's turning away from the Church coincided with his reading of Spinoza, and that this development started when Bismarck entered university in 1832. This had special significance for Grunwald as 1832 was the year of Spinoza's 200th birthday and the year of Goethe's death. Grunwald also believed he could discern a Spinozist trait in Bismarck's most famed quality, his style of exercising power; Grunwald perceived Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in a Spinozist light. By giving superiority to the State over religion, Grunwald argued, Bismarck acted in a manner prescribed by Spinoza's political works. Grunwald even used Bismarck's move to dissolve the Reichstag in 1878 as an example of Spinoza's "intuitive Erkenntnis" (intuitive knowledge). In Grunwald's eyes, Bismarck's ability to foresee the political consequences of such an act was a Spinozist way of "reading nature". He compared it to the reading of nature of that other Spinozist, Goethe, and concluded that Bismarck was "der Herrenmensch nach dem Herzen des Spinozajüngers Nietzsche" (the member of the master race, according to the heart of the Spinoza-pupil Nietzsche).

In the conclusion of his article on Bismarck, Grunwald wrote that Bismarck's motto – *Patriae inserviendo consumor*, *i.e.*, (I am entirely taken up in serving the Fatherland.) – could have been written by Spinoza. Although Grunwald did not specify what led him to such an interpretation, we may assume that he was thinking either of the TTP, where Spinoza defended the superiority of the state in religious affairs, or of Spinoza's insistence, in the same book, that his writing was "in complete agreement with our country's laws, with piety, and with

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Spinoza's influence on Bismarck is also mentioned by Nahum Sokolow, in his Hebrew Spinoza biography.Nahum Sokolow, *Baruch Spinoza wezmano (Baruch Spinoza and his Time, A Study in Philosophy and History (with illustrations)* (London: Impr. d'Art Voltaire, 1929), 99.

morality."[59] Whatever the case may be, it is revealing that Grunwald believed this motto to be of a Spinozist nature. If Grunwald admired a man for a Spinozism that led him to state his loyalty to the Fatherland, this could also mean that Grunwald's celebration of Spinoza expressed his own loyalty to the (German) Fatherland.

Rembrandt

Another basis for attributing integrationist meaning to the Spinoza celebrations was the association of Spinoza with the famous painter Rembrandt van Rhijn (1606–1669). Strange as it may seem, in the German context – like Goethe and Bismarck – Rembrandt was used as a representative of German culture. Speculation on a connection between Rembrandt and Spinoza, therefore, was symbolic of relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans – as it was also with Goethe and Bismarck.

Rembrandt came to be perceived as a representative of German culture thanks to the influential work of Julius Langbehn (1851–1907). Langbehn belonged to a group of German nationalist, *fin-de-siècle*, cultural critics who worried about the spiritual decline of the German people.[60] In his bestseller, R*embrandt as Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator) (1890), Langbehn wrote a long lamentation on this decline. He believed that, because of Jews, German culture and the German nation had lost their creativity and succumbed to uninspired specializations, or, in his words: "Spezialisten und Schablonentum" (the production of specialists and epigones). Langbehn wrote his book to turn this tide, in the hope that the German people would return to its original greatness. To allow this regeneration, he looked to Rembrandt as an "educator." According to Lengbehn's thesis, the genius of Rembrandt could be set as an example to Germans, so that they could be cured of Jewish influences, and return to the creative essence of their nation.

For Langbehn, this did not mean that the German nation needed a foreigner to drag it out of its crisis. Rather, Rembrandt's genius, to him, was a German genius. With Rembrandt, Langbehn argued, the German *Volksgeist* had spilled over national borders. Moreover, he considered

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[59] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 394.

[60] Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair; a study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 97–183.

The Netherlands to be part of the German cultural realm, calling it Niederdeutschland (Lower Germany).[61] That is how the Dutch painter could be "der deutscheste aller deutschen Maler" (the most German of all German painters) and "das Prototyp des deutschen Kunstlers" (the prototype of the German artist).[62] Langbehn's book became immensely popular and with it the idea that Rembrandt was essentially German. Even Langbehn's nickname, *der Rembrandtdeutsche*, alluded to the close connection between Rembrandt and the German soul.

In this context, speculations on a connection between Rembrandt and Spinoza could be used to symbolize the connection between Germans and Jews; and such speculations were just too tempting to resist. From 1639 onwards, Rembrandt lived on the Jodenbreestraat in the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam. Between the years 1639 and 1656, Spinoza lived only a block away. Although there is no evidence that Rembrandt and Spinoza knew of each other's existence, many have found it tempting to contemplate some sort of acquaintance between these two great men. Their physical proximity was not the only fact fuelling such speculation. Other facts were that Rembrandt often depicted Jews in his paintings,[63] and it is known that he made etchings for a book written by Menasseh Ben Israel, a teacher at the Talmud Thorah School, where Spinoza studied during his youth. We have already noted how meaning was sometimes attributed to the coincidence between the Goethe and Spinoza jubilees, but in the case of Rembrandt, there also was a striking temporal connection. Spinoza's ban was imposed on July 27th, 1656, one day before Rembrandt's bankruptcy was announced.

Surprisingly, in his book, the anti-Semitic Langbehn also bestowed a share of Rembrandt's glory to the Jewish Spinoza. In Langbehn's eyes, the genius of both figures complemented each other. He even compared the relationship between Rembrandt and Spinoza to that between Goethe and Schiller, as it was expressed in Rietschel's double-statue of them in the city of Weimar. Langbehn argued that just as with this statue, "halten auch Rembrandt und Spinoza, in welchen der Dichter und Denker noch weiter in einander übergehen als in Jenen [Goethe and Schiller], einen gemeinsamen Ruhmeskranz" (also Rembrandt and Spinoza, in whom poet and thinker intermingle even

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[61] Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Leipzig: C.L. Hirschfeld, 1891), 59.
[62] Ibid., 9.
[63] Nadler, *Spinoza a Life*, 78, 364n45.

more than in those [Goethe and Schiller], hold a common laurel wreath).[64] Yet, anti-Semitism did color his interpretation of Spinoza. Although Langbehn was mild on Spinoza, because he considered him an "aristocratic" Jew and, as such, as being a whole lot better than Jews of the nineteenth century whom he called "plebeian Jews", as a Jew, Spinoza could never reach the same level of genius as the "German" Rembrandt. Langbehn wrote: "Der Jude giebt die Weisheit des Ueberweltlichen, der Deutsche die Weisheit des Alltäglichen; und darum die bessere, die nähere, die genießbarere Weisheit" (the Jew provides the wisdom of the supernatural, the German, the wisdom of the day-to-day; and therefore the better, the closer, the more enjoyable wisdom).[65]

Still, for those prepared to ignore the anti-Semitic message of Langbehn, his description of the relationship between the great German Rembrandt and the great Jew Spinoza could serve as a model for the integrationist ideal of German and Jewish cooperation. Sometimes, Langbehn's words even became a reason to celebrate Spinoza.[66] Max Grunwald, for example, without referring to Langbehn's accusations against Jews, extensively quoted Langbehn's comparison of the aristocratic Jew Spinoza with Rembrandt, and the comparison of Rembrandt and Spinoza with Goethe and Schiller. Grunwald praised the "*schöne und treffende*" (beautiful and fitting) words used by "*der Rembrandt-deutsche*", Julius Langbehn, to describe Spinoza. To him, the fact that even a figure such as Langbehn wrote positively about Spinoza implied an "Ehrenrettung" (salvation of honor) of Spinoza. This *Ehrenrettung* eventually led Grunwald to provide an apology for German nationalist thought. Grunwald argued that Langbehn's admiration for Spinoza showed how, "selbst einseitig nationale Einstellung die Grenzen

[64] Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*.

[65] Ibid.

[66] We find a good example of this in an article the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* (the predecessor of the *CV-Zeitung*) published for the 1919 jubilee of Rembrandt's death. This article deals with Rembrandt's relation to Judaism and to Spinoza. It begins by asserting the German-ness of Rembrandt: "Rembrandts Kunst [ist] echt niederländisch, echt deutsch, echt nordisch." Then, it proceeds to summarize, and even literally quote, sections from Langbehn's *Rembrandt als Erzieher* pertaining to Spinoza. Eugen Peterson, "Rembrandt's Verhältnis zum Judentum und Spinoza", *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 83(1919). However, Langbehn's anti-Semitism was sometimes recognized. Indeed, the same newspaper had earlier attacked Langbehn's book, including the section on Spinoza, for its anti-Semitism Reinhold Berger, "Rembrandt als – Antisemit", *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 12-9-1890 (1890).

anerkennen muss, die ihr durch historische Gerechtigkeit gezogen werden" (even biased, the national mentality needs to recognize the limits, which have been set by historical justice).[67] A more integrationist way of celebrating Spinoza than this defense of a "one-sided nationalist attitude" is hardly imaginable.

Julius Bab (1883–1955) wrote the most extensive analysis of the relationship between Spinoza and Rembrandt in defense of the belief in a symbiosis between Germans and Jews.[68] Bab, a Jewish theater critic from Berlin, was a firm believer in a "tiefen Wesensbeziehung zwischen Deutschtum und Judentum" (profound essential connection between Germanness and Jewishness).[69] He was a soldier during the First World War, and wrote patriotic poems on Germany.[70] He also wrote a small book on the subject of Rembrandt and Spinoza, which was printed by the Jewish publishing house, *Philo Verlag*. This book appeared in 1934, one year after Hitler's rise to power. It elaborated a short article on Rembrandt and Spinoza, published in 1929 in *der Morgen*. The book concerned the similarities between Rembrandt's and Spinoza's lives. Bab already indicated the significance of the parallel lives of the philosopher and the painter in the title of his book: *Rembrandt und Spinoza. Ein Doppelbildnis im deutsch-jüdischen Raum* (Rembrandt and Spinoza. A Double Portrait in the German Jewish Space). That he spoke of a *German*-Jewish space, making The Netherlands part of the German cultural realm, reveals the influence of Langbehn. By speaking of a *German-Jewish* space he indicated his firm belief in the existence of a meeting ground for Jews and non-Jews. In 1934, such a belief was quite a defiant statement, although Zionists would also consider it to be tragically erroneous. For Bab, however, parallels in the biographies of Rembrandt and Spinoza validated this belief. Bab carefully formulated his aims, and claimed that his book commented on the "kampfvolle[n] Tage" (days of strife) in which it

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[67] Max Grunwald, "Spinoza und die Reaktion", *Hickls Juedischer Volkskalender Fuer das Jahr 5688 der Weltschoepfung* (1929); ———, "Der Jude Spinoza", *Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt, Offizielles Organ der israelitischen Gemeinden Mannheim und Ludwigshafen* 10, no. 11 (1932).

[68] Julius Bab, *Rembrandt und Spinoza: ein Doppelbildnis im deutsch-jüdischen Raum* (Philo, 1933); ———, "Rembrandt und Spinoza", *Der Morgen* 5, no. 4 (1929). Another author who compared Spinoza to Rembrandt was Leo Baeck: Leo Baeck, "Motive in Spinoza's Lehre", *Der Morgen* 8, no. 5 (1932): 354.

[69] Oswalt, "Julius Bab", 28.

[70] Ibid., 26–27.

was written, and dealt with the author's "Frage nach seiner Existenz als Deutscher und Jude" (question over his existence as German and Jew). His book also dealt with the wider issue of whether or not creative spirits would be better served by "Abtrennung" (separation) or by "intensivere Wechselwirkung der Menschengruppen" (intensive interplay between groups of people),[71] or, as it could also be phrased, whether races could understand each other.

Bab did not speculate about possible contact between Spinoza and Rembrandt; he admitted quite frankly that there was no evidence for this. Nevertheless, he did suggest a spiritual closeness binding the "spanische Jude…wahrscheinlich das Größte, am meisten bewegende Genie, das das Judentum in nachbiblischer Zeit hervorgebracht hat" (Spanish Jew…probably the greatest, most mobile genius, which Judaism has produced in the post-Biblical era), with Rembrandt, "der reinste und großartigste und gerade dadurch weltwichtigste Ausdruck deutschen Wesens" (the purest and the greatest and precisely because of that universally most important expression of German nature). Bab described this mysterious connection between the great Jew and the great German in the following words: "Wie Rembrandt und Spinoza aneinander vorbeigingen, jeder zur Erfüllung seines innersten Wesens, auf das Volk des anderen zu, das scheint nicht Fremdheit und Ausschließlichkeit darzutun, sondern eine geheimnisvoll verwandte Anziehungskraft, ein tief innerliches Bedürfnis nach gegenseitiger Ergänzung" (How Rembrandt and Spinoza surpassed each other, each toward the fulfilment of his innermost essence, from one people to the other, then strangeness and unrestrictedness do not matter, but a mysterious affined attraction, a profound inner need for mutual supplementation).[72] This, according to Bab, came to expression in the fact that in their life quests both men resembled Goethe's Faust, and that no one but Rembrandt ever lived a life so much according to the Spinozist principle *amor fati*.[73] Bab's main argument, however, was that the genius of Rembrandt and Spinoza led them on paths separate to those of their communities. After being banned, Spinoza acquired a substantial following in the non-Jewish world. This following had an

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[71] Bab, "Rembrandt und Spinoza", 1–2.

[72] Ibid., 397.

[73] Ibid., 102; ———, "Rembrandt und Spinoza", 396. Bab probably considers the Nietzschean concept of *amor fati* another phrasing of Spinoza's concept *amor dei intellectualis*.

obviously German tint to it, and Bab included in it not only Spinoza's "christlich germanische Freunde" (Christian German friends),[74] but also the German philosopher Leibniz, who once visited Spinoza, and the "Spinoza-Kult der deutschen Klassik und Romantik" (Spinoza-cult of German Classicism and Romanticism), which included, of course, Goethe. Furthermore, Rembrandt ventured into the Jewish ghetto, where he chose to live and work, and where he found many of his models, particularly for his Biblical paintings. Symbolically, Spinoza and Rembrandt suffered from the consequences of the choices they made in their respective lives – the first with a ban and the second with bankruptcy – on practically the same date. Thus "die Fremde Art im Tiefsten erfühlend" (feeling the alien sort in the most profound way),[75] both Spinoza and Rembrandt had reached their highest peaks.

Grating against the anti-Semitism of National Socialism, Bab's book commented on the estrangement of Jews and Germans in his day. The topicality of Bab's book was recognized in some of its reviews. *Der Morgen* hailed the book as giving both warmth and food for thought. The *CV-Zeitung* reviewed Bab's work as "im besten Sinne aktuell: nicht für den Tag geschrieben und doch auch für unseren Tag, und besonderes für ihn gültig" (topical in the best sense: not written for today, but even so for our day, and particularly for our day relevant).[76] In *Rembrandt und Spinoza*, it saw an example of the results a Jewish and German interest in one another could achieve. The review concluded from the parallelism of Spinoza and Rembrandt's lives: "das jüdische Element und das Niederländisch-deutsche vereinigte sich in ihnen, und nicht nur auf dem 'deutsch-jüdischen Raum', zu überirdischer Erhabenheit." (the Jewish element and the Netherlands-German, combined in them, and not just in the "German Jewish space" but to super-worldly eminence). Such reviews recognized that Bab's central lesson was clearly that Rembrandt's and Spinoza's achievements through their interest in each other's worlds accomplished far more than National Socialist fear of the Jew could ever hope for. The book thus not only attacked the National-Socialist rulers of Germany, but also opposed Zionist skepticism of the possibility of genuine, friendly relations between Jews and Germans.

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[74] Bab, "Rembrandt und Spinoza", 100.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Leo Hirsch, "Rembrandt und Spinoza": ein neues Buch von Julius Bab im Philo-Verlag", *C.V.-Zeitung* xii, no. 47 (1933).

Leibniz and Spinoza

Another book that used Spinoza to describe German Jewish relations and that was published after Hitler's rise to power was *Gespräch im Nebel, Leibniz Besucht Spinoza*, (conversation in mist, Leibniz visits Spinoza) a short publication authored by the Jewish journalist Leo Hirsch. It was a literary and in part fictional description of the historical visits Leibniz made to Spinoza in 1676, right before Spinoza's death. We know of these meetings from an account that Leibniz himself wrote after they took place.[77] Leibniz had been curious about Spinoza having been told about the Dutch thinker by a mutual friend, and had travelled to his house in the Hague to meet him in person. Spinoza had been reluctant to show Leibniz the Ethica, which he dared not publish during his life, but he eventually got Spinoza's permission to read it. Hirsch's book elaborates on the personal tension between Leibniz whom he described as a prosperous and established German philosopher and diplomat, and Spinoza, who according to Hirsch, Leibniz perceived as a modest and uprooted genius who was deathly ill. His Leibniz understands politics as the occupation of princes that ultimately comes down to a competition for territory, victory, and money,[78] while for his Spinoza it was rather a discipline aimed at acquiring happiness for a society.[79]

The book relates how Leibniz manages to overcome Spinoza's distrust after Spinoza tells of his admiration of the liberal Dutch statesman Jan de Witt and the disgust he had felt of his brutal murder. Spinoza tells Leibniz how the infamous mob lynching he had witnessed had made him see that "[d]as Volk der Freiheit des Denkens und Glaubens" (the people of freedom of thought and religion) had been possessed "vom Ungeist, vom tierischen Untermenschtum" (from un-spirituality, from beastly sub-humanness) and how he had gone to the murder site to place a plaque there with the text "ultimi barbarorum" (basest of barbarians). It is only after Leibniz, who had only heard of Jan de Witt as a charlatan, responds that this story had made him understand better the urgency of the TTP as a pamphlet in defense of Jan de Witt, that Spinoza is willing to let Leibniz have a look at the Ethica. After

[77] Nadler, *Spinoza a Life*, 341.
[78] Leo Hirsch, *Gespräch im Nebel, Leibniz trifft Spinoza* (Philo Verlag, 1935), 21.
[79] Ibid., 22–23.

having read the book it leaves Leibniz both confused and impressed. The significance of this meeting is revealed in the last sentence of the book, when the author writes that "[e]in und ein halbes Jahrhundert später schon sahen die Gelehrten Licht von Spinozas reiner Flamme aus der Masse von Leibnizens Gedanken leuchten." (one and a half centuries later, the intellectuals saw the light from Spinoza's pure flame from the mass of Leibniz' thoughts).[80] It had been thanks to this meeting and the influence it had exerted on Leibniz' thought that later generations discovered Spinoza and could appreciate him for the great philosopher he had been.

Written in such difficult times, it is not difficult not to see references in the book to the issues of Germany in 1935. One doesn't need to read a great length to find the longing for the political freedom which Hirsch has Jan de Witt represent, nor for the barbarism of the mobs. Hirsch weaves these issues into a story of the relationship between a German and a Jewish icon. And although Hirsch demonstrates that he has an eye for the fact that German Jewish relations are not always easy, the conclusion, here as well, is that Spinoza's light stands at the basis of German thought.

Spinoza's Jewishness

Spinoza's invitation to Heidelberg, the admiration of him by great German thinkers such as Goethe, his mystical connection with Rembrandt and his relationship with Leibniz, served not only to emphasize the bond between Spinoza and German culture, but also to set a precedent for relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. These examples demonstrated that Jews could make meaningful contributions to German culture, and thus become part of it. Spinoza also served as an integrationist counterweight to conservative voices that held that Jews were a disease Germany needed to be cured of. Seen in such light, Spinoza's influence on German culture was not only an instrument that could be used to combat German nationalist anti-Semitism; it also seemed to be a statement against Jewish separatism.

The social message of the Spinoza celebrations, however, was not always only integrationist. It is just as easy to find separatist examples.

[80] Ibid., 47.

Whereas the integrationist message was usually expressed by pointing out the influence of Spinoza on German culture, the separatist message can be traced to another recurring topic in the articles celebrating Spinoza, namely, Spinoza's inherent Jewish nature.

By the time of the Weimar Republic, Spinoza had been re-incorporated into Judaism in many ways, in spite of his excommunication. Indeed, different thinkers of the post-emancipation era had emphasized the Jewish character of Spinoza. For instance, one of the founders of the "Science of Judaism" movement, Immanuel Wolf, wrote in 1823 that Spinoza was the last exhaustive manifestation of Judaism.[81] In 1886, Heinrich Graetz, the influential historian of Judaism, devoted half a chapter to Spinoza in volume ten of his monumental *Geschichte der Juden* (history of the Jews). There, he wrote that Spinoza "hat…zur Verherrlichung des Stammes beigetragen, den er so ungerechter Weise geschmäht hat. Seine riesige Geisteskraft, seine Consequenz und Characterstärcke werden immer mehr als Eigenschaften anerkannt, die er dem Blute zu verdanken hat aus dem er sein Dasein hatte." (has contributed to the glorification of the tribe, which he had so unjustly reviled. His spiritual strength, his consequentness and his strength of character are being recognized more and more as qualities, which he owes to the blood from which he obtained his existence).[82] Later, Jewish organizations named themselves after Spinoza, and Spinoza was included in books on Jewish philosophy, or in Jewish lexicons. Jewish libraries collected works by Spinoza and Jewish scientific institutions researched Spinoza.[83] The tremendous amount of Jewish attention on Spinoza during the celebration of his jubilees confirmed Spinoza's status as one of Jewry's greatest heroes. Still, as soon as any serious

[81] Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context, The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 150; Immanuel Wolf, "Ueber den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums", *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 1, no. 1 (1823).

[82] H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden, von der dauernden Ansiedlung der marranen in Holland (1618) bis zum Beginne der Mendelssohn'schen Zeit (1750)*, 2 ed., 11 vols., vol. 10, Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart. Aus den Quellen neu bearbeit (Leipzig), 258.

[83] Bibliothek der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien, *Spinoza-Literatur Verzeichnis Zum 250. Todestage Spinoza's* (Vienna: Selbstverlag der Bibliothek, 1927); *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins zur Gründung und Erhaltung einer Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*; Eugen Tannenbaum and Ernst Fraenkel, "Philo Zitaten Lexicon, Worte von Juden; Worte für Juden", (Berlin 1936); included 12 Spinoza quotations, while there were only six from Moses Mendelssohn.

attention was given to Spinoza, it became clear that reclaiming him as a Jew was a complicated matter. What else was the *Herem* intended for, but to dissociate the Jewish community from this dangerous heretic? And then there were Spinoza's writings, where he argued that the Law of Sinai was no longer valid. These writings leave little doubt as to his lack of Orthodoxy. Therefore, the ways in which Spinoza was claimed as a Jewish possession also needed to be unorthodox. Only with an unorthodox, or modern, definition of Judaism was it possible to consider Spinoza as being Jewish.

The tools used to make Spinoza into a Jew mostly stemmed from the pre-Weimar years. These tools owed much to Herder's and Hegel's views on nations, and went back to the Hegelian invention of a "science of Judaism", in the early nineteenth century. There, Judaism was defined as encompassing a great deal more than simply a set of Laws, or a religion. Judaism was seen as a culture that manifested itself in all aspects of life:[84] there could be Jewish literature, Jewish music, and even Jewish mathematics. A consequence of adopting such a broad cultural definition of Judaism was to downgrade all differences and battles between Jews on the true nature of Judaism to expressions of the same Jewish culture. This also enabled the possibility of treating a heretic like Spinoza as a Jew.

Spinoza's Jewishness was often made obvious by placing him in the context of Jewish tradition. The most common way this was done was by referring to existing theories on Jewish influences on Spinoza's thought. The most influential of these theories was formulated by the Spinoza scholar Manuel Joel (1826–1890). Joel was a rabbi who taught at the Jewish theological seminary of Breslau. He wrote three books that argued that Spinoza was influenced by a number of Jewish writers, and which stood in contrast to authors who largely saw Spinoza as an original thinker influenced by Descartes and medieval scholasticism. According to Joel, it was not only Descartes, but also medieval Jewish thinkers such as Gersonides (1288–1344) and Creskas (1340–1410/11) who exerted a profound influence on Spinoza.[85] This

[84] This is one of the main points of the programmatic statement of the science of Judaism by Zunz: Leopold Zunz, "Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur. Nebst Nachrichten über ein altes bis jetzt ungedrucktes Werk", in *Gesammelte Schriften von Dr. Zunz*, ed. Zunzstiftung (Berlin: 1818).

[85] Manuel Joel, *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinoza's mit Besonderer Berücksichtigung des kurzen Traktats "von Gott, dem Menschen und dessen Glückseligkeit* (Breslau 1871); ———, *Don Chasdai Creskas' religionsphilosophische Lehren in ihrem geschichtlichen*

hardly led him to plead for Spinoza's Jewishness. Joel's work breaths the air of an objective philologist. He seems little concerned with the nationalistic goal of claiming Spinoza as Jewish property. Joel himself wrote that Spinoza was to be treated in a Spinozist way, by which he meant that Spinoza was neither to be admired nor to be hated, but simply to be understood.[86] The closest he came to describing Spinoza as Jewish was when he wrote: "In ihm floss zusammen…Orientalischer und Occidentalischer Geist, der Geist des Semitismus und der Indogermanismus…" (In him oriental and occidental intellect flowed together…the spirit of Semitism and Indo-Germanism).[87] The emphasis on Spinoza's orientalism might be viewed as a means to emphasize his Judaism. However, it appears to be more of an attempt to defend an oriental-occidental symbiosis than a wholehearted affirmation of Spinoza's Judaism. Yet, in the context of the Spinoza celebrations, Joel's work was often used to demonstrate Spinoza's Jewishness.[88] Leo Baeck, for example, referred to Joel's studies when he defended the thesis that Spinoza should be understood from the perspective of "das Jüdische in ihm" (the Jewish element in him), arguing that: "Mannigfaltige Linien führen von der mittelalterlichen jüdischen Philosophie zu Spinoza hin und geben manchen Zügen seiner Lehre die jüdische Herkunft" (diverse lines lead from medieval Jewish philosophy to Spinoza and give many traits of his philosophy Jewish elements).[89]

Related to Joel's findings, there was another important theory enabling a Jewish interpretation of Spinoza. This theory held that Spinoza had been influenced by the Jewish mystical tradition, the Cabbala.[90] Such a theory stood remarkably in sharp contrast to some of Spinoza's own utterances in the TTP such as, "I have also read, and am acquainted with, a number of Cabbalistic triflers whose madness

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Einflusse dargestellt (Breslau 1876); ———, *Spinoza's Theologisch-Politischer Traktat auf seine Quellen geprüft* (Breslau 1870).

[86] Joel, *Spinoza's Theologisch-Politischer Traktat auf seine Quellen geprüft*, 2.

[87] Ibid., 1.

[88] Joseph Klausner, "Der jüdische Charakter der Lehre Spinozas", in *Spinoza-Festschrift Zum 300. Geburtstage Benedict Spinozas (1632–1932)* (Heidelberg: 1932), 120; Willy Aron, "Benedictus de Spinoza und das Judentum", *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung* 7, no. 7 (1927).

[89] L. Baeck, "Spinoza", *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung Organ der Vereinigung für das liberale Judentum e.V.* 7, no. 7 (1927).

[90] Andreas B. Kilcher, "Kabbala in der Maske der Philosophie. Zu einer Interpretationsfigur in der Spinoza-Literatur", in *Spinoza in der Europaeischen Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Hanna Delf, Julius H. Schoeps, and Manfred Walther (Potsdam: Hentrich, 1994).

passes the bounds of my understanding."[91] Yet, this theory still had a long history. It originated in the early Christian Spinoza reception. Already in 1699, the German Christian, Jacob Wachter published a book titled *Der Spinozismus im Jüdenthumb* (Spinozism in Judaism), where he argued that it was possible to read back Spinozist ideas in the Cabbala. As with many of his contemporaries, for Wachter, Spinozism was a derogatory term. Wachter used the idea that Spinoza's heretical ideas had originated in the Cabbala to assault Judaism. He therefore attacked this secret Jewish teaching, by revealing that it contained ideas that were also Spinozist.[92] However, Wachter's own thesis that Spinoza was a Cabbalist also lead to more positive interpretations of Spinoza. Indeed, the view that Spinozism was rooted in the Cabbala could potentially be used to defend Spinoza from accusations of atheism. After all, the Cabbala was a religious teaching. In a treatise from 1706, making a remarkable about turn in his views, Wachter himself used his belief in the Cabbalistic influences on Spinoza to defend Spinoza, and to argue against the view that Spinoza was an atheist. Wachter's thesis that Spinoza was a Cabbalist had considerable influence, and it was used by both sides during the *Pantheismusstreit*: Jacobi used it to denounce Spinoza, and Mendelssohn to prove that Spinoza was not an atheist.[93]

It was in the climate of the Jewish renaissance during the Weimar Republic that the thesis of Spinoza's Cabbalistic influences truly gained Jewish popularity. This development occurred together with the renewed popularity of irrational elements in Jewish history. Initially, emancipated Jewry was not so interested in the Cabbala; it belonged to the more obscure aspects of Judaism, and its secrecy and irrationalism did not fit into the form most nineteenth century Jews believed Judaism should take. From Mendelssohn to Cohen, Jewish thinkers preferred to call attention to Judaism's rationality. However, in Weimar Germany, the Cabbala became more popular, mainly thanks to the work of Gershom Scholem. The renewed popularity of the Cabbala was also reflected in the Jewish reception of Spinoza. The

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[91] Benedictus Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley (1998), 122 (chapter 9).

[92] Johann Georg Wachter, *Der Spinozismus im Jüdenthumb* (Amsterdam 1699), I, 105.

[93] Heinrich Scholz, ed. *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn, Herausgegeben und mit einer historisch-kritischen Einleitung versehen*, vol. VI, Neudrucke seltener philosophischer Werke (Berlin: 1916), 3, 78.

Weimar years saw a resurgence of Wachter's ideas of Spinoza's Cabbalism. Also, as the rediscovery of the Cabbala turned out to be part of a search for authentic Judaism, Spinoza's alleged interest in the Cabbala became an important tool for reclaiming him as a Jew. As Willy Aron wrote in his article celebrating Spinoza in the *Jüdisch liberale Zeitung*, "Die Definitionen seines Gottesbegriffs hat er formuliert aus den Inhalten, die hierüber im Sohar vorhanden sind." (He formulated the definitions of his notion of God from the contents that are found concerning this subject in the Zohar).[94] In 1917, the Viennese rabbi Gelbhaus published a booklet that attempted to demonstrate that Spinoza had derived central aspects of his thought – such as the *amor dei intellectualis* – from the Cabbala.[95]

As was the case with Joel's work, authors celebrating Spinoza, thankfully referred to others who considered Spinoza to be a Cabbalist. These authors used this theory to place Spinoza in a Jewish chain of tradition, and thus maintained that Spinoza had always remained Jewish.[96] As one author wrote, "Die Wurzeln seines [Spinoza's] doch häufig gefühlsmäßigen Denkens liegen in der jüdischen Mystik." (The roots of his [Spinoza's] still often instinctive thinking, lay in Jewish mysticism).[97] Sometimes, entire articles were published on the theme of Spinoza and the Cabbala. The Hamburger *Israelitsche Familienblatt*, for example, published the chapter from a novel on Spinoza by Felix Theilhaber that dealt with Cabbalistic influences on Spinoza's thought. Another article in the Leipzig *Allgemeines Jüdisches Familienblatt*, titled "Baruch Spinoza im Lichte der jüdischen Mystik" (Baruch Spinoza in the light of Jewish Mysticism),[98] celebrated Spinoza with the means of a complicated theory that sought to explain how, despite his

[94] Aron, "Benedictus de Spinoza und das Judentum". The Sohar, or Zohar is the main text of the Cabbalah.

[95] S. Gelbhaus, *Die Metaphysik der Ethik Spinozas im Quellenlichte der Kabbalah* (Vienna: Brünn, 1917).

[96] "Im Lichte der Ewigkeit. Zum 300. Geburtstage Spinozas", *Gemeindezeitung für die Israelitischen Gemeinden Württembergs* ix, no. 16 (1932); Klausner, "Der jüdische Charakter der Lehre Spinozas".

[97] J. Lehmann, "Baruch Spinoza (Zum 250. Todestage)", *Mitteilungen der Jüdischen Reform Gemeinde zu Berlin* 1927, no. 2 (1927): 14; M. Katz, "Baruch Spinoza: zu seinem 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", *C.V.-Zeitung* vi, no. 7 (1927): 89; ———, "Spinoza", *Der Jugendbund; jüdische Blätter* 3, no. 5 (1927).

[98] S. Ernst, "Baruch Spinoza im Lichte der jüdischen Mystik", *Allgemeines Jüdisches Familienblatt, Leipzige jüdische Familienblatt * Leipziger jüdische Zeitung, Wochenblatt für die Gesamten Interessen des Judentums* 8, no. 25-2-1927 (1927).

apparent rationalism, Spinoza was a Cabbalist. This article, written by Ernst Simon, a religious thinker who belonged to the circle of Buber and Rosenzweig, argued that Spinoza's famous rationalism was only a reaction against the messianic fever that swept Amsterdam, when rumors arose about the coming of the (false) Messiah, Shabbetai Zevi; Spinoza's rationalism was an overreaction provoked by the collapse of mystical messianic dreams, when Zevi converted to the Islam. Therefore, this rationalism was merely thought to have intended to disguise Spinoza's underlying mysticism. The bottom line, Simon concluded, was that Cabbalism remained "Die Grundlage seiner [Spinoza's] Philosophie" (the basis of his [Spinoza's] philosophy).

The Separatist Interpretation of Spinoza

Establishing the Jewish character of Spinoza was an important departure from Orthodox Jewish tradition, which viewed Spinoza as a heretic. It should also be noted, however, that Spinoza's fame in Germany had, to a certain extent, taken the Jew out of Spinoza. To be sure, during Spinoza's lifetime, Christians viewed Spinoza as a Jew, despite the ban, referring to him as the "Jew from Voorburg".[99] But already in the first century following his death, he was primarily seen as an atheist rather than as a Jew. The admiration of German romanticists and idealists for Spinoza further obscured his Jewish descent. They did not believe Spinoza was an atheist, but instead considered him profoundly religious. This religiosity, however, was more associated with Christianity than with Judaism. Goethe, after all, had called him *Christianissimus*, not *Judaeissimus*. Referring to Spinoza's Jewishness became, therefore, a way of reclaiming Spinoza from the clutches of his Christian admirers.

The celebration of Spinoza emphasized Spinoza's Jewishness, suggesting that German Jews took pride in their own Jewishness. As such, this theme reveals that the Spinoza celebrations were not only motivated by integrationism but, at the same time, also by separatism. Sometimes this separatism prevailed over the universalistic element in integrationism. When this was the case, Spinoza's Jewishness became an instrument separatists used to highlight how it was wrong to view

[99] This is what Chirstiaan Huygens called Spinoza: Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften*, 191.

Germans and Jews as two elements of one nation. In this case, the emphasis on Spinoza's Jewishness amounted to more than just pride in the fact that the great thinker was of Jewish descent. Such a perspective on Spinoza's Jewishness also implied that Spinoza belonged exclusively to the Jews. An article in the Leipzig *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde* gives a good illustration of this kind of view.[100] The author of the article, Wigdor Gildingorin, saw in Spinoza a perfect Jew. He called him "[d]er jüdische wahre Philosoph" (the Jewish true philosopher) and "der jüdische Traumer" (the Jewish dreamer). He regretted that Spinoza had been neglected by the Jews of his time. Only at the time he wrote this article, Gildingorin argued, did Jewish people begin to understand the important legacy Spinoza had left Jews, but it would still take them years to comprehend Spinoza's importance for Jewish philosophy and the Jewish worldview (*Weltanschauung*). Therefore, Gildingorin believed the 1927 Spinoza jubilee implied that "die jüdische Intelligenz" (the Jewish intellectuals) had the duty to spread and perpetuate Spinoza's teachings. To him, this meant that Spinoza should be exclusively Jewish property, and, in his eyes, the celebration of Spinoza only concerned Jews. The Jewish exclusivity of Spinoza for Gildingorin became most obvious with a short remark at the very end of his article. Here, Gildingorin took issue with a Jew from Poland, Mischlitzki, who had converted to Christianity and still had the audacity to partake in the Polish celebration of Spinoza, "*Das macht den Eindruck*" (that gives the impression) Gildingorin wrote, "als ob Herr Mischlitzki [Spinoza] zu den Seinen rechnet…was durchaus falsch ist. Spinoza ist unser Philosoph, unser Denker und Träumer. Wir müssen allmählich lernen, seine Verdienste zu schätzen, das, was er für uns getan hat, ohne nichtjüdische Anregung" (as if Mr. Mischlitzki counts [Spinoza] to his credit…which is quite false. Spinoza is our Philosopher, our thinker and dreamer. We need to progressively learn to estimate his merits, that which he did for us, without non-Jewish encouragement).[101] Far from taking pride in a Christian interest in Spinoza, Gildingorin considered it a scandal that a former-Jew celebrated Spinoza.

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[100] Wigdor Gildingorin, "Baruch Spinoza (zu seinem 250. Todestag)", *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde, Leipzig* 3, no. 6 (1927).

[101] Ibid.

The exclusive Jewish claim on Spinoza was, of course, mostly the domain of the Zionists. The heart of their ideology was that Jews constituted an independent nation that did not depend on other nations. This meant that when these Jews celebrated Spinoza as a Jewish hero, which they frequently did, they celebrated him as an exclusively Jewish hero. They held that to understand what made Spinoza special, one needed to understand him as a Jew, and that this was difficult, if not impossible, for non-Jews to understand.

One such Zionist was Jacob Klatzkin. Klatzkin was born in Russia, but later moved to Germany where he studied with Hermann Cohen. Despite the integrationism of his teacher, he worked for different Zionist organizations, such as the *Keren Kayemet* and the official Zionist newspaper *die Welt*. Klatzkin developed a Zionism radically opposed to any form of assimilation.[102] This Zionism could be found in his portrayal of Spinoza, who was one of his main fields of interest. Klatzkin wrote a book on Spinoza in Hebrew, published in Leipzig in 1924, and also translated Spinoza's *Ethica* into Hebrew. In 1927, he was invited to speak at the international Spinoza celebration in The Hague, The Netherlands, which had been organized by the leading international Spinoza organization, *Societas Spinozana*.[103] He considered his presence there as a symbolic representation of Judaism.[104] Different adaptations of his lecture were later published in several places in Germany.[105] His message was always the same: that Spinoza had suffered from his Christian interpreters, who lacked an accurate understanding of his Jewishness, and had completely failed to understand him. Klatzkin believed that they – most of all, his biographer Lucas – had mistakenly pictured him as a "Christlichen Asketen" (Christian ascetic).[106] Spinoza's famously modest life, a perception initiated by Lucas, was according to Klatzkin nothing special, and in fact a rather normal lifestyle for "Ghetto-Judaism".[107] There were many more mis-

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[102] Evelyn Adunka, "Jacob Klatzkin", in *Metzler Lexikon jüdischer Philosophen*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 350.

[103] Hans Hartmann, "Spinoza-Renaissance: Eine Betrachtung zum Spinoza-Kongreß im Haag (5. bis 10 September)", *C.V.-Zeitung* xi, no. 40 (1932).

[104] Jacob Klatzkin, "Mißverständnisse in und um Spinoza", *Jüdische Rundschau* 32, no. 24 (1927).

[105] Ibid., ———, "Der Mißverstandene", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 34, no. 49 (1932); Hessing, ed. *Spinoza-Festschrift Zum 300. Geburtstage*.

[106] Klatzkin, "Der Mißverstandene", 10.

[107] Hessing, ed. *Spinoza-Festschrift Zum 300. Geburtstage*, 106.

takes made due to the Christian interpretations of Spinoza. Klatzkin discussed the Christian *Schadenfreude* (malicious pleasure) on how the Jews penalized Spinoza with the severe punishment of their *Herem*.[108] Christians failed to understand the significance of the ban; a relatively mild penalty, in his eyes, compared to the terrible physical punishments heretics of other religions suffered. According to Klatzkin, the ban had also lost its original "furchtbare Bedeutung" (terrible significance).[109] Furthermore, Klatzkin argued in Spinoza's era, imposing such a ban had become a fairly common disciplinary measure; even the hardly controversial Menasseh ben Israel had been punished with the *Herem* for one day.

As Klatzkin explained, however, Spinoza had himself contributed to his own misunderstanding by allowing foreign influences to penetrate his system of thought, which for example had resulted in his geometric method. For Klatzkin, this method had been a foreign, non-Jewish influence caused by "den Charakter des Zeitalters" (character of the age) with a resulting obscuration of Spinoza's Jewish intuition. Like Joel, Gelbhaus and others, Klatzkin believed that Judaism influenced Spinoza, but disagreed that Jewish religious philosophy directly influenced him. Surely Spinoza read Jewish philosophy, but he used the concepts he found there, and gave them his own original meaning. For Klatzkin, then, Jewish influence on Spinoza manifested itself not in thought, but through the Hebrew Language in which he read Jewish Philosophy. According to Klatzkin, just as with the geometric method, writing in a foreign language had not benefited the clarity of Spinoza's writing. Kaltzkin was convinced that certain Latin phrases used by Spinoza were attempts to translate Hebrew concepts. It was this belief that lay behind Klatzkin's project of translating the *Ethica* into Hebrew, and he went so far as to argue that his own translation was more "original" than Spinoza's Latin version. Klatzkin was so convinced of this that he warned that any further translation of the *Ethica* into other languages needed to take his translation into account.[110]

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[108] Klatzkin might have had the lengthy treatment of the ban by Colerus in mind. See: Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften*, 48.

[109] Klatzkin, "Mißverständnisse in und um Spinoza".

[110] Hessing, ed. *Spinoza-Festschrift Zum 300. Geburtstage*, 113; Klatzkin Spinoza, Jacob, *Torath Hamedoth* (Leipzig 1924).

The belief that the Hebrew translation of the *Ethica* was more original than Spinoza's own Latin claimed Spinoza for Judaism in a radically separatist way.[111] For Klatzkin, the Hebrew language was, together with a national land, the defining characteristic of the Jewish nation.[112] By arguing that Spinoza thought in Hebrew when he was writing, Klatzkin incorporated him into the Jewish nation and, in so doing, made it impossible for anyone who did not understand Hebrew to truly understand and appreciate Spinoza. We will later see how Rosenzweig criticized Klatzkin's project of translating Spinoza into Hebrew.

Klausner

One of the strongest Zionist attempts to reclaim Spinoza was a lecture given by Josef Klausner at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1927. Klausner was originally a Russian Jew and his lecture was given in Hebrew. As such, it does not strictly belong to our subject of the German Jewish reception of Spinoza, but the lecture was translated into German and published in a German *Spinoza-Festschrift* on the occasion of the 1932 celebrations. Moreover, Klausner had studied at the German University of Heidelberg and frequently referred to German Spinoza interpretations in his lecture.

Klausner was an ardent Zionist, subscribing to the radical national and "revisionist" Zionist current of Vladimir Jabotinski.[113] In his lecture, Klausner mainly discussed Jews who had been hostile to Spinoza, and largely ignored Jews who appreciated him for his achievements in the non-Jewish world. Nevertheless, Klausner upheld the thesis that Spinoza did not merely belong to "der ganzen Menschheit, sondern vor allem dem Judentum"[114] (the whole of humanity, but most of all Judaism). According to Klausner, Spinoza was "ein vollkommener Jude"

[111] There is some irony in the fact that Klatzkin is now credited with having developed a philosophical vocabulary for Modern Hebrew with his translation of the *Ethica*.

[112] Jacob Klatzkin, "Boundaries", in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Atheneum, 1984).

[113] Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past; European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, 35, 50, 64.

[114] Klausner, "Der jüdische Charakter der Lehre Spinozas", 122.

(a complete Jew) whose teachings possessed "einen absolut jüdischen Charakter" (an absolutely Jewish character).[115]

Instead of fitting Spinoza into a symbiotic ideology between Non-Jewish and Jewish Germans, it was a national definition of Judaism that made Klausner celebrate Spinoza. Klausner viewed Judaism as both a religion and a nation; Judaism was a "nationale Weltanschauung auf religiös-sittlicher Grundlage" (national worldview based on a religious-moral foundation).[116] He argued, however, that within the Diaspora the national element of Judaism had not developed until the development of a national Jewish movement in the late nineteenth century. Before that time, Judaism was only conceived of as a religion by the rabbis that excommunicated Spinoza, but also by later Jewish thinkers, such as Moses Mendelssohn or Hermann Cohen. The latter was living in a non-Jewish environment and failed to perceive the national element in Judaism, even at a time when a national Jewish movement existed. To Klausner, the lack of a Jewish national movement explained why the rabbis feared Spinoza and failed to appreciate his Jewishness.[117] If it was conceived as only a religion, Spinoza was indeed a danger to Judaism. However, such a danger disappeared once the real nature of Judaism was understood. Klausner argued, in a manner heavily indebted to the way Judaism was defined by the nineteenth-century developers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (science of Judaism), that Judaism was not static, but changed over time and contained many contradictions. Indeed, there had been many forms of Judaism throughout the course of history, such as the time of the Judges, the First and Second Temple periods, the era of the Cabbalists in Safed, and the era of Enlightenment. Klausner maintained that all these forms had produced different types of Judaism. However, in spite of their differences, they all expressed the same power inherent in the first kind of Judaism. For that reason, Judaism should be perceived as "eine unaufhörliche Veränderung auf Grund einer im innersten Wesen unveränderlichen nationalen Unterlage" (a constant change on the basis of a national foundation, which is in its essence unchangeable).[118]

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[115] Ibid., 128.
[116] Ibid., 124.
[117] Ibid., 144.
[118] Ibid., 125–126.

Such a vision of Judaism enabled Klausner to ignore contradictions between Spinoza and Jewish religion, and to view Spinoza as a complete Jew. After all, both sprang from the same "nationalen Unterlage" (national foundation). Klausner specified how this was visible in Spinoza. Although there were many aspects of Spinoza's thought that seemed to contradict Judaism (Klausner cited atheism, mechanism, determinism, utilitarianism, Machiavellism and antinomianism), in the end, Spinoza arrived at a "hebräischer Gedanke" (Hebrew thought) on God derived, as had been demonstrated by Joel, from Creskas and Jehuda Abravanel.[119] Klausner likened Spinoza to a soldier of Judas Maccabaeus: rough on the outside, but deeply religious on the inside, such a soldier fought "für die Rettung seines Volkes, seines Gottes und seiner Thora" (for the rescue of his people, his God and his Torah).[120] On the surface, Spinoza also seemed to be cold, dry and geometrical, but, on the inside, he was "ein lodernd Feuer der Religion" (a blazing religious fire). Zionists drew inspiration from the Maccabees. In their battles, purging the chosen Land of alien Hellenist influences, they saw predecessors to their own fight for Jewish independence. Thus, by likening Spinoza to the Maccabees, Klausner recruited Spinoza for a Zionist separatist cause.

Klausner believed that, with the 1927 Spinoza celebration, the time had come to repair the broken relationship between Spinoza and Judaism. He gave his lecture from Mount Scopus, Israel, the site of the just two-years young Hebrew University. This gave it a special dimension. He had been among the first to plead for the realization of the Zionist project of a Jewish University in Jerusalem, and also was one of its first professors.[121] For him, the Hebrew University was a "Heiligtum" (sanctimony)[122] and, as such, it had the authority to speak on behalf of the whole of Judaism. Klausner ended his lecture with an exclamation addressed directly to Spinoza:

> *Gelöst ist der Bann!*
> *Gewichen ist das Vergehen des Judentums gegen dich!*
> *Gesühnt ist deine Schuld ihm gegenüber!*

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[119] Ibid., 132.
[120] Ibid., 142.
[121] Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past; European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, 46–47.
[122] Klausner, "Der jüdische Charakter der Lehre Spinozas", 145.

Unser Bruder bist du!
Unser Bruder bist du!
Unser Bruder bist du!

(The Ban has been lifted!
Gone is the offence of Judaism against you!
Atoned is your guilt to it!
You are our brother!
You are our brother!
You are our brother!)[123]

With this secular revocation of Spinoza's ban, Klausner made a definite attempt to reclaim Spinoza for Judaism.

Universalism and Separatism

The previous paragraphs show that social motivations for the celebration of Spinoza differed greatly and spanned the entire spectrum from the radical integrationism of the Jewish front soldiers to the extreme separatism of Klatzkin's political Zionism. The integrationist motivation attributed meaning to the Spinoza celebrations by stressing his influence on, and connectedness with German culture. Articles on this subject articulated the unity of Jewish and German culture. The separatist motivation was found in the emphasis on Spinoza's Jewishness, in the pride of him being a Jew, and in the claim that celebrating him was an exclusively Jewish affair. Such motivations articulated the distinctiveness of the Jewish nation. Still they all celebrated Spinoza. Apparently Spinoza provided an inspiration to both integrationalists and separatists, and the many Jews who could be placed in between these two poles. It would therefore be mistaken to completely separate these two motivations behind the Spinoza celebrations. Instead, it would be better to understand the celebration of Spinoza as a combination of both universalism and separatism. Although some articles tended toward one or the other of these views, there was almost always some of both present in each article celebrating Spinoza.

A separatist element was, for example, by no means lacking in articles on Spinoza's influence in Germany. We have uncovered the

[123] Ibid.

integrationism inherent in Max Grunwald's admiration of Bismarck, and in his apology of Langbehn. Yet, we can also find an element of separatism in his work. As a rabbi, Grunwald was well aware of the difficulties in treating Spinoza as a Jew. In fact, he wrote in several places that Spinoza had no understanding of Judaism at all. In an article titled "*der Jude Spinoza*" (the Jew Spinoza), he blamed Spinoza for having invited the world to mock the things Jews held most sacred.[124] He also took issue with Oswald Spengler for having used Spinoza to exemplify Jewishness in his *Untergang des Abendlandes*.[125] Yet, Grunwald sometimes also argued the complete opposite. In one of his articles, after discussing Joel's discovery of Spinoza's Jewish sources, he concluded, "Hier erhob zum ersten Male das Judentum bestimmt seinen Anspruch auf Spinoza" (Here it arose for the first time, that Judaism demands its claim on Spinoza).[126] On another occasion, he was even clearer: "und darum dürfen wir Alle, die wir uns als Juden fühlen, unbeschadet unserer Parteistellung und Auffassung, mit Stolz von Spinoza sagen 'Er ist unser'" (and that is why all of us who feel as Jews, irrelevant of our partisanship and opinion, say with pride of Spinoza: "He is ours!").[127] In fact, celebrating Spinoza for his influence on German culture combines well with both the integrationist and the separatist motivations. The solution of separatist pride in Spinoza's Judaism with integrationist appreciation of his role in German culture was clearly voiced in the *Jüdische Zeitung* of Breslau: "Durch Spinoza hat der jüdische Geist, der Geist unseres Stammes und unseres Blutes, der Geist jüdischer Religion und des Talmuds, die ganze Philosophie der neueren Zeit und die Blütezeit der deutschen Literatur befruchtet und entscheidend beeinflüßt." (It is through Spinoza, that the Jewish spirit, the spirit of our tribe and our blood, the spirit of Jewish religion and of the Talmud, has influenced and fertilized decisively the entire philosophy of the modern Age and the heyday of German literature).[128] This quote reflects pride in Spinoza's Jewishness, and simultaneously

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[124] Grunwald, "Der Jude Spinoza", 4.

[125] Max Grunwald, *Das Judentum bei Oswald Spengler* (Berlin 1924: Philo-Verlag, 1924), 24–30.

[126] ———, "Spinoza-Jude?", *Populär-wissenschaftliche Monatsblätter zur Belehrung über das Judentum für Gebildete aller Konfessionen* 14, no. 6 (1894).

[127] ———, *Spinoza Vortrag gehalten in der Henry Jones-Loge zu Hamburg* (Vienna 1897), 14.

[128] Felix Weltsch, "Jüdische Gestalten: Baruch d" Espinoza", *Jüdische Zeitung für Ostdeutschland (Jüdische Volkszeitung)* 4, no. 8 (1927).

in German culture. Perhaps the best illustration of the simultaneous use of Spinoza for both integrationist and separatist purposes can be found in the way David Baumgardt (1890–1963), a lecturer and, from 1932, a Professor in Philosophy at the University of Berlin, participated in the Spinoza celebrations. Baumgardt wrote several articles on the German reception of Spinoza in both the Jewish and non-Jewish Press. His inaugural lecture dealt with Spinoza's German reception, and he authored one of the few books published on the occasion of the Spinoza celebrations: *Spinoza und Mendelssohn; Reden und Aufsaetze zu ihren Gedenktagen*. This book was printed by the Jewish publishing house, *Philo Verlag*, on the occasion of the dual celebrations of Mendelssohn and Spinoza in 1932. The section in it on Spinoza again dealt with the German reception of Spinoza. Later, Baumgardt republished this same portion from the book in many different places, including non-Jewish, Jewish integrationist and Jewish separatist journals, and even talked about it on the radio. Examples of these articles can be found in the Spinoza issue of the non-Jewish journal *Kant-Studien*, the *Gemeindeblatt* of the Berlin Jewish community, the in-depth integrationist magazine *Der Morgen* of the *CV-Verein*, and also the Zionist journal *Der jüdische Rundschau*.[129]

Although Baumgardt's articles are not written very polemically, he does not hesitate to point out the political implications of his review of the German reception of Spinoza. In the introduction to his article in *Der Morgen*, he invoked Goethe who said: "Der Weltgeist ist gemeinhin toleranter, als man denkt." (The world-spirit is commonly more tolerant than one thinks). Baumgardt reasoned that it was thanks to this tolerance of the World Spirit (*Weltgeist*) that the year 1932, which was witness to an unprecedented level of German Judeo-phobia "uns jetzt auch nötigt, an dem 300. Geburtstag Spinozas die besondere Wirkung zu würdigen, die gerade dieser geächtete Jude auf den deutschen Geist geübt hat" (and now, with the 300th birthday of Spinoza, also invites us, to value the exceptional effect this particular Jew exerted on the German spirit).[130] It is possible to read an integrationist tone, and even assimilationism in this assertion. By arguing that the celebration of Spinoza could serve such a purpose, Baumgardt suggested it was a

[129] David Baumgardt, "Spinozas jüdische Sendung", *Jüdische Rundschau* 37, no. 93 (1932); ———, "Spinoza's Bild im deutschen und jüdischen Denken", *Der Morgen* 8, no. 5 (1932); ———, "Spinoza und der deutsche Spinozismus", *Kant-Studien* 32 (1927).

[130] Baumgardt, "Spinoza's Bild", 356.

misunderstanding to think Jews were not part of the German spirit, and redressing this misunderstanding could help fight anti-Semitism. Moreover, Baumgardt praised German culture for its extensive reception of Spinoza, and especially for the positive reception of what he called German metaphysics, *i.e.*, the philosophies of German romanticists and idealists, and of Nietzsche. Finally Baumgardt wrote in a German nationalist spirit when he argued that Germany could pride itself on the fact that the seeds of Spinoza had grown and developed in its soil as it had in no other country.[131]

However, there was also a separatist side to Baumgardt's celebration of Spinoza. Indeed, he also appreciated Spinoza for the Jewish character of his philosophy. Baumgardt believed there existed a deep "Zusammenhang" (affinity) between Spinoza and Jewish traditions, despite Spinoza's attacks against Judaism. He argued that Spinoza's studies of the Cabbala and of Jewish scholastics made him into a theologian and a *Weltanschauler*, rather than an "exakter Naturwissenschaftler" (hard scientist).[132] Baumgardt traced parallels between Spinoza's ethics and the prescriptions of the Talmud.[133] He even went so far as to argue that "die Idee des Judentums" (the idea of Judaism) was Spinozist.[134] Furthermore, to Baumgardt, Spinoza's Jewishness was revealed not only in his thought but also in his life. Whereas Christian ethics preached a withdrawal from the world, negation of power, and focused on the idealism of the divine, Judaism, for Baumgardt, was worldlier and therefore closer to actual life. Like Klatzkin, he argued, that it was a Christian mistake to see a monk-like figure in Spinoza, as had some authors since Johannes Colerus in 1705.[135] Instead, Baumgardt argued Spinoza should be regarded as a human being who had arrived by his wisdom through the concrete experiences of life.

It was also for this reason that Baumgardt regretted that, while so many German thinkers had admired Spinoza, Jews had, in his eyes,

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[131] ———, "Spinoza und der deutsche Spinozismus", 192.

[132] David Baumgardt, "Spinoza und der Spinozismus", *Das Schatzkästlein* (1927): 108.

[133] Baumgardt, "Spinoza's Bild", 368.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Johannes Colerus, *De waarachtige verrijzenis Jesu Christi uit den dooden, tegen B. de Spinosa en zijne aanhangers verdeedigt. Benevens een nauwkeurige levensbeschryving, van dezen beruchten wysgeer, zo uit zyn nagelate schriften als monderling verhaal van nog in 't leven zynde persoonen, zamengestelt* (Amsterdam 1705); Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften*, 58–60.

largely neglected and been hostile towards their heretic. In some of his publications, Baumgardt concluded his reviews of the German reception of Spinoza with an overview of his Jewish reception. To his regret, this reception had, on the whole, been of a negative nature. Important Jewish thinkers, such as Salomon Maimon, Moses Mendelssohn and Hermann Cohen never showed real appreciation for Spinoza. Baumgardt could understand that Spinoza's ban was a necessary evil, the result of unavoidable specific historical circumstances, and it was even a relatively mild punishment in comparison to methods of torture of the Catholic Church. He did not, however, understand those Jews who continued to relate to Spinoza as a danger to Judaism. Baumgardt was aware of the affection people like Berthold Auerbach or Constantin Brunner felt for Spinoza, but he thought they stood in the shadow of the anti-Spinozism (*Spinoza-Fremdheit*) of Jews such as Cohen, who, in Baumgardt's opinion, had been much more important to modern Jewish thought. Furthermore, none of these Jewish admirers of Spinoza succeeded in incorporating Spinoza into a modern view of Judaism. Baumgardt was convinced of Spinoza's indispensability for such a view.[136]

Baumgardt specifically expressed his regret that two of the most important integrationist ideologues in German Jewish history, Maimon and Cohen, had an appreciation for Kant but not for Spinoza. By expressing this regret, Baumgardt juxtaposed his Spinozism with Jewish Kantianism. Underlying this juxtaposition, we can find a deeper difference of opinion on the place of Jews in German society. Jewish admirers of Kant – and there were many more besides Maimon and Cohen – discerned similarities between Kant's ideas and those of Judaism. This constituted a basis for them from which they could uphold the integrationist view that Germans and Jews composed one nation. Such admiration for Kant implied that they not only valued Kantism for its similarity to Judaism, but also valued Judaism for its similarity to Kantism. Unease with this state of affairs even led one admirer to exclaim: "Wäre Kant Jude gewesen" (If Kant were only a Jew).[137] This admiration of Kant differed from the admiration of Spinoza. Spinoza *was* a Jew, and admiring him placed Judaism in a superior position to

[136] Baumgardt, "Spinoza's Bild", 368.
[137] R.W. Munk, *"Wäre Kant Jude gewesen", De discussie met Kant in de joodse filosofie* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2000).

German thought. After all, the Jewish Spinoza had been necessary for German thought. This brought a dimension of Jewish pride to Baumgardt's preference in admiring Spinoza that was missing in Jewish admiration of Kant.

The Reform Movement

We can see a similar middle-ground between integrationism and separatism in the newspapers of the religious Reform Movement. One of the main objectives of the religious Reform Movement had always been to cleanse Jewish religion of its separatism, thereby allowing its existence in a non-Jewish state. One of the first changes made to the liturgy was to eliminate some of its references to Zion, in order to ease any suspicions non-Jews might have about double Jewish loyalties.[138] In this sense, the press of the Reform Movement belonged, with newspapers such as the *CV-Zeitung*, to the camp of Jews who believed their future lay in German society. While these newspapers celebrated Spinoza by stressing the universalist theme of his German reception, we do find many articles on Spinoza's Jewishness in them. The newspaper of the Berlin reform community, the *Mitteilungen der Jüdischen Reformgemeinde zu Berlin*, for example, argued that it was self-evident that the ban on Spinoza had been "unjüdisch" (un-Jewish). This was not so strange since, after Spinoza had become "von der ganzen Kulturwelt gesegnet" (blessed by the entirety of the cultural world), it could be concluded that none of the curses pronounced in the ban had come true.[139] Spinoza himself had never denied his Jewishness. On the contrary, for some he represented the ideal of the Jewish sage.[140]

On the occasion of the 1927 jubilee, another Reform newspaper, the *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung*, published a Spinoza issue, of which four of its six articles dealt with the question of Spinoza's Jewishness. These articles all concluded that Spinoza should be considered a Jew. Two articles came from figures who had also written extensively on the integrationist theme of Spinoza's influence on German thought, Leo

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[138] Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity; A History of the Reform Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 49.

[139] Arthur Galliner, "Goethes Stellung zur Religion, ein Beitrag zum 300 jährigen Geburtstage *Baruch Spinozas* am 24 November 1932", *Mitteilungen der Jüdischen Reform Gemeinde zu Berlin* 1932, no. 6 (1932): 14.

[140] Lehmann, "Baruch Spinoza (Zum 250. Todestage)", 15.

Baeck and Willy Aron. In his article, Leo Baeck, who had also written his doctoral dissertation on the subject, argued that Spinoza's mind and personality were Jewish.[141] Willy Aron, who wrote about Spinoza's influence on Western thought, argued that more and more "denkenden Kreisen" (thinking circles), including "Die Orthodon Kreise" (the orthodox circle), realized that Spinoza should never have been banned. In his article, Aron listed a number of German Jews who considered Spinoza to be Jewish, including Mendelssohn, Heine and the rabbi Tobias Cohn, who spoke at the 1877 Spinoza jubilee.[142] To Aron, the embrace of Spinoza by such significant Jewish figures demonstrated that Spinoza no longer was a Jewish outcast. Instead, Aron concluded that "er war unser" (he was ours).[143] Another article, written by rabbi Kahlberg, was even titled: "Dürfen wir Spinoza zu den unsrigen Rechnen?" (May we count Spinoza as ours?) He argued, *we* were indeed allowed to. Kahlberg considered Spinoza, to be the greatest Jewish philosopher, and his interpretation of Spinoza's Jewishness was truly in line with Reform Judaism. According to Kahlberg, the reason why Spinoza received such ill-treatment from Jews during his lifetime was the lack of a Jewish Reform Movement. Kahlberg did not doubt that, if such a movement had existed in seventeenth century Amsterdam, instead of being banned Spinoza would have been recognized as a great man.[144]

George Goetz's view was, however, the most extreme. In an article called Propheten und Philosophen he did not hesitate to compare Spinoza to Moses.[145] Both men, Goetz argued, had been forsaken by the Jews of their time, and embraced by Jews of later ages. Their achievements were also similar, and as Goetz wrote: "Moses gibt den Gott der Väter einen neuen Namen; Spinoza lehrt die wahre, von je bestehende unveränderliche Philosophie vermittels seines neuen Systems. Mit dem neuen Gottesnamen und mit dem neuartigen System lehren sie beide das gleiche Eine." (Moses gives God the Father a new name; Spinoza

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[141] Baeck, *Spinozas erste Einwirkungen auf Deutschland*; ——, "Sein deutsches Echo".

[142] Rabbiner Dr. Tobias Cohn, *Spinoza am zweiten Säculartage seines Todes. Vortrag in der "Litterarischen Gesellschaft" zu Potsdam* (Potsdam 1877).

[143] Aron, "Benedictus de Spinoza und das Judentum".

[144] A. Kahlberg, "Dürfen wir Spinoza zu den Unsrigen rechnen?", *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung Organ der Vereinigung für das liberale Judentum e.V.* 7, no. 7 (1927).

[145] George Goetz, "Propheten und Philosophen, zum Gedenken an Benedikt Spinoza", *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung* 7, no. 7 (1927).

teaches through his system, the true and unchanging philosophy that has always existed. With its new name of God and with its new system, both teach the same Oneness).

Goetz's article concluded that Spinoza's concept of God as *Ens constans infinitis attributis* (A single being with infinite attributes) was equivalent to the Jewish *Ehejeh ascher ehejeh, Jahve echad* (I am what I am, the one being). Yet, at the same time, Goetz explicitly warned against a Zionist use of Spinoza's Jewishness, nor did he want Spinoza to be made exclusively Jewish; Spinoza, he argued clearly, should not become a Jewish "Aushängeschild" (front). In Goetz's opinion, Jews were allowed to "Spinoza zu den Unsern rechnen" (count Spinoza as "ours"), but this also implied that Jews had the responsibility of accepting Spinozism. For Goetz, this meant to not bind, as Zionists would, Spinoza's knowledge of truth to a "nationale Gemeinschaft" (national community), but to realize that his ideas (just as those of Moses) were destined for humanity in its entirety.

Conclusion

Living within the pressure of an increasing anti-Semitic social environment, the Jews of Weimar Germany developed two strategies: They could fight the growing anti-Semitic sentiment, in line with an integrationist worldview, by hammering home that German Jews and non-Jews were all members of the same nation. Alternatively, they could insist, in line with a separatist Jewish worldview, that as a nation they were worth at least as much, and perhaps even more than the German nation and that they were therefore not dependent on Germany.

After the Second World War, the problem of knowing which of the integrationist or separatist strategies the Jews of Weimar Germany followed (and, therefore, of knowing from where they drew their social allegiances) became a debate of its own. This debate was heavily influenced by the destruction of German Jewry during the Nazi era, as well as by the success of the creation of the independent Jewish State of Israel. It also became common, especially among Zionists, to condemn German Jewry for having clung to the virtues of emancipation and integration.

We have seen that both the integrationist and separatist perspectives were present in the social motivations for the Spinoza celebrations. Indeed, celebrating Spinoza for his influence on German

thought implicates an integrationist frame of mind. Spinoza's success in Germany proved that it was possible for Jews to be part of German culture, and was used as an argument that Jews deserved a place in German society. Emphasizing Spinoza's Jewishness, on the other hand, put more weight on the greatness of the Jewish nation, and supported arguments behind the separatist view that Jews were not dependent on Germany. These two visions seem to be diametrically opposed to each other. It would appear that, if we reconsider how the *CV-Zeitung* phrased the choice, races can either understand each other or not. Moreover, these two positions could, and did, lead to heated debates on the question of how to fight anti-Semitism. It seems, therefore, that if we want to discover shared social meaning in the unity of Jewish celebrations of Spinoza, it would have to be either an integrationist or a separatist meaning. Nonetheless, the Spinoza celebrations simultaneously expressed these two contradictory views.

For that reason, it may be better to argue that celebrating Spinoza, on the one hand, for his significance in German culture and, on the other hand, for his Jewishness stressed separate aspects of one ambiguous culture. The celebrations of Spinoza show that, in many cases, the same Weimar Jews that harbored an integrationist worldview also harbored a separatist worldview. The Spinoza celebrations, therefore, do not teach us that this Jewish culture of Weimar Germany was under the sway of liberal universalism, nor do they teach us that it was under the sway of the anti-liberal separatism of the Jewish Renaissance. Rather, the celebrations put the finger on the ambiguity of this culture, which can, at once, be universalistic and separatist. Most of all, the simultaneous universalistic and separatist meanings of the Spinoza celebrations can also explain their success. The attraction of Spinoza was that he could be recruited for proponents of both views, and celebrating him avoided the conflict between them. Without such a conflict German Jews could escape the dilemmas Weimar Germany pressed upon them. Spinoza provided an alternative, showing that they could be both German and Jew.

The social element was just one of the aspects of Spinoza's popularity. In the following two chapters, we will explore two further themes that bridged divisions within Weimar Jewry: the moral aspects of the Spinoza celebrations (Chapter III), and the meta-historical ideas Jews expressed when they celebrated Spinoza (Chapter IV).

CHAPTER THREE

INTEGRATION AND AUTHENTICITY

To this point, we have discussed Spinoza's significance as a mediator of the social alignments on which the Jews of Weimar Germany found themselves divided. But the choices Weimar Jews needed to make often went deeper than the simple question to which group they wanted to belong. Those choices also involved the inner principles directing their ways of life. Most of all, the Weimar Jews needed to decide on the significance of what it meant to be Jewish not only in the social but also in the religious and moral sense. Like the social issue, this essentially ethical issue had also been a heritage of the destruction of the Ghetto. Once Jews could freely move in non-Jewish, Christian or liberal societies, debates had emerged on the question whether Judaism was still a sufficient guide for their conduct. Did all Jews need to convert to Christianity, Did Judaism perhaps, need to be adapted? Or was it possible to hold on to a religion with its particular beliefs, values and rules, in the midst of a society that did not? Maybe the solution was to be not religious at all; but was it still possible then to consider oneself a Jew? And what did it mean then to be an unreligious Jew?

Underlying all these questions was an even more fundamental choice Weimar Germany saw themselves faced with. This was the choice between, on the one hand, what I will call an ethics of integration, which emanated from a liberal worldview, and on the other hand an ethics of authenticity, which belonged to the values of neo-Romanticism. German Jews made different choices in these matters which sharpened their divisions. Movements such as the religious Reform and Zionism provided different answers to them.

Here too, investigating the way German Jews celebrated Spinoza may offer valuable insights. Celebrating Spinoza was not only a social act, but a form of remembrance that also entailed a moral imperative. Authors like Yerushalmi and Margalit have emphasized the relevance of this aspect of remembrance, Yerushalmi by pointing to the Jewish religious commandment of *Zahor!*, which means "remember!"; Margalit, by discussing the moral authority of witnesses of historical

events, usually of a catastrophic nature.[1] But this moral imperative also applies to the iconization of historical figures, whose ideas and lives serve as ethical models.

The act of celebrating Spinoza, raised him, his works and the way he led his life to the level of an ethical authority. Articles written during the Spinoza celebrations described the virtue of his life and opinions, and, in doing so, elevated Spinoza to a moral role model. While our analysis of the social meaning of the Spinoza celebrations has shed light on the social self-perceptions of the culture of Weimar Jewry, the ethical significance attributed to Spinoza developed in the course of the celebrations can reveal much about the identification with the ethics of that same culture. In this chapter, we will investigate how German Jews believed Spinoza showed them how they should behave. But before we can examine the Spinoza celebrations themselves, we need to look more closely at the dilemma between the liberal ethics of integration and the neo-romantic ethics of authenticity.

The Ethics of Integration

One of the most powerful and influential German expressions of value used in the moral justification of Jewish emancipation is the Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise* (1779). To appreciate the ethical aspect of the pre-Weimar liberal culture of *Bildung*, it is particularly helpful to look at what this play stood for. It is of interest here specifically because German Jews themselves frequently pointed to it to justify their emancipation. The impact of this play in the emancipation of German Jewry can hardly be exaggerated. Many Jews considered it to be a charter for Jewish emancipation, and used it as an ethical compass. The play did not loose its moral weight during the Weimar Republic. On the contrary, its status as a model for ethical conduct remained, even after the Nazis had taken over power. The choice of the exclusively Jewish *Kulturbund* (founded with National-Socialist permission in 1933, after Jews had been forbidden to work in State-sponsored cultural institutions) to respond to the anti-Jewish mood in Germany by staging *Nathan der Weise* as its first play is just one illustration of the strength of the symbolism, and enduring moral

[1] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory*.

significance of the play.[2] One reason for its Jewish popularity was how Lessing depicted his friend, and father of Jewish emancipation, Moses Mendelssohn, in Nathan – the character of the wise Jew. The true ethical force of the play came, however, from one particularly famous passage: the so called ring-parable. This parable was based on Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and it was widely considered to be one of the most powerful expressions of German Enlightenment thought. As such, the parable represents the core of the play, and the essence of its ethical strength.

The ring-parable is told by Nathan after he is asked why he had always remained Jewish. Nathan then relates the story of a father of three sons who possessed a precious ring with the secret power "vor Gott Und Menschen angenehm zu machen, wer / In dieser Zuversicht ihn trug" (Of God and man beloved, who in this view / And this persuasion, wore it).[3] The father could not decide which of his sons he would leave the ring to. Therefore, he ordered an artisan to make two other rings that looked exactly like the original, and separately gave each son one of the rings under the auspices that they had received the true ring. Of course, after the death of the father each son claimed to have the only genuine ring. To solve the dispute they asked a judge to decide, each hoping the judge would mark their ring as authentic. Instead of pointing to one of the rings, the judge challenged the sons to show the power of the ring with his verdict:

> *Es eifre jeder seiner unbestochnen*
> *Von Vorurteilen freien Liebe nach!*
> *Es strebe von euch jeder um die Wette,*
> *Die Kraft des Steins in seinem Ring' an Tag*
> *Zu legen! komme dieser Kraft mit Sanftmut,*
> *Mit herzlicher Verträglichkeit, mit Wohltun,*
> *Mit innigster Ergebenheit in Gott Zu Hilf'!*[4]
>
> (Let each feel honoured by this free affection.
> Unwarped by prejudice; let each endeavour
> to vie with both his brothers in displaying
> the virtue of his ring; assist it's might
> with gentleness, benevolence, forbearance,
> with inward resignation to the godhead)[5]

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[2] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*.
[3] Mendels-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World; a Documentary History*, 64.
[4] Ibid., 67.
[5] Use has been made here of the translation by William Taylor of Norwich.

Nathan then explained that the three rings of the parable represented Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The meaning of the parable was that, just as with the rings, which religion was the genuine religion could not be determined. What mattered were not the particular truths the different religions propounded, but the effect these religions produced on people.

It was this message that made the ring-parable so popular among a Jewish population that was attempting to integrate into German society. For them, the essence of the story was that the genuineness, the authenticity, of the rings did not matter. Nathan taught that, just as the rings were not to be judged on their authenticity, religions were not to be judged on their Truth. What mattered most in both cases was the effect they exerted. All the sons had to do to win the dispute was to behave virtuously. If they did assist the power of the ring, in the words of Lessing, "Mit herzlicher Verträglichkeit, mit Wohltun, Mit innigster Ergebenheit in Gott" (With gentleness, benevolence, forbearance, with inward resignation to the godhead), then the authenticity of the rings, or the Truth of the religions was only of secondary concern. To emancipating Jewry, the crucial element of this ethic was the value of acting over believing, and effect over truth. Lessing taught that how a person behaved was of superior importance ethically than the truth of his or her specific religious beliefs.

The liberal message of tolerance embedded within this parable made a significant difference in the religiously inspired social treatment the Jews had received from the non-Jewish authorities in pre-modern society. This accounts for the popularity of the play among German Jews. Before Jewish emancipation, improvement of the civil position of Jews was always linked to their acceptance of Christian faith. The second-rate social treatment Jews received was justified with the argument that, by having the wrong faith and refusing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they were ethically inferior and could not, therefore, be trusted. The only way Jews could gain equal rights was through conversion to Christianity. This option was, however, problematic; Jews could not be forced to believe what is true or not. Being baptized to be accepted in a guild, without believing in the dogmas of Christianity, that is, without being genuinely converting, was an act of insincerity, an immoral act. In separating the virtuousness of Jews from their beliefs, Lessing claimed that Jews could indeed be virtuous and that they were suited to fill any position in society fulfilled by non-Jews, without, at the same time, believing in the principles of Christianity.

In so doing, Lessing separated morality from religious dogma, and cleared the way for religious tolerance and Jewish emancipation.

During the nineteenth century, the message of tolerance expressed by Lessing in the ring-parable became so important that it almost served as a compensatory religion for the parallel loss of Jewish religious sentiment.[6] German Jews continued to admire, publish and stage *Nathan der Weise*. They erected monuments to Lessing, and a leader of a Reform Synagogue even advised in any given situation, to do what Lessing would have done. "So much for the relevance of the Bible", one historian later commented.[7] It is in this way, we can trace in Lessing's ring-parable the ethical justification for liberal sympathies of the Jewish culture of *Bildung*.

The popularity of the ethical message of the ring-parable also explains Jewish enthusiasm for Spinoza. First of all, Spinoza's philosophy contained elements that could be explained as a message of tolerance similar to that of *Nathan der Weise*; the separation between belief and behavior may be considered the ultimate purpose of the TTP. There, Spinoza attempted to defend the freedom to philosophize, by arguing that "while to act against the sovereign's decree is definitely an infringement of his right, this is not the case with thinking, judging, and consequently with speaking too."[8] In other words, the law has the right to judge people on their actions only, and not on their beliefs; beliefs should be of no interest to a sovereign.

This aspect of Spinoza's philosophy gained further strength from the legendary way in which he lived his life. He never compromised his beliefs, suffered the great ban with equanimity, and he enjoyed a reputation of virtuousness. Spinoza firmly believed that despite his, at times, shocking and provocative new ideas, he never did anything, or wrote, anything to upset the peace of his country. For these reasons, others gave him the title of the "virtuous atheist."[9] Spinoza himself responded in a letter to the accusation that he was an atheist, with the argument that since he had never been immoral he could not be an atheist.[10] To him, atheism was the same as immoral behaviour.

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[6] Michael A. Meyer, ed. *Emancipation and Acculturation: 1780–1871*, 4 vols., vol. 2, German-Jewish History in Modern Times (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 201–02.

[7] Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 15.

[8] Spinoza, *TTP*, 224.

[9] Pierre Bayle, *Écrits sur Spinoza* (Paris: Berg International, 1983), 140, 68.

[10] Spinoza to Jacob Ostens: Sp. *Ep.* 43.

Finally, Spinoza developed a liberal reputation because, even though he had been ostracized from the Jewish community, he never became Christian.[11] This, in the context of the seventeenth century, put him in a quite unique secular social position. Furthermore, he seems not to have seen anything immoral in not adhering to any religion, especially as it never led him to behave in an immoral manner. Another reason why it was likely that Spinoza was admired as a predecessor of liberalism was that his name was associated with Lessing. When Jacobi revealed that Lessing had been a Spinozist, he wanted – in an old-fashioned way – to discredit Lessing, and the ideas of the Enlightenment Lessing stood for. However, after much debate between German thinkers, it turned out that instead of the dismissal of Lessing, Jacobi's revelation caused a rehabilitation of Spinoza.[12] A positive association of the liberal Lessing with Spinoza stuck. Spinoza's attacks on organized religion and on the traditional concept of God were now counted to Spinoza's credit and were no longer considered a means to condemn others. Spinoza was not seen as an atheist anymore, but as someone who rightly attacked organized religion, a true forerunner of the defense of religious tolerance and freedom of thought.

Ethics of Authenticity

Such ideas were contested, however, by the neo-Romanticist spirit which had become the backbone of German nationalism and permeated so much of Weimar culture, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Just as Lessing's ring-parable illuminated the liberalism of Jewish culture, this same spirit could also show how Weimar Jewry's focusing on authenticity constituted a break from liberalism. As has been noted, the ethical message of the ring-parable was one of tolerance. This message of tolerance was based on the idea that the civil effect of religious beliefs was more important than their dogmatic truth. The authenticity of the rings was not relevant; only their effect mattered. The search for

[11] We do not know this for certain, but this is the way he has always been remembered.

[12] This rehabilitation was mostly the work of Mendelssohn, Herder and Goethe. Mendelssohn, "Philosophische Gespräche"; Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes* (Berlin 1785); Goethe, "Aus meinem Leben, Dichtung und Wahrheit", 76–83; Herder, "Gott, Einige Gespräche", in *Herders Philosophie. Ausgewählte Denkmäler aus der Werdezeit der neuen deutschen Bildung*, ed. Horst Stephan (Leipzig: Aufbau, 1906).

authenticity likewise suited an important current of Weimar cultural criticism that dismissed such liberal thinking as being too arbitrary. As a sociologist wrote at the time: "Die aufklärische-westliche Gesinnung hat zwar sehr viel von Freiheit gesprochen, aber sie hat immer nur Willkur gemeint." (The enlightened-occidental disposition may have spoken much about freedom, but it has always meant arbitrariness).[13] Such thinking was also expressed in a belief that favored the authenticity of "culture" over the inauthenticity of "civilization". As August Winnig wrote: "Fremd ist uns die Zivilisation, nah die Kultur, […] Die Lebensformen der Zivilisation sind nicht von uns geschaffen. Der nicht hineingeborene deutsch Mensch […] trägt den Widerstand gegen sie in sich. Es ist die Widerstand gegen die Entseelung des Lebens, in welcher der Deutsche die Gefahr der Auflösung und des Verfalls der Gemeinschaft wittert." (To us civilization is alien, but culture near, […] The ways of living of civilization have not been created for us. The non-native German carries with him an opposition towards it. It is the opposition against the soullessness of life, in which the German traces the danger of dissolution and decay of the community).[14] This line of thinking also manifested in the popularity of the *fin-de-siècle* cultural criticism of people like Julius Langbehn and Richard Wagner, who blamed the in-authenticity of liberalism for the sorry state they held German culture to be in. Peter Gay described this criticism as "the Weimar common-place, that the modern world was fragmenting man, breaking him apart, estranging him from his society and his real inner nature."[15] Far from valuing effect over belief, this current emphasized the emotional life of the individual, his search for *innerlichkeit* and authenticity. In contrast to the lesson of the ring-parable, which revolved around the separation of belief from behavior, the ethics that belonged to this current of neo-Romantic cultural criticism did *not* separate between man's feelings, or beliefs, and his behavior. Man was to follow his true, authentic nature and this duty surpassed in importance even the morality or immorality of behavior towards others.

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[13] Georg Weippert as quoted in: Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik; Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962), 185.

[14] August Winnig as quoted in: Ibid., 313.

[15] Gay, *Weimar Culture; The Outsider as Insider*, 59.

There was also a Jewish pendant to this search for authenticity. This could be found in the neo-Romantic rebellion against these values of the Weimar Jewish Renaissance.[16] Such rebellion can also be exemplified by the renewed interest in the irrational, but "authentic", Judaism of the *Ostjude*, or in Jewish traditions such as the Cabbalah or Hassidism, which ran parallel with the development of *völkisch* ideals among German nationalists. All these movements searched for authentic roots, which served to illuminate the authentic and usually superior and moral nature of the Jewish or German nation.

Celebrating the Value of Tolerance

During the nineteenth century, German Jews, under the sway of liberalism, discovered Spinoza as one of their predecessors. A good example of this is Berthold Auerbach. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Auerbach translated Spinoza's complete works into German and wrote a popular novel on Spinoza's life. In 1880, at the end of his life, Auerbach explained that to him, Spinoza's significance had been that he had been the first "*homo liber*",[17] a person truly free of religious bondage. But was this still the case in the latter years of the Weimar Republic? Were the Spinoza celebrations a celebration of liberalism, just as the staging of *Nathan der Weise* in 1933 was? Did Weimar Jewry also celebrate Spinoza as an early representative of Lessing's message of tolerance?

In terms of ethical characterizations as a motivation for the Jewish celebration of Spinoza, there were articles published at the time clearly articulating this. These were articles that celebrated Spinoza as a father of liberalism, or as a father of the Enlightenment. Often they offered a direct comment on the threatening political situation present in Weimar Germany. As a defense of liberalism and Enlightenment, they defended the Republic, which was growing more unpopular by the day, and the Republic's positive attitude towards Jews.

One of the best examples, is one article on Spinoza's political theory, honoring Spinoza as "the father of political liberalism", published by the

[16] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 129–211.

[17] Berthold Auerbach, "Feuilleton. Spinoza-Arbeiten, ein Stück aus meinem Leben (Schluß)", *neue Freie Presse* 1880.

philosopher Aron Gurwitsch in *the Frankfurter Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt*.[18] Gurwitsch celebrated Spinoza for his political philosophy. In Spinoza's political ideas, he saw a response to the religious discord and persecutions that had ravaged Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gurwitsch believed freedom of thought in the Low Countries was the reason behind the Dutch succeeding in securing their independence: "die in Spinozas Tagen noch frische Erinnerung an den Abfall der Niederlande bewies, daß…der freie Staat stärker ist, als der despotisch regierte" (the Dutch rebellion, which was a fresh memory in Spinoza's day proved that the free state is stronger than the state that is despotically ruled). Moreover, according to Gurwitz, Spinoza developed these ideas for the benefit of the "geniale" (brilliant) Grand Pensionary Jan de Witt, who, within the Dutch political landscape, upheld "einem gewissen Liberalismus" (a certain liberalism) against the "von den calvinistischen Predikanten aufgehetzten Volksmassen" (multitude incited by Calvinist preachers).[19]

Gurwitsch noted that, like Hobbes, Spinoza believed that men originally lived in a natural state of total war, and since this total war was unbearable they transferred their rights to some sort of government. But what, in Gurwitsch's eyes, made Spinoza and not Hobbes "Vater des politischen Liberalismus" (father of political liberalism) was the last chapter of the TTP. There, Spinoza also argued that while men could transfer their right to act as they pleased to a sovereign power, they could never surrender their right "zu denken, zu fühlen und zu wollen" (to think, to feel and to want). The merit of Spinoza's political thought showed how a good citizen would always have to comply with the laws of the state he lived in, but could never be limited in his freedom of thought. Gurwitsch stressed that for Spinoza it was in the clear interest of a government to secure freedom of thought. Spinoza understood that a government that denied freedom of thought was in danger of becoming an instrument of "fanatischen Sektieren und Glaubensparteien" (fanatical sects and religious parties). Such sectarian

[18] Aron Gurwitsch, "Die politische Theorie Spinozas", *Frankfurter Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* 11, no. 3 (1932).

[19] The emphasis on the Enlightened culture of Spinoza's native Holland was a recurring topic in the Spinoza celebrations. See: Schemaria (Lithographien von Joseph Budko) Gorelik, "Spinoza", in *Jüdische Köpfe* (Berlin: Gurlitt, 1920), 99–100; Max Behrens, "Wo Spinoza lebte…Die Juden von Amsterdam damals und heute", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 34, no. 47 (1932). See also chapter four.

groups would fight each other to win the favor of the government, which would undermine the stability of the state.

Gurwitsch did not limit himself to the seventeenth century. Indeed, he argued that Spinoza's political theory was of particular urgency in "eine Zeit wie die unsrige, der Klassen-, Interessen- und Gesinnungskämpfe, ihren Character verleihen, und die wieder einmal die Anschauung von dem vermittelt, was der Naturzustand im Gegensatz zum bürgerlichen Zustand ist." (an era, like ours, which is marked by class, interest and confessional strife that give it its character, and which again shows us the difference between the state of nature as compared to the civil state).[20] To Gurwitsch, the ideological strife within the Weimar Republic – "Klassen-, Interessen- und Gesinnungskämpfe" (Class, interest and confessional strife) – was a modern version of the religious strife that had undermined international stability during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Transposing this comment to the political climate of the Weimar Republic in November 1932, ideological struggles in the Republic undermined the stability of the State. Struggles between Fascists, Communists, and Nationalists not only put the Weimar Republic at risk, they also threatened to bring about a wholesome return to a pre-civilization "Naturzustand" (state of nature), a condition where everybody was at war with everybody else, and where there was protection for no one. In such a climate, Spinoza's political liberalism, with its emphasis on freedom of thought, was desperately needed. By celebrating Spinoza as the father of liberalism therefore, Gurwitsch ultimately defended a political view of which he thought his own era was in desperate need for. Gurwitsch's celebration of Spinoza was a defense of the Weimar Republic, as well as a weapon against its anti-Republican and anti-Jewish forces.

The *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*, one of the main organs of Reform Judaism in Germany, also attempted to mold Spinoza into an authority prescribing liberalism as a solution to problems of the Weimar Republic. The opening article of its 1932 Spinoza issue was written by Max Wiener (1882–1950), a leading rabbi of the Reform Movement.[21] Wiener's celebration of Spinoza for his liberal

[20] Gurwitsch, "Die politische Theorie Spinozas".

[21] Max Wiener, "Spinoza", *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin* 22, no. 11 (1932).

values is particularly noteworthy, since Wiener was generally critical of the Enlightenment and of the benefits of Jewish emancipation. In a sense, Wiener's views were a typical example of the Weimar Jewish revival. He belonged to a generation of German Jews who had been firmly rooted in rationalism and liberalism, but who had changed views after the First World War. After the War, which he experienced as a field rabbi, he came to believe that the Jewish spirit had suffered from Jewish civil emancipation and the end of the Ghetto era. In 1922, in a speech at the Convention of Reform Rabbis in Germany, he broke with the fundaments of post-emancipation liberalism, the belief in rationalism and universalism, which had been so dominant among German Jews before the First World War. Instead, he pleaded for anti-liberal values, such as a religious revival and the particularity of the Jewish people as a Chosen People.[22]

Yet, when it came to celebrating Spinoza, Wiener returned to his pre-War embrace of liberalism. Wiener not only celebrated Spinoza, he celebrated Spinoza for his liberal values, defense of freedom of thought, and defense of tolerance. Wiener's celebration of Spinoza as a liberal even led him to oppose any exclusively Jewish celebration of Spinoza. In contrast to those who tried to incorporate Spinoza into Jewish tradition, throughout the article he wrote in the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin,* Wiener stressed the discontinuity of Spinoza with his past. For Wiener, Spinoza did not stand in a "Gefühlstradition" (tradition) with Judaism.[23] He was not to be viewed as a continuation of medieval Jewish traditions, but as someone who broke with Judaism. As a consequence, he refuted the common theory that the rabbis of Amsterdam excommunicated Spinoza out of a fear he would bring the Jewish community in disrepute. This, Wiener believed, ignored the genuinely heretical ideas of Spinoza. He instead argued that Spinoza's ban was caused by the ideological differences between Spinoza and the Amsterdam Jewish community. In the *Herem*, Wiener only saw a confirmation of Spinoza's own mental break with Judaism, which, in his opinion, preceded it.[24] By the same token, Wiener was sure that Spinoza's views were unacceptable to the Christian world. He was certain that if Spinoza had died later than he

[22] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 45.
[23] Wiener, "Spinoza", 265.
[24] Max Wiener, "Unser Spinoza? Ein Nachwort zum Jubiläum", *Jüdische Zeitung (jüdische Volkszeitung)* 40, no. 4 (1933).

did, he would surely have come into conflict with non-Jewish authorities, and Wiener was certain that Spinoza would then have been executed for his ideals.

Wiener finally argued for a celebration of Spinoza's political liberalism by playing down the importance of the *Ethica* in favor of that of the TTP. While Wiener admitted that the *Ethica* was of great importance, he also thought that Spinoza should not be celebrated for it. He described the influence of the metaphysical theories of the *Ethica* as merely "eine interne Angelegenheit der Geschichte der Philosophie" (an internal affair of the history of philosophy).[25] It was Spinoza-the-author-of-the-TTP who should be celebrated. It was the TTP that made Spinoza into "einer der gewaltigsten Inauguratoren der europäischen Aufklärung" (one of the most awesome inaugurators of the European Enlightenment). Like Gurwitsch, Wiener compared Spinoza to Hobbes and, like Gurwitsch, he noted Spinoza's friendship with the liberal statesman Jan de Witt. While emphasizing Spinoza's "liberalen Lebensgefühls" (liberal attitude toward life), Wiener also considered the TTP to be a defense of de Witt's political views, which he believed to be relevant to the political situation of Germany in 1932: "Im Augenblick scheint es, als ob unser Erdteil, ganz besonders aber unser Land, dem Spinoza mehr bedeutet hat als irgend einem andern, in kaum noch zu erweiterndem Abstande von seinen Idealen der persönlichen Freiheit, der geistigen Toleranz und der vernunftklaren Durchdringung der Aufgaben von Mensch und Menschheit stehen." (At present it seems as if our part of the world, in particular our country, to which Spinoza has meant more than to any other, stands as far as possible from its ideals of personal freedom, spiritual tolerance and reasonable awareness of the challenges for man and mankind).[26] Celebrating Spinoza could shorten this distance.

In his article, Wiener did not ignore his own criticism of Enlightenment. Indeed, he argued that Jews had lost much with the end of the Ghetto Era: "Aufklärung und Liberalismus haben uns Juden, die diese Bewegungen im schwächsten Augenblick ihrer ganzen Geschichte trafen, fast noch mehr zerschlagen an altem eingeborenen Erbgut als allen andern rings um uns" (Enlightenment and Liberalism have defeated us Jews, whose movements were hit at the weakest moment in

[25] Wiener, "Spinoza", 266.
[26] Ibid.

their entire history, in our heritage more than any others around us).[27] But, in his final reckoning, Wiener nevertheless maintained that Jews could never have dispensed with liberalism. It should not be forgotten, he argued, that in the end Jews gained more from Enlightenment than they lost from it. Wiener concluded his article with an incontestable acclamation of Spinoza's liberalism. He expressed the hope that "in einem neuen Jahrhundert Freiheit und Humanität, wie dieser Sohn unsres Stammes sie die Welt gelehrt hat, frei von den Schlacken, mit denen Vergangenheit sie durchsetzt, noch einmal die Menschheit erleuchte!" (in a new century, the values of freedom and humanity will enlighten mankind one more time, in the way the son of our tribe has taught them to the world, free from the waste products, which the past has riddled them with!)[28] Of course, such a phrase had to refer to the political situation of November 1932, when the ideals of Freedom and Humanity were endangered by the rise of National Socialism. Like Gurwitsch, Wiener hoped that a celebration of Spinoza could bring the inhabitants of the Weimar Republic back to reason.

The *CV-Zeitung* also justified the celebration of Spinoza with values that can be associated with liberalism and their immediate need in 1932. Ludwig Holländer (1877–1936) himself, the leader of the *Central-Verein* which published the newspaper, wrote the opening article of its 1932 Spinoza issue. Holländer had been occupied with Spinoza for many years, and in 1910 he became the first president of the *Spinoza-Loge* (Spinoza lodge) of the Berlin branch of the international Jewish fraternal order, *B'nei brith*. The *Spinoza-Loge* took its name seriously, organizing many lectures and discussions on Spinoza. Such gatherings were aimed at the goal of the *Loge*, which was to be "characterbildend gerade für Erwachsene" (edifying, particularly for adults).[29] Holländer believed that celebrating Spinoza was necessary in a time when the German Jewish community was in danger of being destroyed by National Socialist hate and lies. He wrote forthrightly about the necessity of Spinoza's philosophy at a time when

> wir das Maß von Feindschaft und Haß überblicken, das heute den Tag und Markt und Menge bewegt, wenn wir die Unvernunft, die uns umgibt,

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ludwig Holländer, "Vorgeschichte Und Gründungszeit Der Spinoza-Loge", in *Erinnerungsblätter Zur Feier Des Fünfundzwanzigjährigen Bestehens Der Spinoza-Loge in Berlin* (Berlin: 1935), 7.

> empfinden, wenn wir den Haß unter den Völkern, die Grausamkeit, mit der die Menschen sich befehden, sehen, wenn wir uns immer wieder überzeugen müssen, daß die größte politische Partei Deutschlands mit allen Mitteln der Unwahrheit und Gehässigkeit unsere kleine Gemeinschaft zu vernichten sucht.
>
> (we survey the degree of hostility and hatred, which currently stirs the marketplace and the masses; when we experience the irrationality that surrounds us, when we feel the hatred among peoples, see the cruelty with which people feud, when we have to keep convincing ourselves that the greatest political party of Germany uses all the means of falsehood and venom to destroy our small community).[30]

Against the National Socialist dangers of "Feindschaft und Haß", "Unvernunft" (animosity and hatred, irrationality) he cast what he believed to be the values of Spinoza's philosophy. What could be learned from Spinoza was that neither "brutale Gewalt" (brute violence) nor "Gruppenfeindschaft" (group animosity) could achieve the goal of the "innere Sittlichkeit der Menschheit" (inner morality of humanity). Instead, Spinoza postulated values such as "das Streben, nach Geistesfreiheit und nach innere Erkenntnis" (the striving for intellectual freedom and inner awareness). Holländer viewed Spinoza's philosophy in a liberal light, pointing out that its final purpose was to secure freedom of thought. He understood Spinoza's political philosophy as striving for "eine reine Rechtsordnung" (a pure legal order), in the sense that the only duty of the State was to secure the peace of its citizens. To Holländer, this made Spinoza's political philosophy oppose any State based on religion or other kind of worldview. Spinoza had taught that, what citizens believe should be of no consequence to a State, as long as these beliefs do not threaten the peace.

Holländer blamed the romanticists for being responsible for what might be called a totalitarian conception of the power of the State. He described this conception as "von der Staatsmacht alles und jedes verlangen, ohne zu wissen woher die Staat die Mittel und die Macht zur Durchsetzung aller dieser Anspruche nehmen soll." (expecting everything and anything from the government, without knowing how the state could find the means and the power to realize all these demands).[31] In Holländer's eyes, Spinoza's liberal philosophy was topical because

[30] Ludwig Holländer, "Was Ist Uns Spinoza?", *C.V.-Zeitung* xi, no. 47 (1932): I.
[31] Ibid. II.

it served as a counterweight against this romanticism. Spinoza had, in his opinion, the privilege of enjoying not having to cope with "[j]ede romantische Auffassung, wie wir sie heute weitverbreit sehen" (such a romantic view, as we presently see everywhere). To Holländer, the importance of Spinoza was that he rejected this romantic conception of the State. Spinoza, who developed his ideas to oppose a religious State, could now be used to show what was wrong with a modern Fascist or National Socialist version of a religious State, which, like its religious predecessor, in Höllander's opinion, exerted far too much power over its citizens. In other words, Spinoza was still relevant in 1932 because the religious intolerance he fought against returned in a romantic guise.

We may thus conclude that the nineteenth century belief in the values of liberalism served for a number of authors and newspapers as the ethical motivation for the celebrations of Spinoza. These publications portrayed a Spinoza who was not necessarily Jewish. They tended to celebrate him for his political views, as expressed in TTP, rather than for his metaphysics, which he mostly included in the *Ethica*. These authors and newspapers emphasize that Spinoza's greatest contribution was his belief in religious tolerance, which he expressed in his opposition against political interference with religious beliefs and in his defense of freedom of thought. It is remarkable that these publications gave political meaning to their celebration of Spinoza's liberalism by referring to, whether in veiled or overt terms, the political problems facing the Weimar Republic. They were worried that the liberal fundaments of the Weimar Republic were in danger, and saw a modern version of religious tyranny in the enemies of the Republic, which they believed Spinoza already fought in the seventeenth century. This was relevant to the Jews, because anti-republicanism in Weimar Germany went hand-in-hand with anti-Semitism. All these authors and newspapers viewed the anti-Semitism of the National Socialists in the same anti-liberal light as pre-emancipation anti-Judaism. As such, the Spinoza celebrations are a perfect example of how Jews took refuge in upholding the values of liberalism, as an answer to a political climate that was becoming ever more hostile towards Jews.

Religious Authenticity

Gurwitsch, Wiener and Holländer offer good examples of Jews celebrating Spinoza for his importance as a founding father of the Enlightenment, and for his consequent liberal views in favor of tolerance and

freedom of thought. However, articles relating to the celebration of Spinoza also tended to emphasize the "authenticity" so valued by the neo-Romanticist critics of liberalism.

Spinoza was viewed as being authentic in the sense that his philosophy and behavior were not merely the result of rational deductions. They emanated from a highly personal and individual religious conviction, and were therefore an expression of an authentic – that is individually experienced – religious attitude. Such an attitude stood in opposition not only to rationalism, but also to existing religions' dogma and rituals that such notions of religiosity were considered petrified and inauthentic. The application of such an interpretation of authentic religiosity to Spinoza was the subject of a poem published in the *Jüdisches Wochenblatt für Magdeburg und Umgegend*, on the occasion of the 1927 jubilee. The poem celebrated Spinoza in a universal way, with the phrase that he ground lenses "[d]amit heller sähen – Juden sowie Christen" (so both Jew and Christian would see more clearly). The last verses of the poem argue that Spinoza managed this thanks to his religious soul:

> *Spinoza reifster aller Denker, sei Gesegnet!*
> *Ja, dir ist Gott im Denken und im Sein begegnet*
> *Ob dich die Welt auch einen Gottesleugner schalt.*
> *Der ist, wie du, voll Religion, der dich verstanden*
> *Dich hob der hohe Weltgeist frei aus Erdenbanden*
> *Unendlichkeit erklingt wo nur dein Name hallt.*
>
> (Spinoza, ripest of all thinkers, be blessed
> Yes, in your thinking and being, God is expressed
> Even if the world would label you denouncer of God
> Those who are full of religion will have understood
> The high world spirit elevated you, free from earthly bounds
> Eternity reverberates where your name resounds)[32]

The poem held that categorizing Spinoza as an atheist was mistaken. His role as an ethical example is made clearer by the argument that those who truly understood Spinoza, would, like him, be full of religion, or as another newspaper wrote: "von der Sehnsucht nach Gotteserkenntnis geboren und getragen." (born and moved by the longing

[32] Max Rosenfeld, "Baruch de Spinoza", *Jüdisches Wochenblatt für Magdeburg und Umgebung* 2, no. 11 (1927).

for the knowledge of God).[33] Such a view contrasts with liberalist interpretations of Spinoza, which praise Spinoza not for his religious attitude but for his defense of religious tolerance.

In the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*, Heinrich Kuhn argued that Spinoza's critique of the Bible was not a critique of religion, but of the uses that are made of religion. Spinoza might have rejected the "Zeremonial Gesetze" (ceremonial laws)[34] but this did not mean he was not religious at heart. Kuhn pointed out that for Spinoza the highest good remained "die Erkenntnis und Liebe Gottes" (the knowledge and love of God). Kuhn argued that someone who found divine presence "in jedem Stein und Baum" (in every stone and tree) could never be an atheist. Therefore, he wrote that, far from being an atheist, Spinoza was "ein Gottberauschter" (someome infatuated by God). He even began his article by quoting the German idealist and theoretician of a romanticist and personalized religion, Schleiermacher, who had written about his admiration of the "heiligen, verstoßenen Spinoza" (holy, outcast Spinoza). Schleiermacher had argued that Spinoza represented this inward religious attitude, and Kuhn believed Schleiermacher to have been correct. To Kuhn, this acclaim for Spinoza by Schleiermacher, whom he reminds us was a theologian, was the first point to remember when celebrating Spinoza.

The *Hamburger Israelitisches Familienblatt* went even further in celebrating Spinoza's religious attitude. It published an article that not only attacked the rabbis who banned Spinoza, but also opposed to Judaism Spinoza's alleged "religiöse Sehnsucht" (religious longing).[35] The author, Käte Hamburger, believed Spinoza's rational deductions only to be a means to arrive at this religious passion. In her article, she explained exactly where Spinoza departed from "das jüdische Schrifttum" (Jewish literature). Whereas Judaism had seen the Bible as a source of knowledge, to Spinoza it had been a source of morality. Also, whereas Judaism knows a personal God, Spinoza knew only the impersonal *Deus sive natura*. His differences with Judaism, however, did not imply that Spinoza had not been religious. On the contrary,

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[33] Willh. Meyer, "Spinoza", *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* 7, no. 6 (1927).

[34] Heinrich Kuhn, "Aus Baruch Spinozas Leben und Wirken", *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin* 17, no. 2 (1927).

[35] Käte Hamburger, "Spinoza und der Geist der jüdischen Gotteslehre", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 29, no. 8 (1927).

they only revealed his religious pathos. Hamburger explained that Spinoza's diversion from Judaism had come about not because of his atheism or secularism, but because of his deeply felt need for religion. As this religious attitude was not satisfied by the Judaism of his youth, Spinoza developed his own alternative. This alternative was his concept of the *amor dei intellectualis*, which to Hamburger was also the final purpose of Spinoza's philosophical system. In fact, to Hamburger, *amor dei intellectualis* was a "mystischen Glauben" (mystical faith). Therefore, it could be said: for Hamburger Spinoza had been too religious to remain Jewish.

Jewish Authenticity

Despite Hamburger's separation of Spinozism from Judaism, separatist commemorations of Spinoza celebrated him as a representative of an authentic *Jewish* religious attitude. In this respect, Spinoza was also celebrated as representing a Jewishness resulting from an inner-feeling believed to be authentically Jewish.

A good example of this was Martin Buber's (1878–1965) portrayal of Spinoza. The philosopher-theologian Buber himself had been instrumental in forming a separatist Jewish consciousness, offering an alternative to the assimilative rationalist and integrationist ideology of emancipation. Buber coined the phrase "Jewish Renaissance" in a speech he gave at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel (1901) about the promotion of secular Jewish culture.[36] In 1909, 1910 and 1911 he gave three "Addresses on Judaism" to a Zionist youth organization in Prague, which became the inspiration to a new generation for a new kind of unorthodox Jewish self-consciousness. Buber promoted this new Jewish consciousness by founding a the Jewish publishing house *Jüdischer Verlag* in 1902, and by founding in and editing *Der Jude*, a journal intended to promote Jewish intellectual debate, which ran from 1916 to 1928. Buber's interpretation of Spinoza should be placed in a perhaps even more important territory, where he led the way towards a new Jewish self-perception. This was a movement that developed a novel appreciation for Eastern Jewish culture as a source of authentic Judaism and it gained strong impetus from Buber's discovery of the

[36] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 24.

neglected history of Hassidism. Hassidism, a Jewish sect, originated in the eighteenth century with the mystic rabbi Baal Shem Tov. In contrast to the mainstream Jewish opinion prevailing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hassidism did not appear to Buber as an embarrassing deviation from Judaism. On the contrary, he viewed it as an authentic kind of Judaism that could serve as a source of inspiration to a modern Jewish spirit. Buber's interest in this sect led him to publish collections of its tales and legends. These Hassidic stories became very popular, and did much for the discovery and reevaluation of Eastern Jewish culture. They became a kind of *völkisch* Jewish mythology, opposed to the nineteenth century rationalist interpretation of Judaism.[37]

Buber's interest in Spinoza was as a consequence primarily derived from his interest in Hassidism. In the introduction to his publication containing Hassidic tales, *Gesamtausgabe der Chassidische Bücher*, he referred to Spinoza. On the occasion of the Spinoza celebrations, he republished in Hessing's *Spinozafestschrift* what he had written about Spinoza. A short summary of this article also found its way into the 1932 Spinoza issue of the Hamburger *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, and into the Zionist *Jüdische Rundschau*.[38]

Buber was, however, not uncritical of Spinoza. His interpretation of Spinoza was narrowly intertwined with his own philosophical ideas. As a result, the value Buber attached to Spinoza was highly dependent on the somewhat mystical neo-Romantic character of his theology. At the heart of it, stood what he believed to be the dialectical nature of the relation between Man and God, which he called a relation of "I and Thou". Buber maintained that Spinoza had failed to understand this relationship, and by equating God with Nature, Spinoza obstructed the dialogue with God. In Buber's eyes, Spinoza had taken from God His *Anredbarkeit* – His ability to be addressed. However, this did not make Spinoza un-Jewish to Buber. On the contrary, he saw Spinoza's mistake as being a profoundly Jewish mistake. He explained this through

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[37] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 128.

[38] Martin Buber, "Spinoza und die chassidische Botschaft", in *Spinoza-Festschrift Zum 300. Geburtstage Benedict Spinozas (1632–1932)*, ed. Siegfried Hessing (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1932); ———, "Geleitwort", in *Chassidischen Bücher (Gesamtausgabe)*; ———, "Der Chassidismus als Antword auf Spinoza", *Jüdische Rundschau* 37, no. 93 (1932); ———, "Die Rede", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 34, no. 49 (1932). The article was republished in 1935 in the Bücherei des Schocken Verlag: ———, *Deutung des Chassidismus – Drei Versuche* (Bücherei des schocken-Verlags 43, 1935).

his unorthodox view of what the essence of Judaism entailed. According to Buber, the true Jewish religious attitude was what he called the sanctification of the direct relationship between Man and Creation. Pure Jewish religious attitude was to be found in Man's direct interaction with the Universe. By this, Buber meant the unmitigated sacredness of daily practices of life such as eating, drinking, harvesting – all practices that existed in a pure form among the Hassidim.[39] It was in this kind of religious attitude that Buber discerned authentic Judaism. There was always a danger, however, that this true religious attitude would become the lesser derivative, *Religion*. In contrast to this religious attitude, *Religion* was a word with negative connotations for Buber. It is possible he understood the worship of empty symbols as, in a certain sense, idolatry. In Buber's words, a true religious attitude could result in *Religion* when "sich von der menschlichen Seite des Umgangs etwas ablöst und verselbständigt…sich an die Stelle des wirklichen Umgangs setzt." (something dissolves from the human side of the contact and becomes independent…putting itself in the place of the true contact). This was "das Kultisch Sakramentale" (the cultic sacramental). But this was no longer God, it was only "Bildsame Schein" (plastic illusiveness).[40] For Buber, therefore, *Religion* hampered rather than advanced dialogue with God.

According to Buber, Spinoza's philosophy was to be understood as a reaction against the prospering of *Religion*. This process reached a peak with the flourishing of Baroque when Spinoza was alive, which, to Buber, was evidence that *Religion* completely obscured God. Buber considered the artificiality of the Baroque artistic expression as evidence of this fake religiousness. According to Buber, it had been Spinoza's uneasiness with this *Zeitgeist* that led Spinoza to his philosophy. Although Buber did believe that Spinoza had gone too far in attacking Jewish religion, he still admired him. He perceived the same drive in Spinoza's thought that had inspired the Biblical prophets to protest the cult of sacrifice. According to Buber, this drive sprung out of an "urjüdische Antrieb" (primordial Jewish instinct).[41] Buber only blamed Spinoza for the fact that by rejecting *Religion* he also rejected the entire dialogue between Man and God. However, since this mistake

[39] Buber, *Deutung des Chassidismus – Drei Versuche*, 49.
[40] ———, "Die Rede".
[41] ———, *Deutung des Chassidismus – Drei Versuche*, 47.

was informed by an authentic Jewish instinct it was nevertheless still praiseworthy.

Of even more importance to Buber were the historical consequences of this Jewish drive. The Hassidim never knew of Spinoza, but, as Buber wrote, "[i]n der Wahrheit der Geschichte kann einer erwidern, ohne gehört zu haben." (in history one can answer without having heard).[42] The result was that Spinoza provoked a reaction within Jewry, which, Buber believed, indirectly led to the establishment of the Hassidism. The Hassidim responded to Spinoza by developing a Judaism that was not *Religion* and, in contrast to Spinoza, they preserved the dialogue with God. We may then conclude that Buber celebrated Spinoza for his Jewish drive that led him to oppose the artificiality of the Baroque, as well as for the historical effects of this drive, which led to the creation of one of the most authentic forms of Judaism.

Buber's celebration of Spinoza was ambiguous. While he admired Spinoza's primal Jewish drive, he was quite critical of Spinoza himself. Moreover, his main interest remained Hassidism. A similar, but more straightforward, celebration of the authenticity of Spinoza's Judaism was given in the Zionist-inspired regional newspaper the *Jüdische Zeitung für Ostdeutschland*.[43] In this newspaper, Zionist theoretician Felix Weltsch (1884–1964) argued that Spinoza was "der Philosoph der jüdischen Religion" (the philosopher of the Jewish religion). While Buber celebrated Spinoza for his "*urjudische Antrieb*", Weltsch argued that Spinoza brought the "Urelement" (primordial element) of Judaism to its ultimate philosophical conclusion. This, Weltsch described as "die Allmacht Gottes als einziges Bezugssystem alles Seins" (the omnipotence of God as the only reference of all being). Therefore, Weltsch called Spinoza's philosophical system a "zu Ende gedachtes Judentum" (to its conclusion conceived Judaism).

Weltsch did not believe that mere observance of Jewish Law constituted true Judaism. Judaism, he thought, was permitted in different forms. For example, Spinoza's philosophy was "a" Judaism brought to its final consequence, but not "the" Judaism brought to its final consequence. What mattered most to Weltsch, however, was that, with his philosophy, Spinoza demonstrated a "jüdische Denk-Intention"

[42] Ibid., 45.
[43] Weltsch, "Jüdische Gestalten: Baruch d'Espinoza".

(Jewish intention of thinking), which Weltsch called "Zu-Ende-Denken" (thinking-to-its-conclusion). In the end, Spinoza deserved to be celebrated for displaying such Jewish inner-feeling.

The idea that Spinoza represented an authentic form of Judaism was also attractive to the Reform Movement, which had adapted Judaism by modifying the traditional liturgy and rules. Such adaptations could be justified by postulating a type of Judaism that was more authentic than that of the Orthodoxy. The Reform Movement could then argue that its religious reform occurred in the name of authentic Judaism, and even argue that Orthodoxy had lost touch with authentic Judaism. Therefore, Spinoza could serve as an example of the existence of an authentic Jewish religious attitude. The incompatibility of his philosophy with Judaism only strengthened the thesis that authentic Jewish religious attitude should be distinguished from the specific form Judaism had taken in history.

Such a celebration of Spinoza can be found in an article published in the *Mitteilungen der Jüdischen Reformgemeinde zu Berlin*.[44] Like Buber, the author of this article, rabbi J. Lehmann, was critical of Spinoza. Acknowledging a debt to Hermann Cohen's severe criticism of Spinoza, Lehmann wrote that Judaism could never accept Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*. This, he wrote, put God and Man on an equal footing, whereas in Judaism, God always remained greater and more sacred than Man. Furthermore, Lehmann wrote that Spinoza "alienated" himself from Judaism through his criticism of the Hebrew Bible, which caused him to misunderstand important aspects of Judaism, such as the essence of Jewish prophecy.

Yet, despite his severe criticism of Spinoza's understanding of Jewish religion, Lehmann believed that Spinoza's ban had been wrong and even "un-Jewish". He was convinced that Spinoza had not only never forsaken his Jewishness, but also that he was "eine tief religiöse Seele, ein heiß glühendes Herz" (a deeply religious soul, a warmly glowing heart).[45] Lehmann cited a series of reasons supporting Spinoza's Jewishness. Like many others, he argued that Spinoza had been influenced by medieval Jewish philosophy and mysticism. He also referred to the authority of Mendelssohn, who argued that a purified Spinozism could

[44] Lehmann, "Baruch Spinoza (Zum 250. Todestage)".
[45] Ibid.

go hand-in-hand with Judaism.[46] And he invoked the authority of Spinoza's "treu-jüdische" (faithfully Jewish) biographer Freudenthal, who wrote that Spinoza had not been unpious.

But Lehmann also identified traits in Spinoza's writing that revealed his inner Jewishness. He even believed that two letters by Spinoza constituted a "Selbstbekenntnis" (confession) on this point. The first was a letter from Spinoza to Jacob Ostens, where he denied being an atheist, using a phrase that Lehman recognized as a quotation from the Talmud. In the other letter, Spinoza stated that his purpose had been the same as that of the Scriptures: to teach the love of one's neighbor and obedience to God.[47]

Lehmann had more reasons to celebrate Spinoza as a Jew. Indeed, he saw an implicit confession of Judaism in Spinoza's allusions to sacred Jewish texts. That Lehmann believed this Jewishness was as serious as it could be was visible in what he considered the summit of Spinoza's religious feelings, namely his noble, intellectual love of God. Lehmann believed this Spinozist notion to be nothing else but the divine exclamation of the prophet Hosea: "Liebe verlange ich, nicht Opfer, – Gotteserkenntnis, nicht Brandopfer!" (I demand love, not sacrifice, – knowledge of God, not victims at the stake!)[48] Lehmann stressed the inner quality of Spinoza's Jewishness by arguing that, in the way he led his life, he fulfilled the Jewish ideal of the sage, "der der Mahnung des Talmuds folgte: 'Mache die Lehre nicht zu einer Krone, um dich damit zu schmücken, mache sie nicht zu einem Spaten, um damit nach Schätzen zu graben'" (who followed the warning of the Talmud: "Do not make the teaching into a crown to boast, but into a spade, with which to dig for treasures"). Not only did Lehmann emphasize Spinoza's Jewishness by making him into a Talmudic Jewish sage, but in articulating this ideal he also stressed that Spinoza developed his philosophy out of an inner-conviction and not for any external worldly purpose.

That Lehmann celebrated Spinoza for his authenticity is clearest in his claim that Spinoza exemplified a specific "Spinozist type" of Jew. He defined this Jew by distinguishing it from "[d]er Jude, den der Menschenschacher seiner Feinde mit niedrigem Schachergeist erfüllt hat, der mit Schylocks gierigem Geiz das Geld zu seinem Götzen

[46] Scholz, ed. *Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*, 295.
[47] Letter 21 Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 827.
[48] Lehmann, "Baruch Spinoza (Zum 250. Todestage)"; Hosea 6:6.

macht und das goldene Kalb heute noch umtanzt." (the Jew, who has filled the traffickers of his enemies with a base commercial mind, who with Shylock's avaricious stinginess has made money his God and is today still dancing around the Golden Calf).[49] This description of a non-Spinozist Jew is not only reminiscent of anti-Semitic stereotypes, but is also a description of in-authenticity. It was the kind of Jew who was unproductive in failing to recognize the true value in this world, worshipping only money and even dancing around the Biblical symbol of in-authenticity, the Golden Calf. To Lehmann, Spinoza's authentic Jewish religious attitude ultimately showed that this was not how Jews needed to be. With his deeply religious and ethical philosophy, Spinoza exemplified an alternative Jew, the noble Jew. Lehmann believed Spinoza could serve as a perfect example of a noble Jew because, despite all apparent differences between Spinoza and Judaism, Spinoza represented a genuine form of Judaism. This was not Judaism based on rules, laws, or even beliefs, but was instead founded on a highly personal basis of behavior and thought.

We may then conclude that to a number of Jews who celebrated Spinoza in a separatist way, the ethical motivation behind celebrating Spinoza as a Jew was that he represented a kind of "true", or "real", Judaism. This Judaism was opposed to types of Judaism that were less authentic. For Buber, Spinoza's Judaism had to be distinguished from a Judaism frozen in *Religion*. For Lehman it had to be separated from the existing notion of a Jewish obsession with money.

Authenticity of Character

Spinoza was portrayed as being authentic because of his religious attitude. This was either Jewish authenticity, which implied that his Judaism was more genuine than other forms of Judaism, or it was a purely religious authenticity, which meant that he represented a religious attitude that, unlike organized religion, truly came from his heart. There was, however, an even more direct way in which Spinoza's authenticity was established. This was not done by comparing Spinoza's philosophy with "inauthentic" philosophies, but by comparing it to Spinoza's biography. Indeed, Spinoza was celebrated for the fact that his philosophy accorded with how he led his life. Such supposed harmony

[49] Ibid.

between his life and thoughts made Spinoza's philosophy "true", in the romantic or existentialist sense that Spinoza "truly" lived it.

Thanks to Spinoza's early biographers, especially Colerus,[50] many facts that could be, and constantly were, used as examples of the strength of Spinoza's character, were known about his life. In different ways, these facts showed that Spinoza had been willing to endure suffering to defend his beliefs. They accorded Spinoza a degree of martyrdom. The most telling example was, of course, Spinoza's excommunication. The story of Spinoza standing before his judges, refusing to give in, is reminiscent of illustrious trials such as those of Socrates, or Jesus. Some authors related how Spinoza refused money offered him to at least pretend that he did not want to break with Judaism.[51] He was also compared to Uriel Da Costa. While a character like Da Costa could be broken with a ban, the *Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen wrote, such an objective would fail with a character like Spinoza.[52] The *jüdsiches Wochenblatt* wrote: "Da Costa hatte die Wahrheit ohne Gegenwart. Das zu tragen ist Schicksal des Starken; das zu erdulden ist Schicksal des tragischen Menschen. Spinoza trug es; Da Costa erlitt es." (Da Costa's truth was not that of his era. To carry that is the fate of the strong, to endure it, the fate of the tragic).[53]

For some, Spinoza again demonstrated strength of character by not converting to Christianity after his excommunication. In romanticized accounts of Spinoza's life, this was often given an extra dramatic dimension by the argument that Spinoza's not converting to Christianity was also the reason Spinoza had never married. Auerbach made this element one of the main plots in his 1837 novel on Spinoza, and a similar story-line exists in Felix Theilhaber's 1924 novel on Spinoza.[54]

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[50] Colerus, *De waarachtige verrijzenis Jesu Christi uit den dooden, tegen B. de Spinosa en zijne aanhangers verdeedigt. Benevens een nauwkeurige levensbeschryving, van dezen beruchten wysgeer, zo uit zyn nagelate schriften als monderling verhaal van nog in 't leven zynde persoonen, zamengestelt.*

[51] Spanier, "Zum 250. Todestag Spinozas".

[52] E.J. Lesser, "Zum 250. Todestage des Spinoza", *Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt, Offizielles Organ der Israelitischen Gemeinden Mannheim und Ludwigshafen.* 5, no. 2 (1927).

[53] Rabbiner Dr. Rosenthal, "Spinoza im Spiegelbild seines Vorgängers Uriel da Costa", *Jüdisches Wochenblatt, Köln, Berlin, Frankfurt* 10, no. 55 (1932).

[54] Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein historischer Roman. 2 Bde*; Felix A. Theilhaber, *Dein Reich komme! Ein chiliastischer Roman aus der Zeit Rembrandts und Spinozas* (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924), 146.

To one author his non-conversion to Christianity was made into the prime reason to commemorate him. The headline of the article was "Spinoza der Ungetaufte" (Spinoza the unbaptized), and its author argued that Spinoza never converted to Christianity because, "nicht Geld und Ehre sondern Wahrheit suchte er" (he sought not money nor honor, but truth).[55] It was a powerful ideal to Weimar Jewry that Spinoza refused to become a Christian when almost everyone else at that time adhered to a religion, at least in some formal way. Even though the Jews of Weimar lived in a time when God had been widely declared dead, many still converted to Christianity, if only to improve their status in society. Some converted for the benefit of their professional careers, others to marry in a better family. In this context, the evocation of a Spinoza who feared neither a failed career nor the loss of married life was a powerful counterexample.

Then there also was Spinoza's refusal to become a professor at the University of Heidelberg. In the previous chapter, we saw how Spinoza's invitation to the University of Heidelberg served as a way to demonstrate his importance to Germany. However, there was another reason to invoke this story. Often, newspapers not only quoted the letter of invitation to Spinoza, but also his polite, but resolved, letter of refusal. Throughout the nineteenth century Jews had been refused professorships, a rejection which still occurred in Weimar Germany.[56] Spinoza had, however, been invited to become a professor, but refused the invitation because he feared he would lose his freedom to write what he wanted if he accepted it. To many authors celebrating Spinoza, the refusal of a professorship for this reason was an astonishing example of the extent to which he had been prepared to stay true to his principles. *Menorah* viciously compared Spinoza with Schopenhauer, who had attacked Spinoza's philosophy for being too Jewish. The journal described Spinoza as "der arme Glasschleifer, dem die Philosophie nicht Beruf, aber Berufung war, der eine Lehrkanzel ausschlug, die ein Schopenhauer gierig angenommen hätte." (The poor grinder of lenses,

[55] Zwi Kanner, "Spinoza, der Ungetaufte", *Die Neue Welt*, no. 271 (1932).

[56] Around the time of the 1932 Spinoza celebrations, a professor was expelled from the University of Breslau because he was Jewish. This crisis was directly related to Spinoza in: Hugo dr. Spiegler, "Die Hochschulkrisis", *Wochenblatt für den Synagogenbezirk Erfurt* 9, no. 425 (1932).

for whom philosophy was not a profession, but a vocation, who refused a chair, which a Schopenhauer avariciously would have taken).[57]

These authors related ethical aspects of Spinoza's life with the intention of showing that he kept to his principles, did not compromise, and led a life in tune with his teachings, in short, that he practiced what he preached. This message could be intended to underline the truth of his teachings. Spinoza's moral life, then, exemplified the ethical rules of conduct that could be learned from his writings. However, the emphasis on the fact that Spinoza lived what he taught was usually more than just an argument for the ethical value of his philosophy. To many authors, this lesson was the main reason to celebrate Spinoza. It could even be argued that it became such an important subject that, as a motivation for the celebration of Spinoza, it was more significant than the relevance of Spinoza's philosophy itself. Indeed, some authors who disagreed with Spinoza's philosophy still celebrated him, if only because his integrity meant that his philosophy was in tune with how he lived. The *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde Dresden*, for example, wrote that "[i]n Gegensatz zu viele anderen genialen Menschen war sein Charakter sowie seine Lehre klar und Ehrlich." (in opposition to many other brilliant people, his personality, like his teaching was clear and honest) Still, this was not "das Entscheidene" (the crucial element). What made the celebration of Spinoza "doppelt Erfreulich" (twice as joyful) was that, with him, it was possible to determine a "Synthese zwischen Kopf und Character" (synthesis between mind and character).[58] Another newspaper wrote that Spinoza's actions and philosophy were great, not because they should be followed, but because Spinoza's being "erweist seine Echtheit durch sich selbst, dadurch, daß es uns unmittelbar anspricht und im Betrachter aufs neue die Stimmung des Gemüts erzeugt, die seinem Urheber eigen war." (proves his authenticity through himself, in that it directly addresses us, and awakens in the observer anew the mood,

[57] Löwinger, "Spinoza: anläßlich der 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages 21. Februar 1677", 119. This article also quotes Spinoza's letter of refusal in full. We also find quotes such as these in: "Spinoza und die Heidelberger Universität"; "Zum 300. Geburtstag Spinozas. Eine Professur in Heidelberg"; "Zum 300. Geburtstage Spinozas"; Wiener, "Unser Spinoza? Ein Nachwort zum Jubiläum".

[58] Erich Sachs, "Spinoza, Zu seinem 250. Todestag am 21. Februar 1927", *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde Dresden* 2, no. 11 (1927).

which was characteristic of its originator).[59] Another paper, intended for Jewish youth, wrote that Spinoza could serve as an example because of his "konsequenten Handelns… unerreicht in seiner Bescheidenheit" (consequent actions… unequaled in his modesty). It considered all of Spinoza's life to be "ein Heldensieg, der den Menschen befreit, der Sieg über sich selbst" (a heroic victory, which sets people free, the victory over one's self).[60]

Some authors elaborated greatly on the harmony between Spinoza's work and life. For instance, a brochure celebrating Spinoza, written for the participants of a Spinoza-night organized by the *Soncino Gesellschaft*, a Jewish cultural organization, compared Spinoza's significance to that of Galileo.[61] Its author, the Zionist Hans Rosenkranz, argued that Galileo was not remembered for his theory that the Earth revolved around the Sun. This, he argued, had become so self-evident that it no longer worked on the imagination. According to Rosenkranz, Galileo was still admired because he stuck to his convictions at a time when no one considered the theory to be self-evident. Galileo had been a man "der gegen eine ganze Welt für seine Wahrheit zeugte" (who stood by his truth in the face of an entire world). Spinoza's case was similar in that he too, Rosenkranz believed, stuck to ideas that eventually became commonplace, but that were hardly so during his own time.[62] This, and not his philosophy, was what made him significant to both Jews and Europeans, and therefore worthy of being celebrated.

Admiration for the way Spinoza had stuck to his beliefs led Rosenkranz to a further discussion of Spinoza. He demonstrated the extent to which Spinoza's philosophy should be seen in the light of his life which he described as a spiritual odyssey. Rosenkranz believed that, throughout his life, Spinoza had searched for his roots, and he saw Spinoza's greatness in this search. He argued that Spinoza began this quest in his youth. First, Spinoza had hoped to find his roots in the Jewish religion of his parents. He soon realized, however, that he needed to look further. According to Rosenkranz, nothing meaningful of this old religion had been left, except "ihr außerer Kultus" (its external cult).

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[59] Kurt Eckstein, "Baruch de Spinoza: Zum 300. Geburtstag des Denkers", *K.C. Blätter* 23, no. 2 (1933): 45.

[60] Katz, "Spinoza".

[61] Rosenkranz, *Baruch Spinoza, zum 21 Februar 1927, Aufsatz für die Teilnehmer des Spinoza-Abends, den die Soncino-Gesellschaft Berlin, anläßich der 250. Wiederkehr von Spinoza's Todestag veranstaltete*, no page numbering.

[62] Ibid., no page numbering.

When Spinoza looked into the Books of Moses to find a solution for his doubts, Rosenkranz continued, he discovered that they were full of contradictions. His next step was then to turn to his rabbis for help. Instead of answering him, the rabbis only made things more complicated by referring to "das Nichtbeweisbare" (the unprovable), or by forbidding his doubts. Rosenkranz also subscribes to the notion that the rabbis tried to convince Spinoza by offering him money. According to Rosenkranz, all these factors had an adverse effect on Spinoza. The hypocrisy of the rabbis convinced him he could not find true Judaism. He was fed up with their rules and beliefs, of which he did not see the value, and, as a result, he decided to lead his own life, according to his own convictions. Developing his philosophy was therefore a means to serve him, in the first place, as a guide for living.

Rosenkranz focused his discussion of these opinions on Spinoza's TTP. He believed this book to have been based on an apology Spinoza had written to defend himself against the ban. This interpretation of the TTP made it into more than just the exposition of philosophical and political ideas. Seen in this light, it became a personal work directly inspired by the events of Spinoza's life, and as such part of his spiritual quest. To Rosenkranz and others, the TTP was about the freedom to philosophize, and a defense of the political views of Jan de Witt. However, unlike others who celebrated Spinoza as the father of liberalism, this was not Rosenkranz's primary interest. To him, the essence of the TTP was Spinoza's attempt "den Aufbau des Staates aus ethischen Maximen zu fordern" (to demand the composition of the state from ethical maxims). Here Spinoza's quest came to an end, as Rosenkranz recognized such a vision as being fundamentally Jewish; Jews had always attempted to achieve this. While Moses had been the first to do so, according to Rosenkranz, Jews still continued the attempt. To Rosenkranz, therefore, Spinoza was an authentic Jew as well as an authentic person.

Rosenkranz believed that Spinoza's spiritual journey was significant because it foreshadowed the fate of post-emancipation Jewry. Spinoza had been the first Jew of importance who escaped from the narrowness of the Ghetto. He was the first to realize that, "für einen universellen Menschen" (for a universal human being), medieval Judaims was too limited for self-development. Whereas other Jews of his era had reconciled themselves with their situation, were satisfied with "ruhig in ihrer Ecke atmen zu dürfen" (dare to breath quietly in a corner),

Spinoza thirsted for more. But his thirst itself was ultimately Jewish, and it was in fact the greatness of his people he looked for. In the nineteenth century, many Jews followed in Spinoza's footsteps, and met a similar fate. Like Spinoza, many of them found the conditions in which Judaism forced people to live in to be too restricted. Many even came to hate Judaism as a result. This made Spinoza into the symbol of a people that, because of its "Knechtschaft und Bedrückung" (slavery and oppression), could never keep within the communtiy the great men it bred.[63]

Rosenkranz went further still. Indeed, he believed the importance of Spinoza extended beyond the Jewish sphere. To demonstrate the peculiarity of the way Spinoza led his life, Rosenkranz took refuge in a book that encapsulated romantic values: Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. According to Rosenkranz, Spinoza was able to do what Goethe described in his *Wilhelm Meister*: "Handeln ist leicht, Denken ist schwer, nach dem Gedanken handeln unbequem" (To act is easy, to think is difficult, to act in accordance with thinking, uncomfortable).[64] Therefore, Spinoza's greatest achievement was that he succeeded in living his life according to his beliefs, something that, Rosenkranz noted, Goethe himself had found to be "schwerer als schwer" (harder than hard).[65] Rosenkranz, however, maintained that by having led such a life, Spinoza showed what "noch uns als Ziel gilt" (to us remains an objective).[66]

Another author who further explored the interconnectedness between Spinoza's convictions and his life was the liberal rabbi Leo Baeck (1873–1956). Baeck's voice carries weight, as he occupied leading functions in a number of important German Jewish organizations. He was chairman of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Rabbinerverband*, *Großpresident* of the German *B'nei Brith*, and a member of the committee of the *Central-Verein*. Baeck may then be viewed as an important representative of Jews who firmly believed it was possible for them to integrate German society without having to compromise the essence of Judaism. His writings reveal him to have been a person who stood for tolerance and pluralism, whether in German society or the Jewish community.

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

He only supported Zionism as a solution for the poor Jews of Eastern Europe, and opposed it as a national destiny for Western Jews.[67]

Baeck wrote a number of articles on the occasion of the Spinoza celebrations that conveyed the message that Spinoza's life had been in accordance with his teachings. Indeed, in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* he wrote: "Sein Leben entsprach sein Lehre. Das Ideal eines freien Mannes, das er aufgestellt hatte, was[sic] in ihm selbst verkörpert." (His life was in accordance with his teaching. The ideal of the free man, which he had developed, was embodied in him).[68] Further, in the *Jüdisch liberale Zeitung*, Baeck wrote that "Spinoza ist einer der wenigen, dessen Philosophie auch Leben bedeuten sollte, dessen Leben einen Werk ist, das er geschaffen hat" (Spinoza belongs to the very few philosophers, whose philosophy is also intended to mean life; whose life is a work which he has created). Like Rosenkranz, Baeck argued that this revealed Spinoza's Judaism: "Dieses Zu-Ende-Handeln, dieser Ernst gegenüber sichselbst, dieser Wille zur Martyrium ist für das Judentum immer kennzeichnend gewesen." (This consequent acting, this seriousness towards himself, this will to martyrdom has always been characteristic for Judaism).[69] Finally, in the journal of the German *B'nai Brith*, he wrote that all of this made Spinoza's philosophy into an authentic "Künsterliches" (artistic), as opposed to an in-authentic "Artistisches" (artificial).

Baeck described his views most elaborately in a long article written for the *Central-Verein*'s in-depth monthly, *der Morgen*. Like Rosenkranz, Baeck analyzed the nature of the relationship between Spinoza's life and work. He began his article with the assumption that Spinoza's philosophy could not be comprehended without an understanding of Spinoza's biography. Moreover, specifically examining Spinoza's life could solve the two main paradoxes that, according to Baeck, characterized Spinozism. The first paradox was political. While Spinoza favored absolute government, whose rights were based on its power in what could be said to be a Machiavellian manner, he also defended freedom of thought. Baeck believed this to be an unlikely combination, but argued that this paradox could be solved by examining the context of Spinoza's life.

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[67] Christian Wiese, "Leo Baeck", in *Metzler Lexicon jüdischer Philosophen*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003).

[68] Baeck, "Sein deutsches Echo".

[69] ———, "Spinoza".

According to Baeck, Spinoza's political philosophy aimed to find a solution to the oppression of dissidents who were victims of religious intolerance. It was a response to the religious strife that plagued his era. Spinoza had had his own share of religious intolerance when he was banned from the Jewish community. He was, however, able to build-up his life outside the Jewish community, within the Dutch State. Spinoza's political philosophy was, therefore, a reflection of his experience of having found freedom in the protection of the State. In effect, Baeck believed that Spinoza wanted to accord all power to the State because his personal experience taught him that, only then, could religious dissidents find a safe haven.

Baeck identified another paradox in Spinoza's work in his more general philosophical system. This was the apparent contradiction that Spinoza could simultaneously be viewed as an atheist and as an intensely religious person. According to Baeck, this paradox stemmed from the contradiction between the first book of the *Ethica*, which described a deterministic world, and the last book of the *Ethica* where, still according to Baeck, Spinoza turned out to be a mystical sage who loved God. Each book, Baeck explained, could yield a different interpretation. The first book gave Spinoza's philosophy a "positivistisch-atheistischer" (positivist-atheist) meaning, while the fifth book gave it a "mystisch-pantheistischer" (mystic-pantheist) meaning. Again, Baeck explained this by referring to Spinoza's personal experience of the ban. Although Spinoza had always been religious, the ban had forced him to develop his particular Spinozist interpretation of religion. Baeck described this interpretation as a "Religion des Menschen, der ohne die Gemeinde ist." (religion of the man, who is without community).[70] Spinoza had written the *Ethica* to achieve the goal of a religion for people without a religious community. He only appeared to be an atheist because of his rejection of organized religion. For those who understood Spinoza's personal reason to write such a book, however, the mystical quality of his conception of God was clear.[71]

Baeck believed that neither Spinoza's political philosophy nor his general philosophical system could be truly appreciated without awareness of the importance of Spinoza's life. He summarized Spinoza's philosophy as the attempt of "der Mensch der in Gott lebt ohne die

[70] ———, "Motive", 353.
[71] Ibid.

Gemeinde" (the man who lives in God, without the community)[72] to escape either in an absolute State, or in the absolute substance. Although Baeck could not imagine Spinoza's philosophy without taking account of his personal experiences, Baeck did not view this as a weakness. On the contrary, to Baeck, this is exactly what made Spinoza special. He believed that this "Einheit, die so in ihm Leben und Denken in Entscheidendem zusammenfügt" (unity, which assembles life and thinking in such a decisive way)[73] had been responsible for Spinoza's fame. It made his philosophy into more than "bloße Spekulation" (mere speculation).[74] Baeck went even further, and believed that when Spinoza spoke of the unity of will and intellect,[75] he was in fact praising the harmony between life and thought itself. This is what made Spinoza into an example of the application of his own theories. In Baeck's own words, "Die Einheit von Intellect und Wille, die sein System darlegen wollte, war in ihm Wirklichkeit geworden." (The unity of intellect and will, which he wanted to expound in his philosophical system, had become reality in himself).[76] Thus, more important than the precise meaning of Spinoza's philosophy, according to Baeck, was the harmony between Spinoza's philosophy and the way he led his life. Spinoza was exceptional because, "Die Motive seiner Lehre rechtfertigen sich in der Wahrheit seines Lebens." (The motives of his teachings are justified in the truth of his life).

The consequences of this belief became apparent in a remarkable parallel Baeck drew between Spinoza and the inhabitants of Weimar Germany. He wrote that in Spinoza's wish for a State with absolute power "tritt ein Gleiches auch in der Gegenwart nahe, in der sich so manche vor einer Parteiherrschaft in einen totalen Staat hineinretten wollen." (a similar thing also now occurs, when so many want to flee towards the one-party dominance of a totalitarian state).[77] As religious dissidents in the seventeenth century had hoped, in Baeck's time, people also expected the "totalen Staat" (totalitarian state) to protect them. In effect, Baeck saw Spinoza's belief in a state with absolute power in the same light as the popularity of those political parties that upheld

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 355.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Baeck probably refers to Spinoza's equation of will and understanding. *Ethica* II: prop 49 corollary.
[76] Baeck, "Motive", 356.
[77] Ibid., 351.

the notion of a *totalen Staat*. Baeck does not specify which parties they were, but we can assume they were the anti-democratic National Socialists and Communists, with whom Baeck did not sympathize. It appears, then, that Baeck was not concerned with comparing Spinoza to those who believed in a National Socialist conception of the State. At least, such an interpretation of Spinza did not prevent him from admiring Spinoza. This makes sense, however, only once it is clear that Baeck did not celebrate Spinoza for the meaning of his philosophy, but for the mere fact that his philosophy was in accordance with his life.

Philosophy of Authenticity

The lengthy articles Rosenkranz and Baeck wrote, analyzing the nature of the unity of Spinoza's life and philosophy, complemented descriptions of Spinoza's life throughout Jewish celebrations of his jubilees. In all these descriptions, the message was that Spinoza had lived what he taught, and this justified his celebration. Again, this was a celebration of Spinoza for his authenticity. This time, Spinoza's beliefs were considered to be true or authentic in the sense that they were in accordance with his life. There was, however, one last way Spinoza was made to exemplify authenticity, which presented Spinoza's philosophy itself as a philosophy of authenticity. This kind of celebration of Spinoza was upheld in an article published by the *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung*, titled *Von Benedikt Spinozas seligem Leben*.[78] The article was an excerpt from the booklet *Spinoza gegen Kant und die Sache der geistigen Wahrheit*, written by the philosopher Constantin Brunner (1862–1937) in 1910. Brunner was a German Jewish philosopher who had a large circle of followers that admired him and to whom he was sort of a spiritual guide. Born into a strictly orthodox family, he himself was less religious. Politically he opposed what he called the national and racist dogmas of Zionism in favor of self-emancipation, which for him meant a political assimilation in western nations.[79] In *Spinoza gegen Kant* he used Spinoza and Kant as examples of two opposing ways of thinking, whereby he rejected Kant's way and embraced

[78] Ludwig Holländer et al., "Beilage: Zum 300. Geburtstage von Baruch Spinoza", *C.V.-Zeitung* xi, no. 47 (1932).

[79] Jürgen Stenzel, "Constantin Brunner", in *Metzler Lexicon Jüdischer Philosophen*, ed. Andreas B. Klicher and Otfried Fraisse (Stuttgart: 2003), 295.

Spinoza's. For Brunner, philosophy was too often a mere theoretical affair, whereas he believed it was something that needed to be lived. Spinoza exemplified this. It is no coincidence that The *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung* chose a short section from this booklet that elaborated precisely on the identity of life and thinking by Spinoza. In it, the admiration of Spinoza for the way he led his life in accordance with his thought was expressed in a fashion that bordered on pure ecstasy. Brunner argued: "Ubereinstimmung von Leben und Denken ist etwas ganz überwältigend Großes, und keiner hat das erfüllt als nur Spinoza; alle die anderen leben in Wahrheit uneinstimmig mit ihren Gedanken" (Harmony between living and thinking is something overwhelmingly great, and no-one has fulfilled that like Spinoza; all the others live in a truth in disharmony with their thinking). But in Spinoza, Brunner argued, this went beyond the notion of authenticity that grated against the mere hypocrisy of a life with actions that were not prescribed by a specific philosophical system. To him, this was too narrow an understanding for what it actually meant to live according to one's thinking in a Spinozist way. To actually live in agreement with thinking as Spinoza had managed, entailed for Brunner also a particular kind of thinking. This was a thinking that was not only a cognitive exercise, but was a direct experience of reality of nature, and as such touched one's inner self. It was in Brunner's words "das Sich-Eines-Wissen im großen einheitlichen Grundleben der Welt" and "das Bewußtsein von der Identität dieser relativ seienden Welt mit der wahrhaft Seinenden des Geistes" (the knowing of oneself's oneness in the great uniform fundamental life of the world and the consciousness of the identity of this relatively existent world with the genuine being of intellect). The emphasis on experience in Brunner is reminiscent of the budding existentialism among other philosophers in the Weimar era like Heidegger and Rosenzweig. For Brunner, Spinoza's philosophy itself was therefore authentic. Ridiculing Kant, Brunner asked rhetorically how it was possible to live according to "zwei apriorischen Anschauungsformen, zwölf apriorischen Verstandeskategorien, vier Antinomien und drei Postulaten" (two a-priori forms of intuition, twelve a-priori categories of understanding, four antinomies and three postulates). Spinoza's thought, in opposition to this, did not "have" thoughts, "er war sein Denken" (he was his thinking). Arguing that Spinoza's philosophy dealt with the "Wahrhaftigkeit der Wahrheit" (veracity of the truth), Brunner admired Spinoza for what he suggested was a supreme notion of authenticity.

Another person celebrating Spinoza for the authenticity in his thought was Kurt Freyer (1885–1973), a German Jewish art historian and bookseller, with a Zionist background. To mark the occasion of the 1927 Spinoza anniversary he wrote a short booklet that was published for bibliophiles in two numbered editions, on precious *van Gelden-Bütten* and *Kaiserlich Japan* paper by one of the founders of the *Soncino-Gesellschaft der Freunde des jüdischen Buches*. The title, *Spinoza Führer der Irrenden* (Spinoza, guide for the perplexed) referred to the famous Guide for the Perplexed written by the Jewish philosopher Maimonides in the twelfth century. Freyer believed that like the audience for which Maimonides had written in the middle ages, his own contemporaries were perplexed. Freyer started his book with a description of what he understood to be the "Seelischer Not dieser Zeit" (mental destitution of this era) and which emanated from a disappointment in the achievements of modernity that was typical of much cultural criticism of his age. Mankind, he argued, had been reaching for heaven, attempting to make progress. Clearly alluding to the initial euphoria and the subsequent deception of the First World War, he wrote: "Noch vor kurzem glaubte er, vor dem höchsten und letzten Gipfel zu stehen, übermutig ging er [der Mensch] drauf los, seiner Kraft gewiß. Aber was geschah? In Wildnis und Sumpf geriet er wie nie zuvor." (Not long ago he believed to stand before the highest and last summit, he [man] recklessly went for it, sure of his strength. But what happened? He got stuck in the wilderness and swamps as never before). In five chapters with titles that referred to central concepts of Spinoza's thought, Freyer explained the nature of his wasteland and how Spinoza could serve as a guide to find a way out of it, to help people to achieve *Glückseligkeit* (happiness). According to Freyer, Man drifted without roots. Many aspects of modern life had lost their meaning. The advance of technology had changed Man's thinking and made life and the world itself into a mechanism, asking only "wie es Funktioniert, aber nie welches sein Sinn ist" (how it functions, but not what its meaning is). To cope with this, people had become sceptics, avoiding truth, or vainly attempted to revive ancient traditions, that were in fact dead. Quantity was valued over quality, true love gave way to eroticism and friendship had disappeared with it. In short, with many other Weimar critics, Freyer held that community had made a place for society, which had become individualized, atomized and superficial. People had become connected through "Interessenverbindungen, aber keine Gemeinschaften" (relationships of

interest, but not communities). Freyer argued that a true understanding of Spinoza's notions of intutition, wholeness, necessity and *amor dei,* could help cure mankind of these evils.

Liberalism and Authenticity

We may then conclude that Spinoza not only set an ethical example as a defender of religious tolerance and freedom of thought, but also as an authentic person or a teacher of authenticity. Throughout this chapter, we discussed four ways in which this authenticity was demonstrated. First, there were authors who focused on the authenticity of Spinoza's religion by celebrating him for his religious heart. They believed that Spinoza showed the way towards a genuine religious attitude that was both personal and universal. Second, there were authors who celebrated Spinoza's authenticity in a separatist way, praising him for representing an authentic form of Judaism. This celebration was opposed to in-authentic forms of Judaism, such as the ceremonialism of the Orthodoxy, or the religious lip-service of some assimilating Jews. Third, there were authors who established the authenticity of Spinoza's beliefs by emphasizing the harmony between his philosophy and his life. According to these authors, Spinoza's philosophy was authentic because he had lived it himself. He was not a hypocrite, and had been willing to suffer to retain his integrity. This made Spinoza's philosophy "real" or "authentic", and thereby made him, himself, authentic. Finally Spinoza's philosophy itself was interpreted as a guide to an authentic life.

The Double Standard of Emancipation

The way Weimar Jewry celebrated Spinoza thus entailed both elements of the pre-Weimar, Jewish adoption of the early *Bildungsideal*, and those influenced by opposition to this ideal during the Weimar Jewish revival. As in the previous chapter, where we saw this diversity on the social level, our investigation of the ethical meaning of the Spinoza celebrations turns out to be just as complex. Here too we are faced with the fact that the justification of the Spinoza celebrations – now on the ethical level – include contradicting attitudes. These contradictions might be resolved if we consider the articles written to commemorate Spinoza as implicit responses to the demands German society made

on Jews. Considering the timing of the celebrations – at a moment in German history when the danger of anti-Semitism became ever more visible – there is little reason to assume they were not such a response, at least partly. Authors who celebrated Spinoza for his liberalism, his message of tolerance and his freedom of thought, often referred to the anti-liberal threats that were facing the Weimar Republic. These authors rejected criticisms of liberalism, and explicitly used Spinoza as a weapon in defense of the Republic, where the survival of Jews had such a high stake. The jubilees of Spinoza, however, also included a celebration of his authenticity. This occurred in the light of the threatening climate toward Jews in Weimar Germany. In the late nineteenth century, the presumed inauthenticity of Jews became one of the main themes in anti-Semitic literature, and many of the stereotypes aimed against Jews characterized them as being inauthentic. Michael Brenner writes: "To most Germans, Jews now represented the antithesis of the neo-Romanticist ideals of the time: they were mainly urbanized, not tied to the soil, and they lacked genuine folk-traditions."[80] We may add that the idea that Jews were artificial or inauthentic was central to the common anti-Semitic stereotype. According to this stereotype, the Jew, working towards world domination, plotted against Humanity, while at the same time pretending he was a loyal German. Therefore, one of the most dangerous characteristics of the Jew was that he could not be identified. He did not show his true nature and behaved artificially. Moreover, the image of the Jew as cosmopolitan and obsessed with money further confirmed that Jews were superficial and inauthentic. The celebration of Spinoza for his authenticity served as a counterweight to such accusations. As a reviewer of the great Spinoza exhibition of the Reform Jewish community of Berlin put it: "Er [Spinoza] befreit uns von der Verleumdung, wir seien nur Mittler und Vermittler, Händler, Importeure und Exporteure auch im Geistigen. Auch der Verstoßene hat also für die Ehre des Judentums gezeugt. Auch den feindlichen Bewegungen unserer Tage kann so Spinoza manche Antwort erteilen" (Spinoza frees us from the defamation that we are only intermediates and agents, negotiators, importers, and exporters, also in spiritual matters. The outcast has also born witness to the honor of Judaism. Also, Spinoza can provide quite a few answers against the

[80] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 30.

hostile movements of our day).[81] In this case, Jews did not so much fight the climate of anti-liberalism as they adapted to it. This becomes even clearer given that the reproach that Jews were inauthentic was a direct consequence of the liberalist culture that had made Jewish emancipation possible in the first place; we may even say that it was a response to the justification of Jewish emancipation in Lessing's ring-parable. German society exerted heavy pressure upon Jews to assimilate so that they could integrate into that society. From the beginnings of German Jewish emancipation in the eighteenth century, assimilation was viewed as the price Jews had to pay for their emancipation. To earn their place in German society, social pressure was exerted on Jews to transform themselves.

During the nineteenth century, Jews went to great lengths to assimilate and thus deservedly earn their emancipation. Some made their religion into a confession, thereby making it a private affair separate from their public behavior. Others adapted their religion and purged it of all references to Zion. Many Jews also changed their language and their names, adapting them to German society, while many others developed an interest in products of German culture, such as Goethe's literature or Wagner's music. The hope that such behavior would lead to their acceptance into German society was ultimately based on the liberal ideal of tolerance that was so beautifully expressed in Lessing's ring-parable. In what the parable conveyed, a crucial impartiality towards the essence of Judaism, there was no risk to the possibility that Jews might lose something authentic with their assimilation.

However, assimilation could easily undermine authenticity, and this danger was present from the beginning. Many Jews wrestled to find a way to comply with the social demands to assimilate and the need to remain true to oncelf. It led them to search for extraordinary proposals, such as that from the *maskil* David Friedländer, who suggested in 1799 for Jews to obtain emancipation by converting to Christianity, with the caveat that they did not having to believe in the divinity of Christ. Also famous is Heine's confession of his own conversion as an entrance ticket into German society and his alternating regret and indifference about this opportunism.

In German culture, the value of authenticity acquired ever more importance from the late nineteenth century onwards, with the rise

[81] Rawidowicz, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung in Berlin".

of *völkisch* ideology and neo-romanticism. This rise was often at the expense of Lessing's ideal of tolerance. As the conservative cultural historian Moeller van den Bruck wrote: "Der Liberalismus hat Kulturen untergraben. Er hat Religionen vernichtet. Er hat Vaterländer zerstört. Er war die Selbstauflösung der Menschheit." (Liberalism has undermined cultures. It has destroyed religions. It has disturbed fatherlands. It was the disbandment of humanity).[82] The problem for Jews was, of course, that liberalism had made Jewish emancipation possible. Their existence as full and accepted German citizens depended on it. Therefore, Jews became the victims of a double standard. German society made different and conflicting demands when it came to the Jews: Liberalism demanded from them that they would assimilate and therefore behave in new ways, which necessitated a break with their traditions. But at the same time they were constantly criticized for what the assimilant could hardly avoid: being uprooted, pretending to be what they were not, in one word inauthentic. It was hard, if not impossible, to both assimilate and remain authentic. In the light of this quandary, the Spinoza celebrations offered a way out as they worked to simultaneously uphold both these ideals, that of liberalism and that of authenticity.

In conclusion, this partly explains the paradox of why Jews celebrated Spinoza so massively at a moment in time when there would appear to have been more pressing problems to worry about rather than the life of a seventeenth century philosopher. Celebrating Spinoza, then, showed that the impossible was possible. The idea that the Jewish father of liberalism had been an authentic person, was a powerful statement Jews could use in their fight for emancipation on liberal grounds; they could simultaneously assimilate and remain authentic.

This is well illustrated with one particular article by the philosopher Fritz Heinemann, who offered an integrated celebration of Spinoza for his defense of liberal values, such as religious tolerance and freedom of thought, with the celebration of him as an authentic figure. Heinemann wrote for the newspaper of the German *B'nei Brith* organization where he wrote that Spinoza wanted a Religion des Herzens

[82] Moeller van den Bruck as quoted in: Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik; Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933*, 182.

und der Tat" (religion of the heart and of acting).[83] He also argued that Spinoza had to wage a battle against himself. In this, Heinemann shows himself to admire Spinoza for the authenticity of his personality. What else is struggling against oneself, but an attempt to be true to oneself, to be authentic? As much as we can find a romantic element in this *Schleiermacherian* struggle for authenticity, for Heinemann it also has a liberal twist. Spinoza's struggle against himself, Heinemann wrote, became a struggle against "political and religious intolerance."[84] According to him, this led Spinoza to write the TTP, which to him was principally about liberal values such as the "Freiheit des Gedankens gegen dem Staate, Freiheit des Glaubens gegenüber der Orthodoxie jeder Art" (freedom of thinking against the state, freedom of faith as opposed to any kind of orthodoxy).[85] To Heineman, this quest for freedom was highly relevant in the celebrating of Spinoza as it was a freedom which, was far removed from the "hohlen Pathos" (hollow pathos) of his day.

Heinemann did not elaborate further on this *hollow pathos*, but it is likely that he referred to the heat of ideological strife present in the Weimar republic. His aversion to exaggerated emotions, however, did not prevent him from, in the same article, immediately returning to Spinoza's authenticity. The only thing Spinoza wanted, Heinemann wrote, was "Wahrheit und innere Freiheit" (truth and inner freedom), and he added that: "Das große hierbei ist, daß er sich nicht nur diese Ziele setzte, sondern, daß er lebte, was er lehrte." (The great thing in this is, that not only did he set himself these goals, but also that he lived what he taught).[86] The liberal freedom Heinemann believed to be the subject of Spinoza's *TTP*, had become "inner freedom" and, again, when it really came to Spinoza's greatness, Heinemann found this *innere Freiheit* not in Spinoza's views, but in the harmony between his life and his philosophy.

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[83] Fritz Heinemann, "Spinoza und wir. Zum 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", *Der Orden Bne Briss: Mitteilungen der großloge für Deutschland VIII U.O.B.B.*, no. 2 (1927): 22.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 23.

[86] Ibid.

The Spinoza celebrations thus conveyed a strong and highly relevant message for the eventful years in which they occurred, when liberalism was the only hope for Jews, even though it was in disrepute and Jews were constantly being attacked for perverting German culture into a liberal state of in-authenticity.

das Weib steht leuchtend da als Priesterin des Lebens, als Siegerin über Not und Tod, in ihrer Rechten den Aeskulaps-Stab mit der geringelten Schlange, in ihrer Linken die dampfende Schale mit dem Balsam der Linderung und Heilung. Oder hat der Künstler vielleicht mit absichtlicher Satire die Frage offen gelassen? Ist es am Ende Gift, das Gift der Liebe, das das Weib mit seinen weissen Händen uns reicht? — Das Ex-libris trägt unten in hebräischer Sprache und Schrift die Worte: „Aus der Bücherei (Missiphre) des Eliahu ben Arje Simonson." Ebenso oben das Motto: „Wenn ich Dein vergesse, Jerusalem, so verdorre meine Rechte!" Zweifellos ein auffallender und markanter Wahlspruch für einen modernen Arzt. Verständlich aber, wenn man weiss, dass der Besitzer mit seinen ganzen Ueberzeugungen tief im Boden des Judentums wurzelt und ein reges Interesse an der jüdischen Kolonisation hat.

Das zweite hier abgebildete Bibliothekzeichen trägt unten in hebräischer Sprache und Schrift die Bezeichnung „Missiphre" (aus der Bücherei), oben ebenso den Namen des Eigentümers „Ruben ben Mordechai Brainin". Brainin ist ein jetzt in Berlin lebender, bedeutender hebräischer Schriftsteller, dessen Muttersprache hebräisch ist und dessen Bibliothek fast ausschliesslich aus hebräischen Büchern besteht. Deshalb finden sich auf der Zeichnung auch nur durchweg hebräische Worte. Das Motiv ist einfach, aber charakteristisch. Umrahmt von kahlen Dornenranken, dem ewigen Symbol des jüdischen Volkes, das seit langer, langer Zeit nichts mehr von Rosen weiss, sehen wir die Bilder von zehn hervorragenden Hebräern, die durch ihre Schriften ihr ganzes Leben lang für das Judentum gewirkt und gestrebt haben. Ernst und Milde, Würde und Weisheit liegt in ihren durchgeistigten Gesichtern. Als die schönsten und markantesten ragen unter den Köpfen hervor: der grosse Karlsruher Rabbiner Thias Weyl; Rappoport, der geistvolle Kritiker und einstige Rabbiner von Prag, und Spinoza.

E. M. Lilien.
Ex Libris Ruben Brainin.

Die beiden Ex-libris sind in der bekannten Lilienschen Art gezeichnet und haben bei der geschickten Verwendung von schwarz und weiss eine stark dekorative Wirkung.

So wie in Frankreich neben dem Ausdruck Ex-libris der Landessprache gemäss die Bezeichnung „marque de possession" aufkam, wie in England „bookplate", in Holland „boekmerken", so hat Lilien für die hebräisch sprechenden Juden die Bezeichnung „Missiphre" eingeführt. Und es steht zu erwarten, dass sich daran ein weniger heftiger Streit knüpfen wird, als an die deutsche Bezeichnung für Ex libris, für das ich den Ausdruck „Büchermarke" vorschlagen möchte. Diese Bezeichnung ist vollkommen deutsch und bringt die Aufgabe des Ex-libris deutlich zum Ausdruck.

Wir sind in der angenehmen Lage, unseren Lesern eine umfassende Arbeit über „jüdische Ex-Libris" in Aussicht stellen zu können, die wir — einen Beitrag von berufenster Seite — voraussichtlich im Januar- oder Februar-Heft des nächsten Jahres veröffentlichen werden.

Illustration 1: The bookplate of the author Ruben Brainin, designed by E.M. Lilien, with Spinoza depicted among Jewish rabbis, as printed in the journal *Ost und West*.


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KUNSTVERLAG PHÖNIX

Leo Winz

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Illustration 2 and 3: Postcard from a painting of Spinoza by Samuel Hirszenberg, and an advertisement in the newspaper Ost und West for this postcard.

Gemeindeblatt

der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin

Amtliches Organ des Gemeindevorstandes

Das Blatt wird sämtlichen Mitgliedern der Jüdischen Gemeinde zugestellt. Für Nichtmitglieder beträgt der Bezugspreis jährlich Mk. 6.— für die einfache Ausgabe, bzw. Mk. 12.— für die Kunstdruckausgabe. Das Blatt erscheint am 1. Freitag jeden Monats.

Bestellungen auf das Blatt sind zu richten: a) für Gemeindemitglieder an den Vorstand der Jüdischen Gemeinde, Berlin N 24, Oranienburger Straße 29; für Nichtmitglieder an den Verlag Ost und West, Leo Winz, Berlin-Charlbg. 2, Knesebeckstraße 32.

22. Jahrg. NOVEMBER 1932 Nr. 11

Spinoza

(Museum der Akademie der Künste, Leningrad)

Illustration 4: The cover of the November 1932 issue of the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinden zu Berlin*. This German-Jewish newspaper – one of the largest around with an estimated circulation of 60,000 in 1933 – leaves little doubt as to the importance it attached to celebrating Spinoza.

Wir haben im Goethe-Jahr 1932 unserer Ankündigung in der Januar-Nr. entsprechend in den einzelnen Nummern im wesentlichen in gebotener Kürze Goethe selbst zu uns sprechen lassen. Wir haben unvergängliche Äußerungen herauszusuchen uns bemüht, die gewissermaßen für unsere Gegenwart bestimmt erschienen. Wir haben dann auch des großen Denkers Spinoza gedacht, im Hinblick auf dessen Geburtstag das Jahr 1932 gleichfalls ein Jahr der Erinnerung ist. Im Zeichen dieser Erinnerung nehmen wir zunächst von ihnen Abschied, indem wir ihr Bild noch einmal zu uns sprechen lassen und die Lessingsche Mahnung anfügen:

Aus: Emil Ludwig „Goethe, Geschichte eines Menschen". Bd. 2.

Op. posthum

Wer wird nicht einen Klopstock loben?
Doch wird ihn jeder lesen? — Nein.
Wir wollen weniger erhoben
Und fleißiger gelesen sein.

Illustration 5: Spinoza and Goethe celebrated together in the *Mittleilungen der großloge für Deutschland* of the Jewish fraternal organization *Bne Briss*.

Erscheint wöchentlich. Abonnementspreis M. 1,95 vierteljährl. ausschl. Postbestellgeld. Herausgeber und Verleger: Reichsbund jüdisch. Frontsoldaten E. V. Anschrift: Jacob Lebermann, Berlin W 15, Kurfürstendamm 200, Gartenhaus III. Tel.: Bismarck 7433 u. 8884. Tel.-Adresse: „Schildkamerad". Verantwortlich für Verlag und Redaktion: Jacob Lebermann, Berlin-Halensee.

Der Schild

RJF

ZEITSCHRIFT DES REICHSBUNDES JÜDISCHER FRONTSOLDATEN E.V.

Alleinige Anzeigen-Annahme durch die Annoncen-Expedition Jacques Albachary, G. m. b. H., Berlin SW 35, Potsdamer Str. 122 Telef.: Lützow 2727 u. Nollendf. 5371. Anzeigenschluß: Jeden Dienstag für die 8 Tage später erscheinende Nummer. Anzeigentexte, die bis zu diesem Tage nicht bei uns eingegangen sind, werden in der darauffolgenden Nummer aufgenommen. Verantwortlich für den Anzeigenteil: Adolf Silberstein, Berlin-Wilmersdorf

Nummer 11 | Berlin, 21. März 1927 | 6. Jahrgang

Spinozas Weltanschauung bildlich dargestellt

Von Dr. Jacob Fromer.

In diesen Tagen feierte die gesamte Kulturwelt das Andenken eines der größten Philosophen aller Zeiten, Baruch Spinoza. Mit Stolz dürfen wir Juden ihn zu unseren Heroen zählen, ihn, der der ganzen modernen Geistesbewegung sein Gepräge aufgedrückt hat. Leider ist die Kenntnis dessen, was er der Welt gegeben hat, in weiten Kreisen der Menschheit nicht so bekannt, wie es die Bedeutung seines Werkes verlangen darf. Wir haben deshalb den hervorragendsten lebenden Interpreten spinozistischer Philosophie, Dr. Jakob Fromer, gebeten, für die Freunde des „Schild" eine im Rahmen unserer Zeitschrift erschöpfende Darstellung seiner Hauptlehren zu geben. Wir bitten unsere Kameraden, für möglichst weite Verbreitung dieses bedeutsamen Heftes zu sorgen, da keine Zeitung der Welt sich rühmen kann, eine derartig bedeutungsvolle Arbeit über Spinoza veröffentlicht zu haben.

Die Redaktion.
Fritz Götz.

Ein jeder, der das Hauptwerk Spinozas, die Ethik, gelesen oder genauer zu lesen versucht hat, wird sich wohl überzeugt haben, daß ein tieferes Eindringen in den Sinn dieses Werkes kaum möglich ist.

Daß das nicht nur für den Laien, sondern auch für den Fachgelehrten gilt, wird selbst von einem so tiefgründigen Philosophen wie Schelling bezeugt. Er vergleicht nämlich dieses Werk mit der Säule des Pygmalion, die des warmen Hauches bedarf, um belebt zu werden. Dasselbe will wohl auch Heine sagen, wenn er die Ethik Spinozas gefrorne Poesie nennt.

Das ist für Spinoza umso tragischer, als er sich wie kaum ein anderer Philosoph bemüht hat, sich gemeinverständlich auszudrücken. Wenn ein Gedanke im Gedächtnis bleiben soll, muß er auf die kürzeste und prägnanteste Form gebracht werden. In der Tat sind in Spinozas Ethik die Lehrsätze scharf zugespitzt und heben sich von den Beweisen und Anmerkungen schon durch die verschiedene typographische Form der Schrift ab. Voran gehen die ebenfalls kurz gefaßten Definitionen und Axiome, in denen die zu behandelnden Begriffe erklärt oder bloß hervorgehoben werden. Diese Fassung allein wäre es, meinte Spinoza, die den geometrischen Lehrsätzen die Klarheit und Ueberzeugungskraft in einem in keiner anderen Wissenschaft erreichten Grade verlieh.

Aber so kühn und genial dieser Versuch auch war, so mußte er doch sein Ziel verfehlen, weil Spinoza dabei nicht bis zur letzten Konsequenz vorgeschritten ist.

Die geometrischen Lehrsätze erhalten ihre Klarheit und Ueberzeugungskraft letzten Endes nicht vom Kommentar, sondern von den beigefügten Figuren. Der Satz beispielsweise, wonach der kürzeste Weg zwischen zwei Punkten die gerade Linie ist, ist an sich weder klar noch überzeugend. Das Wort ist seiner Natur nach deutungsfähig und daher dem Mißverständnis unterworfen. Aber selbst, wenn wir den Sinn dieses Satzes richtig verstanden haben, sind wir noch immer durchaus nicht gezwungen, dem, was er behauptet, beizustimmen. Wenn wir es durch neue Worte zu beweisen und zu klären versuchen, dann wird es nur noch vieldeutiger und zweifelhafter.

Nun ziehen wir zwischen den beiden Punkten eine krumme und gerade Linie. Dadurch wird zunächst der Sinn des Satzes eindeutig klargestellt. Bei der Betrachtung der beiden Linien drängt sich uns auch die Ueberzeugung auf, daß die gerade Linie kürzer als die krumme ist. Wir können nicht mehr, selbst wenn wir es noch so sehr wollten, an der Richtigkeit des Satzes zweifeln. Der Kommentar, der nur noch die Aufgabe hat, diese Tatsache festzustellen, kann dann umso kürzer sein, je deutlicher die Figur ist.

Eine genaue Nachahmung dieses Verfahrens war Spinoza allerdings nicht möglich. Er konnte nicht Gott oder die sonstigen abstrakten Dinge, von denen er bestimmte Aussagen machte, auf die gleiche Weise durch Figuren zur Anschauung bringen, wie es in der Geometrie geschieht.

Aber man muß dabei zwischen der Ueberzeugungskraft und der Klarheit streng unterscheiden. Die Ueberzeugungskraft erhalten die abstrakten Dinge nicht, wie es bei den konkreten geschieht, durch die äußere, sondern durch die innere Wahrnehmung, das Gefühl. So können wir beispielsweise das Vorhandensein unserer Seele nur fühlen.

Wenn wir aber das Gefühlte zur Klarheit bringen wollen, dann müssen wir, ebenso wie in der Geometrie, anschauliche Bilder heranziehen, die allerdings, da sie nicht zur Ueberzeugung, sondern nur zur Klärung dienen, das Gefühlte nur annähernd anzudeuten brauchen.

Solche Bilder werden Symbole oder Gleichnisse genannt, je nachdem sie figürlich oder durch bloße Wortbeschreibung dargestellt werden.

Im folgenden will ich nun versuchen, die Weltanschauung Spinozas durch anschauliche Bilder zu klären — wohl bemerkt, nur zu klären, die Ueberzeugungskraft nennen sie einzig aus dem Gefühle schöpfen. Wer diese W[illegible]anschauung nicht im Gefühle hat, bei dem werden alle Klärungsversuche ohne Wirkung bleiben.

Den wesentlichen Gehalt dieser Weltanschauung hat Spinoza in den drei Definitionen zusammengefaßt, die er seiner Ethik voranschickt. Sie lauten:

„Unter Substanz verstehe ich das, was unendlich ist und durch sich begriffen wird, d. h. etwas, dessen Begriff nicht den Begriff eines anderen Begriffes nötig hat, um daraus gebildet zu werden. Unter Gott verstehe ich das absolut unendliche Wesen, d. h. die Substanz, welche aus unzähligen (wörtlich unendlichen) Attributen besteht. Unter Modus verstehe ich eine

Illustration 6: Even the Journal for Jewish War Veterans participated in the Spinoza celebrations.

Spinoza, verschieden gesehen

DIE ÄLTEREN DARSTELLUNGEN:

Das Wolfenbüttler Gemälde *Hendrik van der Spyk* *Jugendbild von 1660*

Prägnant drückt sich die verschiedene Beurteilung, die Spinoza erfuhr, in den bildlichen Darstellungen, die man von ihm hat, aus.

auf ein Heidelberger Professorat, und die Darstellung von Wallerant Vaillant vervollständigt diesen Entwicklungsablauf. Aber dann kommen die Bildhauer unserer Zeit, die

JÜNGERE BILDNISSE:

Wallerant Vaillant *Aus der Opera posthuma* *Rudolf Saudek*

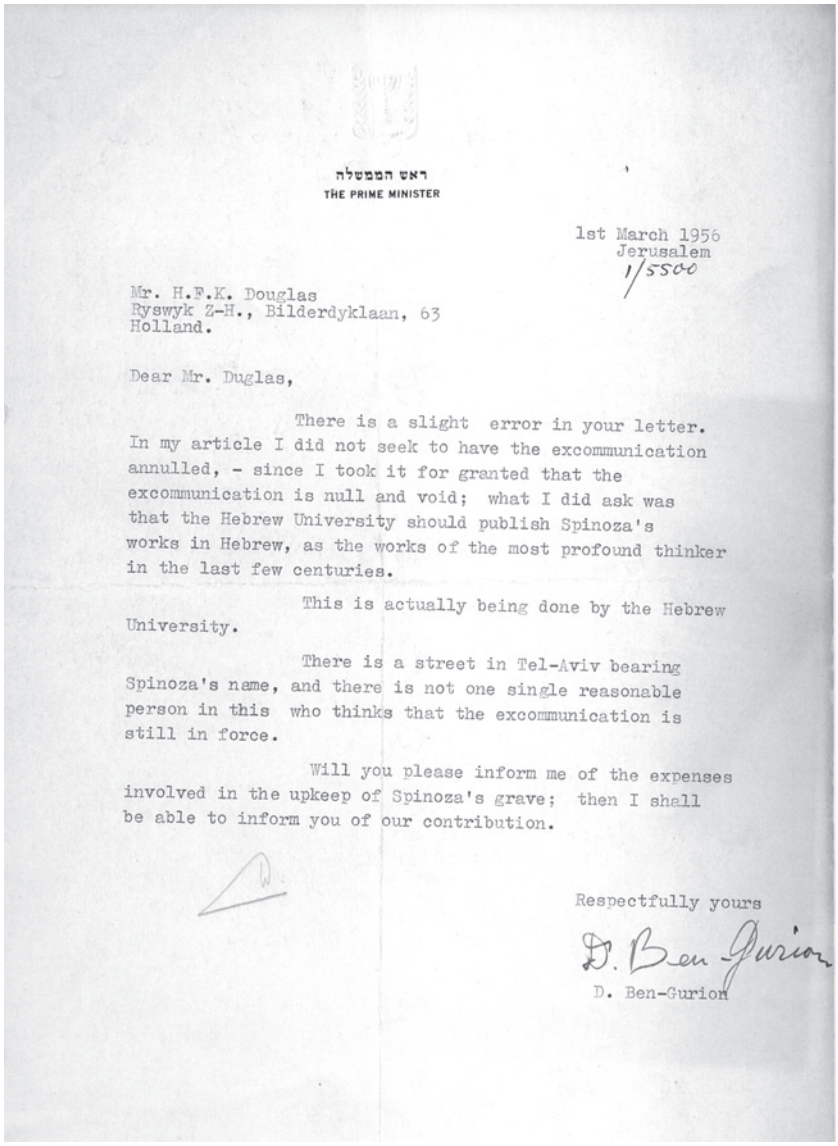
Das älteste Bildnis, 1660 gemalt, sieht in ihm noch den typische Rabbinatsschüler. Das Bildnis des Hendryk van der Spyck läßt schon die Entwicklung zur Originalität, zur Einsamkeit erkennen. Das bekannte Wolfenbüttler Gemälde zeigt den selbständigen Gelehrten, den Anwärter

Spinozas Züge schon vollkommen aus der Epoche, in der er lebte, losgelöst. Hier ist er schon das überzeitliche Genie, gezeichnet mit überzeitlichen Zügen, die nur periphere Prägung von den Zufälligkeiten der Persönlichkeit und der Umgebung bekommen haben.

Illustration 7: The Berlin issue of the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* showed the development of Spinoza from a rabbinical student into an "überweltlichen Genie." Present research considers only the portrait from the *Opera Posthuma* (down, middle) authentic.

Illustration 8: Design for a Logensiegel (lodge seal) for the Spinoza Lodge of the German Jewish fraternal organization *Bne Bris* from 1926.

The Berlin edition of the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* published a photograph of the opening of the Berlin Spinoza exhibition together with a photograph of the anniversary of a synagogue.



ראש הממשלה
THE PRIME MINISTER

1st March 1956
Jerusalem
1/5500

Mr. H.F.K. Douglas
Ryswyk Z-H., Bilderdyklaan, 63
Holland.

Dear Mr. Duglas,

There is a slight error in your letter. In my article I did not seek to have the excommunication annulled, - since I took it for granted that the excommunication is null and void; what I did ask was that the Hebrew University should publish Spinoza's works in Hebrew, as the works of the most profound thinker in the last few centuries.

This is actually being done by the Hebrew University.

There is a street in Tel-Aviv bearing Spinoza's name, and there is not one single reasonable person in this who thinks that the excommunication is still in force.

Will you please inform me of the expenses involved in the upkeep of Spinoza's grave; then I shall be able to inform you of our contribution.

Respectfully yours

D. Ben-Gurion

D. Ben-Gurion

Illustration 9: Letter from the first prime minister of Israel, David ben Gurion, written in the year of the Tri-centennial of Spinoza's ban. Ben Gurion argues that the widespread Jewish popularity of Spinoza makes lifting the ban unnecessary, from the collection of Theo van der Werf.

רבי מכר 10.12.2003 הארץ

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6	**פרידה קאלו / גניה אנקורי (הקדמה והאריות)** יומן אמנות וחיים. תרגום היוסף יורם סלצר, מודן, 128 שקלים	6	5
7	**אתיקה / ברוך שפינוזה,** תרגום חדש: ירמיהו יובל, הקיבוץ המאוחד, 98 שקלים	16	8
8	**סודות ההצפנה / סיימון סינג,** תולדות המצפינים והמפענחים. תרגום: זהר ברא־אור, ספרי עליית הגג, ידיעות אחרונות, ספרי חמד, 88 שקלים	42	6
9*	**זמן אמת: מלחמת יום כיפור / רונן ברגמן ויגיל מלצר,** ידיעות אחרונות, ספרי חמד, 98 שקלים	9	7
10	**המגש והכסף / עפר שלח,** מדוע דרושה מהפכה בצה"ל. המצב הישראלי / הסידרה, כנרת זמורה־ביתן, 69 שקלים	6	-

ילדים ונוער

		מספר שבועות	בשבוע הקודם
1	**תפילולה / מאיה חנוך ומיכל כהן־יחי,** איור: דסיתי קילוסקי, ידיעות אחרונות, ספרי חמד, 68 שקלים	31	1
2*	**חנן הנגן / רינת הופר,** זמורה ביתן, 59 שקלים	6	3
3	**רוץ בן־סוסי / ח"נ ביאליק,** מבחר שירי ילדים. שורכח שרי גוטמן, איורים: בתיה קולסון, דביר, 56 שקלים	10	4
4*	**האריה שאהב תות / תרצה אתר,** הוצאה מחודשת. איור: דני קרמן, הקיבוץ המאוחד, 49 שקלים	3	2
5*	**מוצאים את נמו / וולט דיסני,** סיפור הסרט. תרגום: סיגל נפן, ידיעות אחרונות, 59 שקלים	20	5

הדרכה ופנאי

		מספר שבועות	בשבוע הקודם
1	**מי יבנה בשתמות / רובין ס' שארמה,** הסדרך לחיים משמעותיים. תרגום: יעל עובד, כתר, 84 שקלים	10	1
2	**אופים בבית / ישראל אחרוני ורפי כהן,** סאפים מחוקים, עוגות ושוגיות. צילום: גלי שפר, מודן, 98 שקלים	10	4
3*	**מרק / ד"ר רוברט ברקוב (עורך ראשי),** הסדרך הרפואי השלם לבית ולמשפחה. עורך המהדורה העברית: אברהם אל־רז, כנרת, זמורה ביתן, דביר, הר ארצי, 189 שקלים	40	5
4	**אבא עשיר אבא עני / רוברט ט' קיוסקי וישרון ל' לכטר,** איך להיות סליונרים. תרגום: דרורה בלישה, ספר, 74 שקלים	12	2
5*	**בישולה מהאגדות / שולה מודן,** מסחברת המחכונים שלה. מודן, 98 שקלים	27	3
6	**יש גם ימים באלה... / בראדלי טרבור גרייב,** רעיונות לשיפור סצב הרוח. תרגום: איריח ארב, ספר, 39 שקלים	84	6

* כוכבית מלמדת כי הספר קרוב מאוד בדירוגו ליזה שלפניו.

Illustration 10: Spinoza continues to enjoy Jewish popularity in the twenty-first century. The first Hebrew translation of Spinoza's Ethica since Jacob Klatzkin's 1924 translation hits the charts in Israel. On December twelfth 2003 it had been on the non-fiction bestseller list for sixteen weeks and had now reached seventh place.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICISM AND MESSIANISM

On an intellectual level, a final source for divisions between Weimar Jews came from their perception of history. Here too Spinoza served as a unifier. A discussion of this aspect of the Weimar Jewish appreciation of Spinoza will take us into the heart of the act of remembrance and celebration, as a particular way of dealing with history. We will ask, how, if at all, was the historical person of Spinoza placed in a historical context. What kind of historical significance was attributed to Spinoza? And, how did his celebration convey meta-historical presuppositions? In short we will now investigate how celebrating Spinoza amounted to dealing with the past.

The History of Jewish History

A particular philosophy of history was essential to the process of Jewish emancipation. This was the belief in progress, which had been central to the enlightened and revolutionary spirit of the late eighteenth century. This spirit entailed the belief that history had entered a new phase.[1] Kant in *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, argued that history was moving towards "die vollkommene bürgerliche Vereinigung in der Menschengattung" (the complete civil organization in the human genus).[2] The French Revolutionaries even emphasized this sense of change by installing a new calendar, which, they believed, inaugurated a new post-Christian era. Jewish Emancipation was subsequently legitimized as the necessary consequence of the victory of Reason. Emancipating the Jews was considered the duty of enlightened mankind, which believed it had put an end to the medieval night of the "Dark Ages". It is difficult to establish the extent to which the Jewish parallel to the revolutionary Enlightenment sense of

[1] R. Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise; ein Beitrag zur Pathalogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1959), 156.

[2] Immanuel Kant, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht", *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 1748, no. November (1784).

historical change was an autonomous Jewish development rooted in the *haskalah*, the Jewish pendant to the Enlightenment, and the extent to which it copied non-Jewish developments. In any event, Jews were likely to have perceived historical change, if only through observing the aftermath of the French Revolution. In France, the Revolution brought Jews Emancipation two years after the fall of the Bastille. Later, Napoleon I gave voice to the idea that the French Revolution had also changed Jewish history, when he re-instituted the *Sanhedrin*. This institution had been the supreme political, religious, and judicial body that existed in Palestine during the Roman Period. Napoleon re-instituted it in order to adjust Judaism to the new Revolutionary Age.[3] Although these developments took place on the Western bank of the Rhine, they also exerted influence on the perception of history among German Jews. They looked at the West and saw the direction in which history was proceeding.

It should then come as no surprise that we see a reflection of the faith in progress among different currents within emancipating Jewry. The Jewish *maskilim*, for example, noticed historical progress in the way that reason made their exit from the Ghetto possible, and enabled their admission into Gentile society. A belief in progress became an essential element of the Jewish movements that emerged from the *haskalah* outlook. The Reform Movement often went as far as to depart from the idea that Judaism was based on a longing for Zion. In the name of progress, it was willing to adjust Jewry to suit a new era, and to initiate significant modifications on rituals that were centuries old. The reformists called their Synagogues "Temples", no longer waiting for the Temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. They also removed messianic references about a future Jewish return to Zion from the liturgy.[4] The Reform Rabbinical Conference in Frankfurt of 1845 even formally declared the Jews" newly gained status as citizens a partial fulfillment of Jewish messianic hopes.[5] An end of messianism also manifested in Zionism, which held that Jews should put an end to their state of dispersion themselves, without waiting for the Messiah. Herzl demonstrated a belief in the blessings of technology, in his dreams of a

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[3] Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 43–44.

[4] Meyer, *Response to Modernity; A History of the Reform Movement*, 59.

[5] Mendels-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World; a Documentary History*, 185.

Jewish State full of modern machines and industry. In his utopian novel *Altneuland*[6] he envisioned a canal between the Meditteranean sea and the Red sea, and state of the art industry to exploit the natural recourses of the Red Sea. Moreover, Herzl included a rebuilt, Third Temple in his vision of a Jewish Palestine. For the most part, it is this rejection of the traditional faith in the coming of the Messiah, or even the perceived lack of need for his coming, that made both movements appear so blasphemous to the Orthodoxy. The ideology of Emancipation, then, implied a secularization of Jewish history and a break with Jewish messianism.

Another consequence in the changed perception of Jewish history was characteristic of the era of Jewish Emancipation. Jews started to take unprecedented interest in history. This phenomenon has been classically chronicled in Haim Yerushalmi's book on Jewish historiography, *Zakhor*.[7] Yerushalmi showed how the secularization of Jewish history was one of the defining changes that took place in the transition from the medieval rabbinical form of Judaism to Jewish culture in the post-Emancipation age. He made his case in the context of a sweeping version of a history of Jewish history that went back to Biblical times. Yerushalmi maintained that the pre-Modern rabbinical concept of Jewish history originated in the destruction of the Second Temple and the repression of the *Bar Kochba* uprising.[8] Out of fear of new comings of false messiahs, the rabbis proclaimed not only that the Biblical times of Revelation and Prophecy had ended, but also that there should be no immediate expectation of the coming of the Messiah, or of a new era of Redemption. The rabbis held that Jewry was dispersed and condemned to wait passively for the Messiah. As a consequence, Yerushalmi argued, Jewish history was at a standstill. It was locked between the Biblical Era and the Messianic Era, in a state of exile that could only end by divine intervention. As a result, Yerushalmi noted, Jews became masters of remembering their Biblical past through their Holidays, many of which referred to Historical events such as the Exodus (Passover), the Maccabean Revolt (Feast of Lights), or the destruction of the Temples (*Tisha be-Aw*). While Yerushalmi showed how Jewish collective memory flourished, he also noted that Jewish

[6] Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (Leipzig: H. Seemann, 1902).
[7] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory*.
[8] Ibid., 24.

historiography hardly existed, especially when compared to interest in non-Biblical history as it developed in the Christian world, or to interest in history for the sake of history (or historicism) as we have been used to since the nineteenth century. He argued that in the rare cases when medieval Jews did write about their post-Biblical past, they still placed it in the perspective of Biblical events.

Yerushalmi demonstrated, as other historians in his footsteps,[9] that this picture changed completely in the era of Jewish Emancipation. From the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries onwards, Jews hesitantly started taking interest in recording their post-Biblical history, and in time this interest rapidly increased. More and more German Jews began to occupy themselves with Jewish history. Journals on Jewish history were founded,[10] and Jewish history was taught at rabbinical seminaries. The classical texts of Judaism, like the Scriptures and the Talmud, began to be rivaled by the great multi-volume Jewish Histories written by Isaac Marius Jost, Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow.[11] Particularily, Graetz' momentous 11–volume *History of the Jews* marked the Jewish preoccupation with Jewish history. The tremendous popularity of this book, and of its three-volume popular edition that became a favorite *Bar-Mitzvah* gift, did much to popularize Jewish history. In 1900, 131 lay circles for Jewish history and literature counted thousands of German Jews as members.[12] To Yerushalmi, this Modern interest in history was nothing less than the "faith of fallen Jews."[13] Underlying this eruption of Jewish historical interest, Yerushlami noticed a change in the Jewish attitude towards history. It ceased

[9] Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, 20–30; Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History, The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, trans. Chaya Naor and Sondra Silverston (London: The Littman library of Jewish civilization, 2002); Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations* 26, no. Spring (1989): 8; Schorsch, *From Text to Context*; Ismar Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism", in *From Text to Context, the Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, ed. Ismar Schorsch (Hanover: Brandeis University Press 1994).

[10] Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums (1851–1839); Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland (1937).

[11] Marcus Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 9 vols. (Berlin 1820–1828); Heinrich Graetz, *Die Geschichte der Juden*, 11 vols. (Leipzig 1853–1875); Simon Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes: von seinen Uranfängen bis zur Gegenwart; in zehn Banden*, 10 vols., vol. Jüdischer Verlag (Berlin 1925–1929).

[12] Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, 30.

[13] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 86.

to be perceived in a strictly religious light, and was marked by a departure from "the belief that divine providence is not only an ultimate but an active causal factor in Jewish history, and the related belief in the uniqueness of Jewish history itself."[14]

Another significant development was that in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the blessings of Modernity began to look more and more like curses. Confidence in progress suffered from the rise of a proletarian class, the deterioration of living conditions in cities, the loss of a connection with Nature in cities, and – to Jews particularly – the rise, in the late nineteenth century, of modern anti-Semitic sentiments. Most important here was the impact of the First World War. In many ways, the outbreak of this "War to End all Wars" to both belligerent sides still seemed to be a climax of the belief in progress. German Jews, such as Leo Baeck initially perceived the War as bringing the final victory of German *Kultur* to the rest of the world.[15] Accordingly, the disillusionment in which the War ended was not only the result of a disillusion in the quality of the German army, or in the nature of modern warfare, it was also the result of a disillusion in progress itself. This disillusionment was an important ingredient of the dynamism of Weimar culture. It produced the dissonance of Kurt Weill's music, the brutality of George Grosz's painting, and the popularity of books like Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*,[16] which articulated the view that Western culture, like that of all other civilizations, would eventually decline.[17] Apart from this general sense of disillusionment, German Jews also had their own reason to abandon their confidence in Historical progress. To many, the confrontation with anti-Semitic sentiments, despite strong Jewish support for the War, had been a sign, or even a confirmation, that having a nationalist German loyalty did not suffice for Jews to be accepted as equals in German society. This thwarted their vision that the total acceptance of Jews in German society would be a necessary result of historical progress, and upset the historical optimism of emancipated Jewry.

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[14] Ibid., 89.

[15] Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *Deutsch-jüdische geschichte in der Neuzeit, Aufbruch und Zerstörung*, 16.

[16] Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes, Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (München: Beck, 1923).

[17] MV.

The Weimar reaction against the secularization of Jewish history has been described in different ways. One of them was in the rise of anti-historicist sentiments among a number of Weimar Jewish intellectuals. Yerushalmi himself mentions that "voices of protest" were not lacking against the secularization of Jewish history and the historicizing of Judaism itself, citing the examples of Samson Raphael Hirsch and Franz Rosenzweig.[18] This development was mapped more extensively by David Myers, who devoted his book, *Resisting History*, to this late Wilhelminian and Weimar Jewish anti-historicist movement.[19] He discussed the cases of four German Jewish intellectuals who were all endowed with a strong historical orientation, and yet showed a dislike to historicism: Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss and Isaac Breuer. These four objected to the relativism that historicism ultimately led to, and looked for an alternative appreciation of history that would not lead to such relativism. Myers used these figures to illustrate the "phenomenon of Jewish anti-historicism",[20] which, he believed, ran parallel to the ubiquitous non-Jewish "crisis of historicism" proclaimed by Ernst Troeltsch in 1922, and which was an important ingredient of the Weimar *Kulturpessimismus*.

Another way in which this reaction against the secularization of Jewish history was described was through the phenomenon of the return to messianism. This development was recognized as a key element of the Weimar Jewish revival by Aschheim and Rabinbach, and most extensively charted by Löwy.[21] In his book, *Redemption and Utopia*, Löwy discussed a group of Jewish intellectuals, including "religious Jews" such as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, "assimilated (religious-atheist) libertarian Jews" such as Gustav Landauer, and Walter Benjamin, who to Löwy "more than any other personified the German-Jewish messianic/libertarian culture."[22] These Jews did not perceive history as a gradual process of progress toward a better future.

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[18] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 91–92.

[19] Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, 170.

[20] Ibid., 11.

[21] Aschheim, "German Jews Beyond Bildung and Liberalism", 38–39; Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*, 28; Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia; Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*.

[22] Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia; Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*, 25–26.

Instead, their utopian hopes were turned toward total destruction of the existing world order, and the sudden redemption that was to follow such a catastrophe. In their aim of uprooting the political order and hopes for an egalitarian community, these authors were often anarchistic and libertarian. In this, Löwy saw a neo-romantic ideology and an anarchist disposition that fitted the description of Jewish messianism of Gershom Scholem – himself a figure under the scrutiny of Löwy – who wrote: "there is an anarchic element in the very nature of [Jewish] Messianic utopianism: the dissolution of old ties which lose their meaning in the new context of messianic freedom."[23]

Modern messianism had roots before the advent of the Weimar Republic. Indeed, as Jacob Talmon has argued, there was a good deal of messianism inherent in the great nineteenth century ideology of progress.[24] Still, the Weimar messianism described by Löwy was of a different kind. Whereas Talmon's messianism was political and led to political organization, Löwy's messianism was aimed at the destruction of political organization in an anarchistic spirit. Also, whereas Talmon's messianism was the product of an optimistic spirit based on the possibilities raised by the end of the *Ancien Régime*, the authors discussed by Löwy developed their messianic ideas as a result of a more pessimistic disillusionment with the benefits of Modernity. Finally, whereas the proponents of the messianism described by Talmon had great confidence in Man's capability to help bring about the utopian or messianic age, Löwy's thinkers limited the role of Man in encouraging the coming of the messianic age to an absolute minimum. As Benjamin, one of Löwy's proponents of messianism, argued, the only method available to Man was nihilism.[25]

After the Modern era secularized Jewish history, Weimar Jewish culture thus showed a return, in new ways, to the religious meaning history had in pre-Modern times. This break with the Modern secularization of history was not a return to pre-Modern Orthodoxy. Indeed, Jewish Orthodoxy still considered anti-historicism and modern messianism to be blasphemous, and it hardly encouraged authors to adopt

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[23] Ibid.; Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

[24] J.L. Talmon, *Political Messianism; The Romantic Phase* (London 1960), 15–17.

[25] Walter Benjamin, "Theologisch-politisches Fragment", in *Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), 204.

the prescriptions of Jewish Law. However, the meaning of this secularization was still religious, in the sense that it rejected the notion that Man was in control of history. The attempt to attribute external meaning to history implied that, in the end Man, is at the mercy of history. Therefore, both attitudes towards history, anti-historicism and messianism may be described as a "de-secularization" of history, rather than as religious attitudes towards history.

Like Myers, Löwy also focused on a limited number of Jewish intellectuals, such as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, Gustav Landauer, Ernst Bloch, Georg Luckács and Erich Fromm. Myers and Löwy both suggested it was possible that the phenomena of messianism and anti-historicism ran deeper in Weimar culture than the circle of authors they were able to examine. As a consequence, Myers and Löwy claimed that the authors were only part of a much broader group.[26] At the same time, they did not deny that the powerful historicist and anti-messianist sentiments existing before the First World War had not completely disappeared. Instead, they believed that these sentiments were still alive, if only because these sentiments had provoked the movements of anti-historicism and messianism. Myers even went as far as to trace the co-existence of historicism and anti-historicism in the authors he discussed, and making this co-existence into one of the main themes of his book.[27]

Again, this confronts us with two conflicting attitudes present within Weimar Jewry. The first is typical of the way in which German culture developed during the nineteenth century and flourished in the Wilhelminian Era. The second attitude was a reaction against this legacy, which was typical of the Weimar Jewish revival. This time, the conflicting attitudes may be described as, on the one hand, a secularized notion of history and, on the other, an anti-historicist, even messianic, wish to de-secularize history.

The secularized notion of history held that reason would eventually be victorious and solve the Jewish problem. This was also the attitude to history of the *Bildungsideal*, triggered by the belief that progress

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[26] Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia; Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*, 176; Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, 170.

[27] Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, 5.

surpassed the need for the Messiah. This attitude was expressed in a rejection of messianism and in a historicist interest in history for no external or metaphysical reason other than pure interest in history. This anti-messianism prospered in the nineteenth century with the rise of Jewish historicist interest in the Jewish past.

The opposing stance was one of de-secularization of history. This mostly post-First World War attitude was based on a critical attitude towards the accomplishments of the Enlightenment and a subsequent loss of confidence in progress. The consequence of this disillusionment was that the only hope left for improving the world was through Divine intervention. This entailed an opposition to historicism and a return of the messianic, meta-historical presuppositions previous to the Emancipation Era.

In this context, the Spinoza celebrations again offer us interesting insights into the culture of Weimar Jewry. These celebrations not only reflected an interest in history (Spinoza was indeed a historical subject), but as celebrations of a historical subject they also accorded meaning to history. Examining the ways in which this meaning was given allows us to investigate the co-existence of the secularization and de-secularization of history within Weimar Jewry. Moreover, the wide range of authors and newspapers that participated in the Spinoza celebrations enables a look beyond the leading group of intellectuals covered by Löwy and Myers.

Spinoza, Historicism and Messianism

There are good reasons to assume that the interest in Spinoza reflected the persistence of historicism and messianism in Weimar Germany, and celebrating Spinoza can be interpreted in messianic, anti-messianic, historicist and anti-historicist ways. The celebration of Spinoza could be historicist for a number of reasons. To begin, the celebration of the seventeenth century philosopher was based on an interest in post-Biblical history. As such, interest in Spinoza was part of the break with the pre-Modern Jewish neglect of post-Biblical history described by Yerushalmi.[28] More importantly, however, it is possible that it was

[28] See also: Jonathan Skolnik, "Writing Jewish History between Gutzkow and Goethe: Auerbach's *Spinoza* and the Birth of Modern Jewish Historical Fiction", *Prooftexts, A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 19, no. 2 (1999).

Spinoza himself who first declared the historicist belief that Jewish history should be viewed without interference from the matrix of the Divine Plan.[29] Indeed, Spinoza's reading of the Scriptures in the TTP is widely recognized as the starting point of modern Bible criticism.[30] In the TTP, Spinoza interpreted the Bible as a historical document that could, and *did*, contain contradictions and, therefore, also errors in its historical accuracy. Spinoza began by criticizing the accuracy of Prophecy, the Biblical window on the Divine Plan of history and, as such, the source of all messianism. The assumption of the existence of a Divine Plan could not only be regarded as being in conflict with important elements of the TTP, but it could also be viewed as alien to Spinoza's entire philosophical system. Indeed, central to the Spinozist project is the rejection of all anthropomorphism, which means that there can be no Divine Plan in history: There can be no moment in history when God "decides" it is time to send the Messiah.

The more religiously inclined could, however, find reasons to associate Spinoza with messianism, and even to consider him a Messiah. Spinoza's conflict with the Jewish community of Amsterdam in particular, and with organized religion in general could, and was, seen as entailing the messianic wish for the abolishment of the existing political order. Spinoza also behaved in messianic way by questioning the authenticity of the Scriptures and the authority of the rabbinical authorities, arguing that Jewish Law was no longer valid. After all, according to Jewish tradition, only the Messiah could annul Jewish Law. Spinoza also obtained a messianic air because he took a unique position, independent of existing religions, since he never converted to Christianity after having being excommunicated from Judaism. Such a position independent of organized religion suited a messianic era in which religious differences would be abolished, especially to those unwilling to see a secular atheist in Spinoza. Then there was also the outburst of messianism among both Christians and Jews during Spinoza's lifetime. There were Jewish predictions that the Messiah would come in 1646, and Christian predictions that the Last Ordeal would

[29] This is emphasized by both Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory* and Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, but it was also Spinoza's contribution to Enlightenment, according to Ernst Cassirer's 1932 book on the Philosophy of the Enlightenment. Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932), 185.

[30] See for example Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinoza's als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft, Untersuchungen zu Spinoza's theologisch-politischem Traktat*.

begin in 1666. These messianic expectations had been particularly intense in the Amsterdam Jewish Quarter. Many Amsterdam Jews followed Shabbetai Zevi, who in 1654 proclaimed himself the Messiah.[31] Among Weimar Jewry there was considerbale interest in the figure of Shabbetai Zevi and the messianic movement he ignited.[32] Some authors paired their fascination for this false Messiah, with interest in his contemporary heretic Spinoza. Often the historical background of messianic expectations, helped place the appearance of Spinoza as a supernatural, messianic sign. In some cases Spinoza himself was identified as a messianic figure. Thus his appearance on the world-stage could be viewed as the gradual fulfillment of supernatural workings.

The Historicist Celebration of Spinoza

Now, then, is the time to turn to the Spinoza celebrations themselves and see to what extent they indeed reflected a secularization of history. The Zionist celebration of Spinoza deserves separate treatment because of its complicated attitude towards messianism. For that reason, we begin by looking at the celebration of Spinoza in the non-Zionist and Integrationist press.

Some articles concerning the Spinoza celebrations that appeared in these newspapers clearly reflected historicist interest in Spinoza. They used the occasion to provide their readers with informative accounts of Spinoza's life and work, while avoiding attributing Spinoza with any historical role.[33] A good example comes from the 1932 Spinoza issue of the widely-read *Israelitisches Familienblatt*. The newspaper opened simply with a pre-publication of a section of the *Geschichte der Juden*, by the historian Simon Dubnow that was about to appear in a German translation. It presented a concise factual history of Spinoza's biography without any attempt to attribute any historical significance to it.[34]

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[31] Y. Kaplan, "De joden in de Republiek tot omstreeks 1750 – Religieus, cultureel en sociaal leven", in *Geschiedenis van de joden in Nederland*, ed. R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld J.C.H. Blom, I. Schöffer (Amsterdam: Balans, 1995), 152.

[32] This is illustrated by the popularity of books such as Josef Kastein, *Sabbatai Zewi, der Messias von Ismir* (Berlin: E. Rowohlt, 1930).

[33] For some examples: Sachs, "Spinoza, Zu seinem 250. Todestag am 21. Februar 1927"; Kuhn, "Aus Baruch Spinozas Leben und Wirken."

[34] Simon Dubnow, "Die Gestalt", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 34, no. 47 (1932).

Several articles in different newspapers – in good historicist fashion – even celebrated Spinoza to protect the Historical "truth" on him, by way of warning that existing tales about Spinoza could not withstand the test of historical criticism. For example, the *Jüdisches Wochenblatt für Magdeburg und Umgegend*, dedicated a good part of its 1927 article celebrating Spinoza to the debunking of such myths.[35] It argued that Spinoza had not been driven away from Judaism by his Latin teacher Van den Ende;[36] that the story that there had been an attempt to murder Spinoza was probably false;[37] and that there was no basis for the anecdote that he had been in love with Van den Ende's daughter,[38] even though this had been used as the basis of historical novels on Spinoza's life.[39] This last subject was the main theme of another article in the *Jüdisch liberale Zeitung*, titled "*Spinoza's Liebesverhältnis*". This article reproached Auerbach for having used a story that was "historisch unbegründet" (historically unfounded) as the main thread of his novel. Similarly, the organizers of the Spinoza exhibition in Berlin stated that the exhibition "gegen die historische Treue in keiner Weise verstoßen wurde" (would not violate historical accuracy in any way).[40]

A somewhat more sophisticated attempt to historicize Spinoza was made by neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer, who wrote an article titled "Spinoza's Stellung in der allgemeinen Geistesgeschichte" (Spinoza's position in the general history of ideas) in the 1932 Spinoza issue of the in-depth monthly of the *CV-Verein, Der Morgen*. Cassirer wanted to free Spinoza from what he saw as the unhistorical interpretations of the "Orthodoxe und Freidenker" (Orthodox and freethinkers) of the eighteenth century – and also of his romantic admirers, such as Goethe or Schleiermacher.[41] Cassirer believed there was a kind of fear to historicize Spinoza, and argued that it had too often been seen

[35] Spanier, "Zum 250. Todestag Spinozas."

[36] This story can be traced back to the early Spinoza biographies of Lucas (ca. 1680) and Colerus (before 1705) Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften*, 9, 36–37.

[37] This story can be traced back to the 1697 Spinoza biography of Pierre Bayle. Ibid., 30.

[38] This story can be traced back to the 1705 Spinoza biography of Colerus. Ibid., 37–38.

[39] Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein historischer Roman. 2 Bde*; Kolbenheyer, *Amor Dei. Ein Spinoza-Roman*, 236–237.

[40] Meisl, "Die Spinoza-Ausstellung der Gemeindebibliothek."

[41] Ernst Cassirer, "Spinoza's Stellung in der Allgemeinen Geistesgeschichte", *Der Morgen* 8, no. 5 (1932): 330, 40.

as a "Sünde gegen seinen [Spinoza's] Geist (…). wenn wir ihn selber unter historische Perspektiven rücken, wenn wir nach der Stellung fragen, die er im Ganzen der neueren Philosophiegeschichte und der allgemeinen europaïschen Geistesgeschichte einnimmt." (sin against Spinoza's spirit when we put him in historical perspective, when we ask for the place which he takes in the modern history of philosophy and the general European history of ideas).[42] Cassirer did not believe that giving Spinoza historical perspective was a sin against the Dutch philosopher's spirit. On the contrary, he saw it as an obligation, and wrote: "wir müssen versuchen, all das, was die spätere Entwicklung des philosophischen Denkens in sie hineingelegt hat, einen Augenblick zu vergessen, um lediglich ihre historische Grundungsgestalt, die Gestalt, die sie für Spinoza selbst besessen haben ins Auge zu fassen." (we have to attempt, to forget everything that later developments of philosophical thinking have attributed to him, and soberly understand his historical setting, and the form it took for Spinoza himself).[43] Cassirer was convinced that Spinoza's "Einzigartigkeit" (uniqueness)[44] could only be understood if he was properly placed in his historical perspective, and the article in *Der Morgen* attempted to celebrate Spinoza in such a way.

Spinoza as a Milestone in Post-Biblical History

In spite of these examples, a celebration of Spinoza for a purely historicist interest – that is, only out of a scholarly interest to know how things "really were" – was rare. Descriptions of Spinoza's place in history were usually motivated by a wish to demonstrate his historical importance. This was emphasized in several ways. First of all, many perceived Spinoza as a milestone in history. Different authors argued that Spinoza's life and work represented a watershed in history, usually between the Middle Ages and the Modern Era. M. Katz, a lecturer at the University of Düsseldorf, wrote in the *CV-Zeitung* that the seventeenth century marked a "Weltkrise des Geistes" (world crisis of intellect), which at the same time "neue Werte Geistesgestaltung in sich trägt" (carries with it new values of intellectual formation).[45] To

[42] Ibid., 326.
[43] Ibid., 328.
[44] Ibid., 348.
[45] Katz, "Baruch Spinoza: zu seinem 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927."

Katz, Spinoza embodied the innovative potential of this historical crisis; it made him into a pivotal figure in history. Katz wrote: "Er ist ein Wendepunkt in der Geschichte der Philosophie und eben deshalb begrenzt durch sein Vorher und Nachher. Eine tiefe Kluft trennt seine moderne Weltanschauung von der mittelalterischen Scholastik und was nach ihm folgt, hat sich seinem Einflusse nicht entziehen können." (He marks a breaking point in the history of Philosophy, and because of that is limited by his before and his after. A deep divide separates his modern worldview from medieval scholasticism, and what follows him, has not been able to avoid his influence).[46] Albert Lewkowitz, a philosopher and lecturer at the Breslau Jewish theological seminary, celebrated Spinoza in a similar way in the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, a journal with the reputation of being one of the strongest representatives of post-Emancipation Jewish historicism. In it Lewkowitz set out to explain Spinoza's "immortality" and did so by discussing how modern philosophy had been defined by its integration of Spinozist thought. Lewkowitz discussed the way philosophical currents such as German idealism, neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, dealt with philosophical issues that were first raised by Spinoza even when they considered themselves opposed to Spinoza. Because of that Lewkowitz argued that "in Spinoza ein Typus wissenschaftlicher Weltanschauung, der von der innersten gedanklichen Motiven der Neuzeit gefordert wird, die erste grundsätzliche Ausprägung gefunden hat." (in Spinoza, a certain type of scientific worldview has found its first foundational expression, which emanates from the innermost mental motives of the modern era).[47]

A discussion of the historical conditions of the seventeenth and later centuries did not, however, always suffice to truly motivate Spinoza's historical importance as a watershed in history: The *Jüdische Wochenzeitung für Kassel, Hessen und Waldeck* argued that Spinoza marked the end of the Middle Ages, treating, within the scope of a single page, the main cultures of Antiquity (*i.e.*, Greek, Roman and Asian); how

[46] Ibid.

[47] Albert Lewkowitz, "Der Spinozismus in der Philosophie der Gegenwart, zum 250. Todestage Spinozas (21 Februar 1677)", *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 71, no. 1 (1927): 1.

these cultures meshed into one Medieval culture; and how Spinoza broke with these legacies in a single stroke.[48]

Spinoza in the Historical Context of the Dutch Republic

The focus on Spinoza's historical importance was also motivated by the time and place in which he lived. Spinoza's image as a representative of the tolerance and enlightened spirit of the Dutch Republic is a frequently recurring theme in his celebrations. The anti-Zionist student newspaper, *K.C. Blätter*, saw in Spinoza's Holland an "Insel im Strome der Zeiten" (island in the currents of the epochs).[49] Kurt Eckstein, the author of the article, argued that Spinoza had been part of an enormous cultural prospering, a "Kulturwelle" (cultural wave) that could be felt in economics, politics and art. Seventeenth century Holland had been a remarkable age, where the prevailing political climate granted every man "Freiheit, zu denken, was er will, und zu Sagen was er denkt." (freedom to think what he wants, and to say what he thinks).[50] Eckstein pictured Spinoza as an integral part of this culture. Not only did he compare Spinoza to great thinkers, he also compared him to Rembrandt of whose use of light he wrote "ein Licht, von dem man sagen darf: es denkt" (a light of which one may say: it thinks). From Spinoza's philosophy, Eckstein wrote that it was possible to say: "Dieses Denken ist Licht, das erhellt" (this thinking is light that illuminates).[51] He even compared Spinoza's philosophical system with seventeenth century Dutch architecture, writing that one could see "in Spinoza's Denken auch die klare, verständige Gliederung des Baukörpers, die Betrachtung der Dinge und des Geschehens nach dem Gesetz von Ursache und Wirkung, ohne Wunsch und Forderung, ohne Mitleiden oder Entrüstung" (in Spinoza's thinking, also the clear, rational structure of the building, the view of things and of events

[48] Julius Dalberg, "Baruch Spinoza zum 250. Todestag", *Jüdische Wochenzeitung für Kassel, Hessen und Waldeck* 4, no. 8 (1927).

[49] Eckstein, "Baruch de Spinoza: Zum 300. Geburtstag des Denkers", 39.

[50] These words of Eckstein paraphrase the title of the 20th chapter of the TTP: It is shown that in a free commonwealth every man may think as he pleases, and say what he thinks. Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 566.

[51] Eckstein, "Baruch de Spinoza: Zum 300. Geburtstag des Denkers", 43.

according to the law of cause and effect, without request and claim, without pity or indignation).[52]

Eckstein argued that the "cultural wave" Spinoza was part of receded, and wrote that within a short period of time "versinkt das blühende Leben in nichts" (sinks the flowering life in nothingness). Far from maintaining that a great movement had begun in Holland, he held that: "[n]icht einmal bescheidene Nachklänge sind im Bewußtsein der Zeiten geblieben" (not even modest echoes had remained in the awareness of the eras).[53] Yet, Eckstein held that Spinoza's fame did survive, despite the uniqueness of the political conditions in Holland, which produced such prosperity. Spinoza "honored" that age with his greatness and the fact that he praised the Dutch State in the TTP. To Eckstein, Spinoza's significance was that his memory could remind the world of the great Dutch era of tolerance and freedom of thought.

In some articles celebrating Spinoza, the historical climate in which he lived was deemed to be so important that his character played only a minor role. This can be exemplified with an article celebrating Spinoza in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, titled "Wo Spinoza lebte" (Where Spinoza lived).[54] This article hardly dealt with Spinoza. Instead, its author, Max Behrens, gave a personal description of his visit to the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam. According to Behrens, Amsterdam had always been a city in the front-line of historical progress. It had been early in awarding Jews emancipation and, already in Spinoza's lifetime, possessed "liberalen Gesetze" (liberal laws), Laws, which enabled Jews to develop their culture, putting them "an die Spitze der damaligen bekannten Welt" (at the forefront of the then known world). Most of all, to Berhens, Amsterdam represented progress. He wrote: "nur in dieser Stadt konnten sich die Schicksale entwickeln, die bis heute in ihren Ausklängen nachzittern in den Gedanken der Menschheit, die beitrugen zu dem Fortschritt und der Erkenntnis, die heute noch umstritten und vor allem heute nicht vergessen sind." (only in this city, could the fates develop, of which the echoes quiver in the thoughts of humanity, which contributed to progress and knowledge, which are still today controversial and most of all, not forgotten). Spinoza was, of course, such a *Schicksal* (fate).

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[52] Ibid., 41.
[53] Ibid., 40.
[54] Behrens, "Wo Spinoza lebte…Die Juden von Amsterdam damals und heute."

Articles such as these were attempts to celebrate Spinoza as having been part of a seventeenth century *Zeitgeist*. They were, perhaps, a little far-fetched, but they intended to show that Spinoza belonged to an extraordinary era in history, an era that could serve as an example to other eras, not least Weimar Germany.

Spinoza's Influence on History

The example of Behrens shows that Spinoza was not only celebrated for exemplifying a milestone in history, but also for having influenced history itself. Behrens argued for an understanding of Spinoza as a symbol of "Fortschritt und Erkenntnis" (progress and knowledge). He spoke of the "nachzittern" (quivering), that had been the result of figures like Spinoza, emphasizing that these had not been forgotten. To him, this showed that Spinoza was still exerting influence on history.

The motive of celebrating Spinoza for his influence on history was present in a great number of articles. It was implicit in the recurring theme of Spinoza's influence on German culture. As became apparent in the second chapter of this research, many newspapers celebrated Spinoza by pointing out his influence on great German cultural icons such as Goethe, Schleiermacher or Bismarck. We analyzed these articles for their relevance to relationships between Jews and non-Jews. In this chapter, another aspect of this theme is stressed, namely the historical significance attributed to Spinoza. Celebrating Spinoza for his influence on German culture conveys a strong sense that Spinoza was an important factor in the progress of German cultural greatness. As the *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* argued: "Nicht vergessen werden aber darf…daß Spinoza von einer geradezu epochalen Bedeutung für die Klassische Zeit des deutschen Schrifttums war." (It should not be forggotten…that Spinoza was of epochal significance for the classical era of German literature).[55] Max Grunwald's claim that there would not have been a Goethe without Spinoza shows just how strong a power Spinoza exerted on German culture.[56] The idea that Spinoza stands at the basis of German culture implies that he influenced history in an important way; the greatness of German

[55] Meyer, "Spinoza."
[56] Grunwald, "Spinoza, aus einem Vortrage aus dem Jahre 1899 von Dr. Max Grunwald."

culture was generally perceived as evidence of Germany's leading role in the historical development of mankind. Therefore, Spinoza's contribution to German culture elevated him to a figure who, besides having helped to bring about German culture, had also furthered the progress of mankind.

A similar argument can be made with regard to the celebration of Spinoza as a father of the Enlightenment, a topic discussed in the previous chapter.[57] This celebration of Spinoza also assumed him to be the origin of a historical process. This time, Spinoza had not brought about the greatness of German culture, but the progress inherent in the Integrationist belief that history was moving in a direction that would end all forms of discrimination against Jews, despite many drawbacks and continuous outbreaks of anti-Semitic sentiment. Since discrimination against Jews had always been viewed as a Divine punishment that would only end with the coming of the Messiah, this Integrationist view was impossible to hold without the belief that, with the arrival of the Modern age, history changed in a fundamental way.

A number of authors celebrated Spinoza for having brought about such a historical change. For instance, Katz called Spinoza "den Bahnbrecher der neuen Zeit, den Schöpfer des Modernen Staatsgedankens, den Prediger der Toleranzidee und der Verkünder der Religion der Humanität und Liebe" (the pioneer of the modern Era, the creator of the modern notion of the state, the preacher of the idea of tolerance and the announcer of the religion of humanity and love).[58] Katz further underlined Spinoza's historical role by describing his writings "als erschlössen sich neue Quellen des Menschendaseins" (as if new sources for human existence opened up).[59] Jews, Katz wrote, should be proud of the fact that the Jewish Spinoza had given eternal values to the spiritual history of humanity.[60] Fritz Heinemann, used the metaphor of birth to describe the importance of Spinoza as an instigator of a new historical era. He wrote that Spinoza was "ein notwendiges Glied in dem Geburtsprozeß des neuzeitlichen Geistes" (a necessary element in the birth of the modern mind).[61] According to Heinemann, the traumatic experience of the ban had helped Spinoza "die

[57] P. 86.
[58] Katz, "Baruch Spinoza: zu seinem 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", 67.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Heinemann, "Spinoza und wir. Zum 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", 22.

Eierschalen einer früheren Entwicklungsstufe abzustreifen" (to peel off the eggshels of an earlier stage of development).[62] This labor resulted in nothing less than the "Geburt der Modernen Menschen" (birth of modern mankind).[63] Heinemann added that Spinoza marked a change in Jewish history. By combining his role as a bringer of the Modern Age with a background rooted in Jewish tradition, Spinoza personified a "Schicksalswende in der Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes" (change of fate in the history of the Jewish people).[64]

There also was an assumption that Spinoza's influence on history was caused by him being a historical force that, ever since his birth, was hidden beneath the surface of historical development. The *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde Dresden* spoke of "Die lebendige Kraft seiner [Spinoza's] Werke" (the living power of his [Spinoza's] work), which, it argued, "lebt heute noch genau so, wie vor 200 Jahren. Das ist das Entscheidende!" (still lives, just like 200 years ago. That's the crucial thing)[65] Similarly, Julius Bab called Spinoza "einer der mächtigsten Beweger des Menschengeschlechts" (one of the most powerful movers of the human race).[66] Further, Katz underlined his belief in Spinoza's power to influence history by arguing that his spirit possessed an extraordinary "Gestaltungskraft" (creative power) that made his ideas fertile in every new era. Heinemann also believed that Spinoza possessed such a force, remarking that his philosophy had never become outdated and kept exerting its influence. To describe the influence of this power in the course of history, Heinemann took recourse to the language of physics, using the image of the Law of conservation of energy, writing that: "Was wirkende Kraft war, was als geschaffenes Werk mit Energie beladen ist, das wirkt weiter." (That, which was working power, that, which as created works is charged with energy, that works on).[67]

We may conclude that, in the non-Zionist press, the Spinoza celebrations were one of many manifestations of German Jewish interest in post-Biblical history. Sometimes, this current of the press celebrated Spinoza in a classically historicist fashion, with scholarly

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Sachs, "Spinoza, Zu seinem 250. Todestag am 21. Februar 1927."
[66] Bab, "Rembrandt und Spinoza", 395.
[67] Heinemann, "Spinoza und wir. Zum 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", 21.

articles intended to demythologize him. More often, however, these articles opposed the rules of historicism. Far from historicist relativism that considered every age "unmittelbar zu Gott" (immediate to God) (to quote another famous *dictum* by Ranke), they pictured Spinoza as having performed a, or perhaps even *the*, defining role in history. Still, this amounted to a secularization of history, explaining the movement of history from the perspective of human causes and not from that of a Divine Plan. As such, these articles were typical of the "historization" of Jewish culture.

History in the Zionist Celebration of Spinoza

In our discussion of the use of history in the Spinoza celebrations we have not yet treated the Zionist celebration. This celebration deserves separate treatment as Zionists had their own, very specific, view of the course Jewish history. The Zionist movement was perhaps even more conscious of its own meta-historical role in Jewish history than its antagonist Integrationist movement. The secularization of history was arguably the essential element of Zionist ideology. But while the Integrationist celebration of Spinoza for his role as an instigator of the blessings of the Modern Era showed satisfaction with the Modern world, the Zionist attitude towards the belief in historical progress was more complex than a simple adoption of the confidence in progress of the Enlightenment. In fact, political Zionism had come into existence because of its disillusionment with this kind of historical progress. This is clearly shown in the historical circumstances that lead Herzl, the father of political Zionism, to develop his ideas on a Jewish State, the story of which is all the more relevant for the fact that it became part of Zionist mythology: Before becoming a Zionist and writing this book, Herzl shared the Integrationist confidence in progress. That is, he believed that the Jewish question (*i.e.*, their discrimination and the anti-Semitism of other nations) was a relic of the past, which could be ended if Jews were willing to contribute to finding a solution to it. This made him confident in the possibilities of assimilation. In fact, he was such a strong advocate of assimilation, that, at one time, he proposed a symbolic and massive conversion ceremony aimed at converting all of Jewry to Christianity in one grand gesture.[68] At the time, it was

[68] David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 239.

Herzl's conviction that this would remove the last obstacle to complete Jewish equality.

Herzl's conversion to Zionism came about as a result of the Dreyfus affair in France, which he covered as a correspondent for a Viennese newspaper in 1894.[69] This affair disturbed Herzl not only because it was based on the anti-Semitic motives of the prosecutors of Dreyfus or anti-Semitic articles that appeared in the press in the wake of the campaign, but he was also shocked that this could take place in the country with the reputation for being the most progressive in Europe. After all, France could boast a tradition of Enlightenment, the Revolution of 1789, and had been the first country to accord Jews emancipation. If there was one place in the world, which exemplified the advance of human progress, it had to be France. And now, precisely this country appeared not to be immune to a revival of antiquated religious prejudice. In other words, the Dreyfus affair proved to Herzl there was no reason to expect anti-Semitism to disappear in the near future, to become a relic of the past swept away by the continuous advance of progress. He wrote: "Wollten wir warten, bis sich der Sinn auch der mittleren Menschen zur Milde abklärt, die Lessing hätte, als er Nathan der Weise schrieb, so könnte darüber unser Leben und das unserer Söhne, Enkel, Urenkel vergehen." (Would we want to wait, until reason would also convince those in the middle grade of the civil service, for a mildness that Lessing possessed, then this would last our lives, that of our grandchildren, and that of our great grandchildren).[70]

Thus, Herzl made skepticism of progress an important ingredient of Zionist ideology, and this ingredient subsequently lent it a great part of its convincing force. Time and again, Zionist newspapers in Weimar Germany stressed that the Integrationist press displayed naive confidence in the amelioration of conditions of Jews in the Diaspora. The editorial of the 1932 issue of the *Jüdische Rundschau* celebrating Spinoza is a particularly articulate example of this, expressing the hope that German Jewry "sich nicht mehr von den Phrasen jüdisch-liberaler

[69] There is some controversy on the question of just how important the Dreyfus affair was in Herzl's conversion to Zionism, but it certainly played a role in it. Ibid., 242–244.

[70] Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1933).

"Fortschritts'-Optimisten einlullen läßt." (will not let [itself] be lulled to sleep on the sloguns of jewish-liberal optimism of progress).[71]

Although political Zionism thus seemed to deny the role of progress in its criticism of the accomplishments of the Enlightenment, if one considers the solutions the Zionists proposed for the problems they confronted, their confidence in Man's influence on history was perhaps even greater than that of the Integrationists. The entire Zionist project to establish a Jewish State was intended to bring about historical change without Divine intervention. It was based on the belief that it was possible to change the condition of exile the Jewish people suffered throughout their history. Thus, in a manner of speaking, the belief in progress returned through the backdoor. Accordingly, an optimistic confidence in the blessings of Modernity even permeated into Herzl's writings, in spite of his disillusion with the historical movement towards Jewish Emancipation. A reading of Herzl's utopian novel, *Altneuland*, where a Jewish State in Palestine is described, reveals many elements of this nineteenth century confidence in progress.[72] In the novel, Herzl iterated his famous phrase *Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen* (If you want it, it is not a fairy tale), and spoke of modern factories and great infrastructural projects. Zionism held that Jews themselves could bring about historical progress in this world. In effect, the Zionist position, just as the Integrationist position, reflected confidence in secular progress. The fact that according to Zionists historical progress was not in the hands of God but in those of Man implied a denial of religious messianism. Herzl's phrase, *Wenn ihr wollt, ist es kein Märchen* (If you want it, it is not a fairy tale), may therefore also be read as saying that "if you want it, you do not need to wait for the Messiah."

It would, of course, be a mistake to base Zionist ideology exclusively on Herzl's political Zionism. There was also an important current of so-called "cultural Zionism", which did not view the main purpose of Zionism as solving the Jewish question. This current focused on the establishment of a national Jewish culture, rather than on finding a solution to anti-Semitism. A return to Palestine was needed to provide a spiritual centre for such a culture. Its emphasis on the cultural heritage of Judaism made it better suited to integrate Jewish religious ideas. For that reason it was capable to view its mission in messianic

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[71] "Zur Lage in Deutschland", *Jüdische Rundschau* xxxvii, no. 93 (1932).
[72] Herzl, *Altneuland*.

terms. But this was mainly an Eastern European movement. The bulk of Zionism in Weimar Jewry was political Zionism and denied such religiosity.

Anti-messianism returned in much of their Zionist celebration of Spinoza. One way it showed was in the way some Zionists assessed their own celebration of Spinoza, which, to them, implied in itself, a secularization of history. These Zionists rejoiced in celebrating Spinoza because they believed the historical change brought about by Zionism had made a Jewish celebration of Spinoza possible in the first place. As such, their admiration for Spinoza confirmed their belief that the Jewish state of exile, or *Galuth* as they called it, had ended. We find this message in a number of articles published in the main Zionist newspaper in Germany, the *Jüdische Rundschau*. One such articles was written by Hans Rosenkranz,[73] who had also written a brochure,[74] mentioned in the previous chapter, celebrating Spinoza for the authenticity of his character. His article was similar to the brochure, but a stronger emphasis on the historical significance of Spinoza's authentic character gave it a more Zionist color. According to Rosenkranz, the *Galuth* was to be blamed for Spinoza's unnecessary break with Judaism. Life in the Diaspora, at the mercy of other nations, meant that there was a constant danger that Judaism would dissolve and disappear in the non-Jewish world. Rosenkranz argued that the strict cult and rules of Jewish Law existed to protect Judaism from this particular danger of life in the Diaspora. He believed the clash between Spinoza and the Amsterdam rabbis was inevitable, because Spinoza's spirit was too big to be confined to the limits of Jewish Law. At the same time, Rosenkranz understood the rabbis who, living in the *Galuth*, could not take the risk of not punishing Spinoza's heresies. This conflict with the rabbis forced Spinoza to venture out of the Ghetto, and search for his authentic Jewish religion in the non-Jewish world. The result was that Spinoza, despite the inherent Jewish aspects of his philosophy, "strahlte sein Werk, dem Judentum nicht mehr gehörig, seine Wirkungen in fremde, nur nicht in die jüdische Welt" (radiated his work, not part of Judaism any more, into the outside world, only not into the Jewish

[73] Hans Rosenkranz, "Baruch Spinoza. Zu seinem 250. Todestag", *Jüdische Rundschau* 32, no. 14 (1927).

[74] Rosenkranz, *Baruch Spinoza, zum 21 Februar 1927, Aufsatz für die Teilnehmer des Spinoza-Abends, den die Soncino-Gesellschaft Berlin, anläßich der 250. Wiederkehr von Spinoza's Todestag veranstaltete.*

world). To Rosenkranz, this made Spinoza into "der Vorlaufer der großen Emanzipations- und Assimilationsperiode, die mit dem Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts begann."

What makes Rosenkranz's interpretation of Spinoza Zionist rather than Integrationist is that he saw Spinoza's situation as a tragedy. This tragedy was caused by "[d]ie Zerstreutheit des Volkes, seine Landlosigkeit und die Enge seines Daseins" (the dispersion of the people, its uprootedness, and the narrowness of its existence). As such, Spinoza exemplified "das ganze erschütternde Galuthschicksal des Judentums" (the entire distress of the galuth-fate of Judaism). Rosenkranz's admiration for Spinoza was based on Spinoza's refusal to accept the conditions of the *Galuth* life. However, while Rosenkranz regretted that Spinoza had chosen for the non-Jewish world, he also realized that Spinoza had had no other choice.

As such, Spinoza's fate demonstrated the need for the Zionist project. It showed that the *Galuth* needed to be ended, as well as the necessity for a Zionist intervention in Jewish history. This gave Rosenkranz's celebration of Spinoza an extra dimension: the celebration of Spinoza itself demonstrated the success of the Zionist project. A true Jewish celebration of Spinoza could never be possible without confidence in Jewish independence. Only a post-*Galuth* Judaism would be able to appreciate Spinoza as a Jew. Orthodox Judaism excommunicated him, Integrationists celebrated him for having stepped out of Judaism, but Zionism could both admire him and admire him as a Jew. Therefore, to Zionists, the most important reason for celebrating Spinoza was that it demonstrated the *Galuth* had ended. A deliberate Jewish celebration of Spinoza as a Jewish hero showed that Judaism had entered a new phase in history. Thus the celebration of Spinoza became a political act, showing to non-Zionist Jews the advantages of the historical development of Zionism: making it possible to truly claim Spinoza for Judaism.

A similar argument can be found in another article written in the Zionist newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau*, this time by the ardent Zionist Jacob Klatzkin.[75] Klatzkin argued that the celebration of Spinoza by Jews was made possible thanks to a new, developing, kind of Judaism, "ein Judentum, das die höchste innere Reform an sich vollzieht, nämlich den Uebergang von Nur-Religiösem zum Säkularen, vom

[75] Klatzkin, "Mißverständnisse in und um Spinoza."; ——, "Boundaries."

Eng-Nationalem zum Allgemeinmenschlichen" (a Judaism, which performs the highest sort of inner reform, from strictly religious, to secular, from narrow-national, to general human). Only a Judaism such as that was "frei geworden auch für die Aufnahme des aus seinem Stamme hervorgegangenen Baruch-Benedictus Spinoza" (Became free, also for the incorporation of Spnoza, who descended from his tribe). By arguing that this new kind of Judaism was not "ein in Assimilation reformiertes und aufgeklartes Judentum" (an in assimilation reformed and enlightened Judaism), Klatzkin implied that this new kind of Judaism was Zionism. To Klatzkin, then, the celebration of Spinoza also demonstrated that thanks to Zionism, Jewish history had entered a new phase. It made the celebration of Spinoza into a political act that confirmed the historical development of Judaism. It served him also as an argument to support his opposition to attempts at revoking the ban on Spinoza. He thought the ban was probably justified from the perspective of the Orthodox Judaism of Spinoza's era, but to revoke the ban in the Modern Era would deny the evolution of Judaism.

Both Rosenkranz and Klatzkin used the Jewish celebration of Spinoza to confirm that Zionism ended the *Galuth* era and brought about a new era with more self-determination for Jews. We can then argue that celebrating Spinoza for these reasons amounted to a secularization of Jewish history. The assumption here is that Spinoza could only be celebrated in the post-*Galuth* era, where hoping and waiting for arrival of the Messiah was no longer what defined Judaism.

In a different way, the Zionist opinion that this post-*Galuth* world was more preferable than an idealized future "messianic world" also lay behind David Baumgardt's celebration of Spinoza. Baumgardt wrote extensively on Spinoza's influence in Germany, and traced this influence to the historical power, which emanated from Spinoza's works and *Wirkung*. There was an Integrationist element in this focus on German culture, which accounts for the publication of his article in the *Der Morgen*.[76] However, there was also a clear Zionist flavor in his celebration of Spinoza, which came to the fore in another article about Spinoza's "Jewish mission" Baumgardt wrote for the Zionist *Jüdische Rundschau*.[77] This article dealt with the significance of Spinoza for what he believed to be the Modern challenges that confronted Judaism. The

[76] Baumgardt, "Spinoza's Bild."
[77] ———, "Spinozas jüdische Sendung."

article expressed the anti-messianism inherent in Zionism that aimed to solve the problems confronting Jews in this world, without waiting for God's help.

To Baumgardt, Spinoza's significance was his occupation with *this* world rather than with an ideal or Divine world. He interpreted Spinoza's philosophy as meaning that it made no sense to distinguish the material world from the heavenly realm. In his words: "diese irdische Welt selbst und unsere Aufgabe in ihr trotz aller Grausamkeit des Daseins als das einzig Wahrhafte zu empfinden" (to experience this world itself, and our duties in it, despite all the cruelty of existence as the only reality). Baumgardt even related this interpretation of Spinozism to the challenges that faced Judaism in 1932, specifically identifying two of them. First, there was anti-Semitism, which had been stirred up by the general climate of hatred that resulted from First World War. Second, there were the difficulties Jews encountered in their "Aufbauwerk" (pioneering work) in Palestine. Rather than trying to solve these problems through Jewish humanism, Baumgardt believed that they should be tackled with an awareness of the "düsteren Wirklichkeit unserer Aufgaben" (dark truth of our duties). Spinoza, he argued, warned against trying to solve the "Nöte die uns heute umdrohen" (hardships surrounding us at present) by escaping into a supernatural world. He admired Spinoza for believing that this supernatural world does not exist, and his message that subsequent solutions to the problems of the day are to be found in the natural world.

With this argument, Baumgardt expressed the belief that Spinoza broke with Jewish tradition. Whereas it had been useful to refer to an "Ethos jüdischer Humanität" (ethics of Jewish humanism) in the past, this did not suffice to solve the problems confronting Jewry in the twentieth century. However, Baumgardt did not see this as a modern development of Judaism. Instead, he believed it to be a restoration of the original meaning of Judaism, which had never really been messianic. Making a remarkably bold move by suggesting that Christianity, and not Judaism, was the religion of messianism, Baumgardt wrote: "Auch das alte Judentum hat es nie sagen wollen: Mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt." (Even the ancient Judaism has never wanted to say: my kingship is not of this world).[78] He argued that the tendency to

[78] Baumgardt refers to Jesus' words: "My Kingdom is not of this World"; John 18:36.

encapsulate Judaism in values such as "Machtverneinung and Askese" (negation of power and ascetism) was mistaken, because these were Christian values that did not belong with Judaism. While Baumgardt distinguished Spinozism from the Jewish tradition of "Ethos jüdischer Humanität" (an ethics of Jewish humanism), he still maintained that Spinozism was a continuation of the Judaism of the Old Testament and the Talmud. The true "Atem des Alten Testaments" (breath of the Old Testament), Baumgardt wrote, was expressed in a Talmudic phrase: "Nicht nur den guten, auch den bösen Trieb sollst du mit ins Lehrhaus schleppen." (not only the good, but also the evil drive, should you carry to the [Jewish] school). In his eyes, Judaism was not expressed in the ascetism of the Christian monk, but instead in the im Leben tätige Mensch" (the human being who was standing in the middle of public life).

By distinguishing Judaism from Christianity, Baumgardt gave a strong anti-messianic interpretation of Judaism. Although he did not elaborate on the implications of the messianic prophesies of the Old Testament, we can assume that Baumgardt did not view them as constituting the essence of Judaism, and that he agreed with Spinoza's interpretation that these prophesies should not be taken literally. To Baumgardt, it had been Spinoza, who exemplified this true, non-messianic nature of Judaism.

Spinozist Messianism

In many ways both the Integrationist and Zionist press confirmed the Orthodox perception that celebrating Spinoza entailed a secularization of Jewish history that excluded messianic hopes. Celebrating Spinoza in this way either typified the historicist ways of emancipating Jewry, or departed from historicism through the means of a philosophy of progress. Still, in the latter case, the celebrations showed that a human being, like Spinoza, and not God was the true mover of history. Both thus emancipated Jewish history from the pre-Modern Jewish vision that Jewish history was only meaningful as the outcome of a Divine Plan.

So far, our historicist analysis of the Jewish celebration of Spinoza reflects the pre-Weimar attitudes of *Bildung*, rather than the anti-historicism and messianism characteristic of the Weimar Jewish revival. However, as has been the case in our investigation of the social and

the ethical meanings of the Spinoza celebrations, such a conclusion is not easy to reach. If we look further into the German Jewish reception of Spinoza during the Weimar Republic, we find that Spinoza's celebration could also assume a religious, and even messianic, perception of Jewish history. Paradoxically, this religious perception of Jewish history is not far removed from the historical focus of the Spinoza celebrations. But now the historical roles attributed to Spinoza were ultimately used to place him altogether outside of history. Katz's celebration of Spinoza eventually led to such a conclusion, when he wrote that Spinoza belonged to the "Geistesheroen aller Zeiten, deren menschliches Sein sich ganz losgelöst aus dem Geschichtlichen Werden und in ewige Höhen erhoben hat" (spiritual heroes of all times, whose humanness has dissolved itself from the historical, turning into eternal elevation).[79] Heinemann went as far as taking refuge in the Divine, writing that the historical power Spinoza exerted was a "göttlicher Kraft" (divine power).[80] Another telling example of this can be found in the Spinoza issue of the newspaper of the Reform Movement, the *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung*. An already discussed article there, celebrated Spinoza for representing a prophetic age, an age believed to be different to the Weimar Age, which the author, Goetz, believed to be defined by skepticism and materialism. He believed Spinoza was a true philosopher and, as such, could bring Jews back to an appreciation of the prophets. Goetz did not shrink from comparing Spinoza to Moses, writing that both were "größen Männer der Geschichte" (great men from History) whom Jews should recognize as their leaders, to progress.[81]

The Zionists had one particular reason to view Spinoza as a prophet. This was a famous phrase Spinoza wrote near the end of the third chapter of the TTP, where he said about Jews: "I would not hesitate to believe that they will one day, given the opportunity – such is the mutability of human affairs – establish once more their independent state, and that God will again choose them."[82] This "prediction" played an important role in the Zionist reception of Spinoza. For example, Spinoza is celebrated for this reason in the Viennese Zionist newspaper *Die Neue Welt*. There, Israel Zwi Kanner argued, in 1932, that

[79] Katz, "Spinoza", 38.
[80] Heinemann, "Spinoza und wir. Zum 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", 22.
[81] Goetz, "Propheten und Philosophen, zum Gedenken an Benedikt Spinoza."
[82] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 425.

Spinoza's belief that Jews might one day regain their independence was Spinoza's share of the messianic sentiment that came in Amsterdam with the rumors about Shabbetai Zevi.[83] Another Austrian Zionist newspaper, *Die Stimme*, argued that this prediction was Spinoza's answer to the question asked to him by his friend Oldenburg about what to make of the Shabbatean movement.[84] The leader of the international Zionist movement, Nahum Sokolow, argued that these words of Spinoza already made him into a "national Jew" in the seventeenth century.[85] Among Weimar German Zionists, we can identify a similar argument in Klatzkin's Hebrew book on Spinoza. Klatzkin mainly admired Spinoza for the *Ethica*, and was very critical of the TTP, which he considered to be a polemic in which Spinoza let himself be carried away by his anger against those Jews who had excommunicated him. Despite what Klatzkin saw as unfair attacks against Judaism, he still believed that "there are in the 'treatise' fertile ideas, ideas on the unity of the Hebrew Nation. He [Spinoza] was the first to recognize the national territorial nature of the Israelite religion and prophesied its territorial redemption [*legeulat haaretz*]".[86]

Kayser's Integrationist Messianism

The messianic meaning attributed to Spinoza may best be demonstrated with two messianic novels on Spinoza written by Jews in Weimar Germany.[87] They belonged to a wider genre of books on messianism – in particular on Shabbetai Zevi – that was popular in this era.[88] The first was written by Rudolf Kayser, an opponent of Zionism who believed Jews should remain loyal to the State in which they lived. The second novel was written by the Zionist author Felix A. Theilhaber.

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[83] Kanner, "Spinoza, der Ungetaufte."

[84] "Spinoza und die Rückkehr der Juden nach Palästina", *Die Stimme* 5, no. 235 (1932). Spinoza, L 16(33).

[85] Sokolow, *Baruch Spinoza wezmano (Baruch Spinoza and his Time, A Study in Philosophy and History (with illustrations)*, 98.

[86] Jakob Klatzkin, *Baruch Spinoza, haiav, sifrav, shitato* (Leipzig 1923), 50. [Baruch Spinoza, his life, his work, his system].

[87] Spinoza was a favorite topic of messianic novels in the Weimar era. See Kilcher, Andreas, "Spinoza als Apokalyptiker. Theologisch-Politische Konstellationen in den Spinoza-Romanen der Moderne", lecture held at 8. Internationale Tagung der Spinoza-Gesellschaft "Ein neuer Blick auf die Welt – Spinoza in Literatur und Ästethik" still to be published.

[88] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 150–151.

Kayser's novel, *Spinoza, Bildnis Eines Geistigen Helden,* was published in 1932, but he showed himself to be a messianic thinker as early as in 1919, in an article that appeared in *Der Jude*.[89] There, he had argued it was the task of Jews in Weimar Germany to prepare (for) the coming of the Messiah. He proposed this Jewish destiny as an alternative to Zionism. To him, Zionism was based on a misconception of the essence of Judaism; this essence was anything but territorial or political.[90] Kayser also disputed the Zionist notion that Jews did not have a State due to their weakness. Instead, he argued that the strength of Jews was their very statelessness. Kayser then believed in an alternative mission for Jews, a mission that was not the Zionist one of political independence. According to him, the Jews' statelessness gave them a special mission for humanity: "Das ist also die Mission der Juden: selbst staatenlos die Erde zur Menschenheimat zu machen" (So that is the mission of the Jews, without a state themselves, to make the World to a human fatherland).[91] For Kayser, belief in the coming of the Messiah made Jewry apolitical, and he saw the accomplishment of this mission as nothing less than "die Zeit der Messias vorzubereiten" (to prepare the age of the Messiah).[92] Kayser agreed, however, that Jews should remain involved in the political problems of the States they lived in because "der Talmud lehrt, daß dem Paradies des Messias die Hölle der Politik vorangehen muß" (the Talmud teaches, that the hell of politics must precede the paradise of the Messiah).[93] At the same time, he held that Jews could prepare for the coming of the Messiah by organizing themselves in a *Bund*, an apolitical association of Jewish intellectuals.

Many of these messianic ideas return in Kayser's 1932 novel, which is neither a scholarly biography nor a literary novel. It does not have the scholarly pretensions of, say, Jacob Freudenthal's biography of Spinoza, but it is also not a novel, where the author takes the liberty to invent events at will. Although Kayser did not invent facts, like a

[89] Löwy shortly discusses Kayser as an extra exponent of Weimar Jewish messianism: Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia; Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*, 24–25, 162–163.
[90] Rudolf Kayser, "Der Neue Bund", *Der Jude* III (1918–1919): 524.
[91] Ibid., 526.
[92] Ibid., 525.
[93] Ibid.

friendship between Rembrandt and Spinoza, he did speculate quite freely when explaining why certain real events did happen, or what motivated Spinoza. Kayser himself revealed that he did not perceive his novel as an ordinary biography, concluding his book with the words: "das ist die Legende von Baruch" (that is the Legend of Baruch).[94] By speaking of a legend, Kayser admitted that the historical basis of some parts of his novel could not be proved, while at the same time suggesting that his story did contain a certain truth, albeit one no historicist biography could verify.

So what was the transcendent truth in Kayser's Spinoza novel? One clue can be found in a short article Kayser published in celebration of Spinoza in the non-Jewish German literary journal *Die Neue Rundschau*.[95] In that article, Kayser placed Spinoza above history, arguing that his quest for reason had not only been relevant to the Dutch Republic but also to Germany in 1932. This showed that Spinoza was "das Vorbild eines geistigen Menschen für alle Welten und alle Zeiten" (the example of a spiritual person for all worlds, and eras). In his novel, Kayser gave this supra-historical role of Spinoza a messianic meaning, and he did it from a liberal perspective. Indeed, he celebrated Spinoza for having performed the historical role of freeing humanity. Kayser wrote that Spinoza demonstrated the power of reason, writing that: "[S]ie ist seine [humanity's] stärkste Macht, die nie zu wirken aufhört, sondern in aller Ewigkeit ringt, forscht und tätig ist, um das Schicksal dieser schmerzlichen Erde ein wenig zu erleichtern" (It is its [humanity's] strongest power, which never ceases to work, but resounds, works and investigates in all eternity, to alleviate the fate of this painful world).[96] Kayser argued that by demonstrating the power of reason Spinoza had in fact liberated humanity "von Dogmen und Aberglauben, vom Wort und der Dummheit" (from dogmas and superstition, from words and stupidity).[97] Furthermore, according to Kayser, Spinoza's TTP was about "die Freiheit des Glaubens und des Staates" (the freedom of consciousness and of the state).[98] He held that in writing the TTP, Spinoza took side with the great republican leader

[94] ———, *Spinoza, Bildnis eines geistigen Helden* (Wien/Leipzig: Phaidon Verlag, 1932), 306.
[95] ———, "Zum Spinozatag", *Die Neue Rundschau* 12, no. 53 (1932).
[96] Kayser, *Spinoza, Bildnis eines geistigen Helden*, 284.
[97] Ibid., 283.
[98] Ibid., 218.

Jan de Witt. Kayser firmly adhered to the theory that de Witt was not only familiar with the TTP, but that he also cherished this treatise as it expressed his own ideas. In the words of Kayser: "Jan de Witt kennt diese Schrift; sie ist ihm nahe, als ob sie sein eigenes Bekenntnis wäre" (Jan de Witt knows this book, he feels familiar with it, as if it is his personal testimony).[99] However, to Kayser, Spinoza's liberation of humanity was most of all a philosophical liberation, it was "[d]ie Befreiung der Philosophie von der Theologie" (the liberation of philosophy from theology).[100] In effect, Spinoza's "Befreiungstat" (act of liberation) liberated all later philosophers.[101]

This celebration of Spinoza for his role in history as a liberator did not make Kayser into an exponent of the liberalist secularization of Jewish history. Far from it, Kayser viewed this Spinozist liberation as a religiously, and even messianically, inspired liberation. He emphasized that Spinoza's attack on the Church was not motivated by secularism, but the result of a religious inspiration. Kayser considered both the *Ethica* and the TTP as profoundly religious books. About the *Ethica*, he wrote that a religious belief in God "herrscht in jeder Zeile dieser Schrift" (dominates on every page in this book).[102] About the TTP, he wrote that it was not an atheist manifest but the "tiefste und weheste religiöse Klage gegen die Zeit" (deepest and most painful lament against this era). Kayser underlined this point by summarizing the entire TTP in a single, profoundly religious, question propounded by Spinoza: "Was habt ihr aus Gott gemacht?" (What did you make God into?)[103]

Kayser gave this religiously inspired liberation messianic meaning. Using different interpretations of the historical circumstances of Spinoza's life, and using fitting metaphors, he made the "legend of Baruch" into a messianic legend. Kayser did so, first of all, by depicting the historical conditions in which Spinoza worked in apocalyptical terms. These conditions shaped Spinoza's youth in Kayser's novel, where he wrote: "Baruch's Jünglingsjahre sind von außen und innen mit Sturm erfüllt" (Baruch's younger years are filled with tempestuosity from the

[99] Ibid., 213.
[100] Ibid., 282.
[101] Ibid., 283.
[102] Ibid., 124.
[103] Ibid., 207.

inside and from the outside).[104] One of these conditions was the fear of the Inquisition from which Spinoza's family had escaped. Kayser gave the Inquisition an apocalyptic meaning by emphasizing that it was no less religiously motivated than its Jewish victims. He suggested that both were locked in a necessary struggle, a struggle that was religious on both sides: "Es gibt ein Mysterium des Tötens, wie es ein Mysterium des Sterbens gibt. Die Gottesbrunst, die in Staat und Kirche in das Furchtbare Mordwerk der Inquisition hineinriß, erfüllt auch die Opfer, die für Gott sterben." (A mystery of killing exists, just like a mystery of dying. The religious zeal, which drew the state and the Church into the terrible murdering by the Inquisition, also fulfils the sacrifices of those who died for God).[105] Kayser even implied that behind the Inquisition and these *autos da fé* was a cosmic battle. He stressed that in this religious strife, each side claimed God was with them: "Es scheint", he wrote "daß Gott sich geteilt hatte und mit sich selber kämpfte." (It seems as if God had divided and fought Himself). A similar supernatural meaning is given to Spinoza's presence in The Hague during the Dutch *rampjaar* (disaster-year) of 1672, which culminated in the murder of Jan de Witt. Kayser wrote that Spinoza's presence near the scene of this event was "Wie durch eine geheime Macht in den Mittelpunkt des Unheils hineingerissen" (drawn, as through a secret power, into the middle of the mischief).[106]

More historical background is added to Spinoza's life with the presence of the Sabbatean movement. Kayser was careful not to dismiss this movement too readily. He stressed that 1648 was the year the Cabalists had calculated to be messianic, as well as it marked the end of 30 years of religious wars in Europe. Furthermore, Kayser argued that although Cabalist predictions are superstition, they remained meaningful since: "[i]n solchem Aberglauben drückt sich die leidvolle Sehnsucht eines Volkes und die bitterschmerzliche Erfahrung seiner Geschichte aus" (the painful longing of a people and the aching experience of history is expressed in such superstition).[107] He further stressed the value of Jewish messianism by arguing, similarly to Schachnowitz, that Rembrandt recognized something authentic in it: "Gerade in diesen erregten Jahren liebt er die Juden mehr als alle anderen Menschen" (precisely

[104] Ibid., 69.
[105] Ibid., 25.
[106] Ibid., 181.
[107] Ibid., 69.

in these years he loves the Jews more than all other people). Most of all, Kayser argued that Spinoza also recognized the value of Jewish messianic fever. Kayser inferred this from the passage in the third chapter of the TTP where Spinoza spoke about the possibility that Jews may one day regain their independence.[108] In Kayser's interpretation, this passage was a response to the Sabbatean movement. Moreover, Kayser believed that this response reflected a renewed sympathy of Spinoza for the Jewish people. Kayser argued that Spinoza had recognized that "eine heldenhafte Vergangenheit, der tiefe Glaube an das Wort Gottes und die eigene Mission und das entsetzliche Leiden für diesen Glauben, hat sie [die Juden] zu einer geistigen Rasse erhöht, die nicht ihresgleichen hat" (a heroic past, the profound faith in the word of God, the personal mission and the direful suffering for that faith has elevated them [the Jews] to a spiritual race, without equal).[109] With this interpretation, Kayser argued that the Shabbatean movement inspired Spinoza to express admiration for Jews. What matters to us is that, in doing so, Kayser maintained that Spinoza did not denounce but shared, at least, some of the messianic enthusiasm of the Jewish community to which he once belonged.

Kayser's messianism is clearest, however, in the allegories he used to describe Spinoza's life. One of these allegories compared Spinoza to Jesus. Kayser admired Jesus, but not as a Christian. His interpretation of Jesus, was rather a way of criticizing Christianity, as well as certain forms of Judaism. To Kayser, Jesus was neither the son of God nor the founder of Christianity as it took shape in history; but his message had been relevant. In *Der Jude* he wrote: "Das der Jude Jesus am Kreuze starb, kam daher, daß Europa ihn noch nicht hörte, das nach seinen Geboten doch so sehr verlangte." (that the Jew Jesus died on the cross passed because Europe, which yet so desperately longed for its commandments, did not hear him).[110] Kayser argued that Jesus was misunderstood by the Christian Churches, and that he should rather be viewed as a Jew who wanted to reform Judaism and rebelled against the authorities out of a Jewish messianic instinct. This opened the door to obvious comparisons with Jesus and his Passion throughout *Spinoza, Bildnis Eines Geistigen Helden*. Kayser wrote that

[108] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 425.
[109] Kayser, *Spinoza, Bildnis eines geistigen Helden*, 196.
[110] ———, "Der Neue Bund", 526.

when Rembrandt saw Spinoza walking through the streets of the Jewish Quarter, his "Maleraugen" (painter's eyes) discovered in Spinoza's pale face "einen unverlierbaren Glanz" (an un-detachable glow). Then he wrote, referring to a painting by Rembrandt of Jesus, who went at age twelve to the Temple to be taught: "Man könnte diesen jüdischen Knaben als Jesus im Tempel Malen, auch in ihm ist Wissen und Heiligkeit." (One could paint this lad as Jesus in the Temple, he also has knowledge and sacredness).[111] When Kayser introduced the story of Spinoza's excommunication, the comparison with Jesus becomes even more explicit, writing: "Noch einmal ergeht der messianische Ruf an einen unbekannten Menschen, der alle Not der Zeit, des Glaubens und des Denkens auf sich nimmt und mit dem Worte antwortet: 'Ich bin es'" (One more time, the messianic call strikes an unknown person, who takes upon himself all the hardship of the era, of faith and of thinking, and answers with the words: "It is me").[112] Kayser was perhaps most direct in his comparison when, towards the end of the novel, he wrote about Spinoza that: "Er nam die geistige Last seines Jahrhunderts auf sich und trug sie nach Golgotha" (He took the spiritual burden of his century and carried it to Golgotha).[113] In the light of these references, other less obvious remarks by Kayser can also be viewed as allusions to the life of Jesus. For example, Kayser believed that Spinoza wrote himself to death, and described his last years as "ein gespenstlicher Wettlauf zwischen Arbeit und Sterben" (a thrilling competition between work and ambition).[114] When Kayser described Spinoza's disease as "sein tiefes und großes Schicksal" (his profound and great fate),[115] we should see it as an "*imitatio Christi*", a way of making clear that, like Jesus, Spinoza suffered and died for his ideas.

Another metaphor Kayser used that attributed a messianic quality to Spinoza is the one where he compares Spinoza's *Ethica* to a rebuilt Temple. This Temple-metaphor appeared in different places in the novel. Indeed, Kayser gave the title *Der Templebau* to the seventh chapter of the novel, and in this chapter he described how Spinoza began working on the *Ethica*.[116] Before that, Kayser referred to a

[111] ———, *Spinoza, Bildnis eines geistigen Helden*, 72.
[112] Ibid., 86.
[113] Ibid., 306.
[114] Ibid., 229.
[115] Ibid., 106.
[116] Ibid., 181.

Temple metaphor used by Spinoza himself in *De Intellectus Emendatione*. There, Spinoza wrote, "we do not admire the architect who has planned a chapel so much as the architect who has planned a splendid Temple",[117] which was an illustration of his philosophical proposition that "[t]he more ideas express perfection of any object, the more perfect are they themselves."[118] Kayser wrote about this line: "Einen herrlichen Tempel wird jetzt auch Spinoza entwerfen" (Spinoza will now design a beautiful Temple).[119] In fact, Kayser often wrote of Spinoza as an architect, mentioning, for example, his "baumeisterlichen Schaffen" (architectural fashioning),[120] or that "Er baut sein gewaltiges Modell Gottes" (He builds his impressive model of God).[121] The Temple metaphor is clearest when Kayser related how Spinoza interrupted his work on the *Ethica* to write the TTP:

> Der große Tempelbau – Mauern und Säulen stehen schon, nur das Dach fehlt noch – muß für einige Zeit feiern. Das Rechnen und Konstruieren, das Aufsichten der gleichförmichen Steine, die Bindung durch den Mörtel, das unablässige Hämmern und Bauen – sind plötzlich zur Ruhe gezwungen. Nach zweijähriger, fast ununterbrochener Arbeit ist Spinoza die Lust an dem großen transzendenten Bau vergangen
>
> (The great construction of the Temple. Walls and pillars are already standing, only the roof is still missing. The calculating and constructing, the inspection of similarly formed stones, the binding by the mortar, the incessant hammering and construction – are suddenly forced to rest. After two years of almost uninterrupted work, Spinoza has lost the appetite for the great transcendental construction).[122]

Finally, there is a messianic element in Kayer's attempt to picture Spinoza as apolitical. Gershom Scholem pointed out that, since Jewish messianism is always aimed at the eventual upsetting of the historical and, therefore, political order, there is always an anarchistic element inherent in messianism.[123] Kayser's Spinoza does not lack such an element of subversion. Indeed, Kayser called the TTP "das Politische Manifest eines unpolitischen Menschen" (the political manifest of an

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[117] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 29.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Kayser, *Spinoza, Bildnis eines geistigen Helden*, 159.
[120] Ibid., 184.
[121] Ibid., 185.
[122] Ibid., 202; it should be noted that this imagery is also remniscent of Masonic symbolism, but I do not know whether Kayser was a freemason.
[123] Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, 21.

a-political man).[124] He further delineated Spinoza's apolitical character by emphasizing his rebellious and even anarchist nature. He argued in the novel that Spinoza learned how to rebel from his freethinking, ex-Jesuit teacher Van den Ende, whom Kayser described in the following terms: "Das Ziel der Rebellion ist ihm [Van den Ende] gleichgültig, er versteht es nicht einmal. Aber er muß protestieren […] weil der Haß gegen die Welt, die stärkste Leidenschaft in diesem leidenschaftliche Greise ist." (He [Van den Ende] does not care about the purpose of the rebellion, he does not even understand it, but he has to protest,…because hatred against the world is the strongest emotion in this emotional old man).[125] Kayser also perceived anarchism in the Protestant sects that were active in The Netherlands in the seventeenth century: "Die Sektierer sind mit der Verbürgerlichung des religiösen Lebens nicht einverstanden, sie sind immer noch in der Glut der Erweckung und der Erwartung" (The members of the sect do not agree with the civilization of religious life. They still stand in the shadow of the rays of revival and expectation).[126] He wrote that Spinoza maintained relations with members of such sects, especially Jan Pietersz Beelthauer, "den seltsamsten Rebellen dieser religiösen Rebellen" (The most rare of these religious rebels).[127] Kayser further described the Mennonites, with whom Spinoza might have been associated for a period of his life, in anarchist terms as "einer Sekte, die…den Staat zwar als eine Notwendigkeit anerkennt, aber ihn abtrennt vom Reiche Christi" (a sect, which…although it considers the state a necessity, divorces it form the kingdom of Christ).[128] Kayser also argued that Spinoza's home was a spiritual community reminiscent of the kind of Bund he argued for in his article in Der Jude. For Spinoza, this community consisted of people who corresponded with or visited him. like Oldenburg, De Vries, Burgh, Meyer, Balling, Blyenbergh, Hudde, Tschirnhaus or Leibniz. Kayser wrote about this circle of people: "Daß sie ihn kennen, daß sie Theilhaber seiner Gedanken und Partner seiner Dialoge sind, das macht ihre Gemeinschaft aus." (That they know him,

[124] Kayser, *Spinoza, Bildnis eines geistigen Helden*, 206.
[125] Ibid., 81–82.
[126] Ibid., 62.
[127] Ibid., 67.
[128] Ibid., 64.

that they partake in his thoughts and are partner to his dialogues, that is what makes up their community).[129]

It would be too much to argue that Spinoza represented the Messiah himself for Kayser. But his interpretation of Spinoza was messianic in the sense that he likened Spinoza to a modern prophet who was not only inspired to predict the arrival of the Messiah, but whose contribution to mankind had changed the course of history. On the destiny of Spinoza, Kayser wrote that: "Er muß, von einer alten Vergangenheit her, ein gutes Stück der Zukunft vorwegnehmen… Das alles bringt ihn in Zuzammenhang mit den Propheten und Führern seiner Religion. Das macht ihn zu einem Erleuchteten und Berufenen, wo die anderen nur Erkennenden sind." (He has to bring, from a distant past, a sizeable part of the future. All that, puts him on an equal level with Prophets and leaders of his religion. That is what makes him enlightened and having a vocation to someone, while others are merely knowing).[130] Kayser wanted to show that the genius of Spinoza was to want to change history with a religiously inspired and, therefore, messianic philosophy. This is what made him a Jew, akin to Jesus, the central figure of a spiritual community, the builder of a new Temple, and, most of all, a spiritual hero.

Theilhaber's Zionist Messianism

The messianic theme was elaborated on and put in an overtly Zionist context in a novel about Spinoza by Felix Theilhaber, who published it in 1924. Parts of it were republished in Jewish newspapers at the time of the celebrations of 1927 and 1932.[131] The messianism of the novel was unmistakable, if only for its title: *Dein Reich komme! Ein chiliastischer Roman aus der Zeit Rembrandts und Spinozas.*[132] (*Your Kingdom Come! A Chiliastic Novel from the time of Rembrandt and Spinoza*). Theilhaber was a physician and sexologist, and was a decorated soldier of the First World War during which he served as a doctor.

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[129] Ibid., 128.

[130] Ibid., 84.

[131] Felix A. Theilhaber, "Rembrandt und Spinoza", *Jüdische Wochenzeitung für Kassel, Hessen und Waldeck* 4, no. 3 (1927); ——, "Spinoza und die Kabbala", *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 29, no. 8: Aus alter und neuer Zeit, illustrierte Beilage (1932).

[132] Theilhaber, *Dein Reich komme! Ein chiliastischer Roman aus der Zeit Rembrandts und Spinozas.*

He became a Zionist during his medical studies. Like many Jews of his generation, he was also disturbed by insinuations that Jews did not participate in the War effort. This led him to write two books on the Jewish military contribution to Germany during the First World War. An active Zionist, he was as an editor of the Zionist newspaper *Palästina*. His Zionism was also expressed in his fierce rejection of assimilation. On this topic he performed a demographic study where he attempted to demonstrate that inter-confessional marriage would make Jewry disappear during the course of time. He went so far as to call assimilation "racial suicide." From this, he concluded that the only chance of survival for Jewry was Zionism.[133]

His book on Spinoza revealingly titled *Dein Reich Komme!* was a historical novel and the product of the literary side of this scientist. As in the book by Kayser, messianic expectations in the mid-seventeenth century formed its setting. In *Dein Reich Komme!*, Spinoza figured as the assistant of the Amsterdam Jewish printer Menasseh ben Israel, who had famously intervened with the Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell, to reverse the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1655 with the argument that this act could bring about the messianic era. Theilhaber pictured him as a passionate believer that the end of Jewish dispersion was near. He had Menasseh explain that the persecutions Jews suffered, from pogroms in the East to the *autos da fé* in Spain, absolved Jews from the shame of having betrayed God in return for earthly goods, which was the orthodox explanation for the curse of the diaspora[134] and that he saw it as his mission to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. Theilhaber pictures this background of messianism particularly well in a scene of the novel from Spinoza's youth: Spinoza is at school and reads a messianic text from the book of Daniel, with his teacher, the Cabbalist rabbi Aboab. From this text, Aboab has his pupil calculate that the coming of the Messiah is only 19 years away. Similar conclusions are drawn from the *Zohar*, and Spinoza even remarks, to the annoyance of his teacher, that there also are Christians who predicted the coming of the Messiah. Theilhaber also uses the Shabbatean movement in his novel, introducing it with the

[133] Felix A. Theilhaber, *Die Untergang der deutschen Juden: eine volkswirtschaftliche Studie* (München: E. Reinhardt, 1911).

[134] Schachnowitz, *Die Messiasbraut* (Frankfurt am Main: Hermon Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft 1925), 29.

appearance of two messengers of Shabbetai Zevi who came to Amsterdam to inform the Jews of that Shabbetai Zevi was the Messiah.

Most importantly, however, we meet Sara, the Messiah's bride. This character was based upon a historical figure, who believed she was destined to marry Shabbetai Zevi. She came from Eastern Europe, but lived for a while in Amsterdam from where she indeed travelled to the famous false Messiah and married him. She had also been a prostitute, and it is believed that Zevi might have married her because the prophet Hosea had married a prostitute.[135] The sexologist Theilhaber pictured Sara as a stunningly beautiful but also mad woman, and suggests that the authenticity of her madness was the clearest sign of the coming of the Messiah. She enters the story at a moment when another teacher of Spinoza, the Cabbalist Joseph Salomon Del Medigo, talked about how the mysteries of the world are written in the stars. Significantly, her appearance in the novel is introduced with a knock on the door at the exact moment del Medigo was talking about a comet. First a friend of Del Medigo from Poland, who turns out to be the uncle of Sara, entered the room. This friend related how his niece believed the Messiah had appeared to her, and he was worried that she would not want to marry anyone as a consequence. She accompanied her uncle but was left outside the house, until Sara was beckoned to enter. The beautiful woman came in "schwankend wie im Traum" (transient as in a dream) with her eyes closed. Sara then turned to del Medigo and asked him to help her understand her vision with his knowledge of astronomy.

Significantly, with the arrival of the figure of Sara, Spinoza becomes involved in the story. The two messengers believe that her existence proves that Shabbetai Zevi is indeed the Messiah, and they decide that they need to take Sara to him. Surprisingly, amidst all the rabbinical and astronomical predictions of the coming of the Messiah and the news of Shabbetai Zevi, Theilhaber's Sara turns not to Shabbetai Zevi, but to Spinoza. Theilhaber wrote, "Ganz deutlich erblickte sie ihn, sah seine Gestalt und verstand auf einmal, daß dieser junge Mann ihr nahe war. Und sie wollte ihn bitten, ihr zu helfen, sie zu befreien." (She looked him very clearly in the face, saw his composition, and understood at once that this young man was close to her. And she

[135] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi; The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 191–198.

wanted to ask him to help her, to set her free).[136] She later collapses and is taken away. Before that, Spinoza tries to avoid her gaze by retreating to a dark corner of the room, but it later turns out that he has not been immune to her attraction. When Spinoza walks home, "[s]ündhafte Gedanken folgten seinen Spuren" (sinful thoughts followed his traces).[137]

During the course of the novel, Sara and Spinoza meet twice more. Each time, the mutual attraction is more unmistakable and its meaning becomes clearer. It is Spinoza and not Shabbetai Zevi that Sara looks for as her groom, and, therefore, it is Spinoza and not Shabbetai Zevi who meets the messianic expectations. The first of their encounters takes place during a synagogue service charged with messianism. This service begins with the reading of a letter from Menasseh. His conviction that preparations need to be made for the coming of the Messiah leads him – as the historical Menasseh in fact had done – to travel to England, where he succeeds in convincing Cromwell to have Parliament admit Jews again. The letter ends with the words: "Dann aber wird der Messias das jüdische Volk erlösen." (But then the Messiah will redeem the Jewish people).[138] The service continued with a sermon by rabbi Aboab about "der Erfüllung des heiligen Wortes und von den Tagen des Messias, der Wiederkehr ins gelobte Land" (the fulfilment of holy Scripture, and of the days of the Messiah, the return into the promised land).[139] Then Elischa, one of Shabbetai Zevi's messengers – not accidentally named after the prophet Eliah who, according to Jewish tradition, will announce the coming of the Messiah – exclaims that the Messiah has arrived. He recites the Shema Israel prayer, and Spinoza, who is present at the service, feels the power of these worlds more strongly than ever. Then Sara raises her voice from the women's gallery and shouts to Spinoza: "Rette Dein Volk, rette und erlöse es! (…). Hallelujah dem Messias!" (Save your people, save and redeem it! (…). Hallelujah, the Messiah!) Spinoza realizes that he is being addressed personally and again tries to escape by leaving the synagogue.

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[136] Theilhaber, *Dein Reich komme! Ein chiliastischer Roman aus der Zeit Rembrandts und Spinozas*, 59.
[137] Ibid., 60.
[138] Ibid., 114.
[139] Ibid.

The final meeting occurs when Spinoza takes a walk to the Amsterdam harbor and Sara follows him. This time, Spinoza halts and talks to her. As Spinoza speaks of his philosophy, Sara unambiguously points him out as the Messiah. She tells him: "Ich habe dich im Traum als den Messias gesehen, und ich weiß, Du bist es." (I have seen you in a dream as the Messiah, and I know it is you).[140] This disturbs Spinoza as he thinks Sara has understood nothing of what he told her about his ideas. However, he can not tell her to leave him alone. Theilhaber wrote: "'Was ist das', dachte Spinoza, 'das mich hindert, diesem Mädchen das Kindische ihrer Sprache energisch zu verweisen?'" ("What is it", Spinoza thought, "what prevents me from rejecting the childishness of this girls language?") Unable to do this, Spinoza is overcome by "sinnliches Verlangen" (sensual yearning) – that, although Theilhaber described it as being aroused by the "prallende Brüste, die unter der blauen Seide wie Blätter im Windrausch zitterten" (prominent breasts, which trembled under the blue silk like leaves in a breeze) – pointed to an irrational messianism present in Spinoza himself. Now it is Spinoza's turn to collapse, spitting blood as the result of his lung disease.

The message of Theilhaber's novel is evident. All the signs and calculations that the Messiah was to appear in the seventeenth century were true, but people made the mistake in thinking that the Messiah was Shabbetai Zevi and not Spinoza. Furthermore, the attraction between Spinoza and Sara is mutual. Here, Theilhaber breaks with the normal perception of an asexual and rational Spinoza. In the end, Spinoza is a subject of the hidden force of messianism, just like the "crazy" Sara.

There was a dimension present in Theilhaber's novel that was not present in Kayser's. Theilhaber's use of Sara gave his Spinozist messianism Zionist meaning. In a discussion between Spinoza and his friend Abarbanel, Theilhaber had Spinoza argue that someone should come to explain that "God lives in nature." When Abarbanel asked if he meant the Messiah, Spinoza answered: "Ach überhaupt kein göttlichen Propheten, sondern nur einen großen Menschen" (Ah, in no way a divine prophet, but just a great man).[141] This answer was also an expression of the Zionist vision that Jews should not wait for God to put an end to Diaspora. In the novel, Spinoza added that "der aus

[140] Ibid., 155.
[141] Ibid., 127.

sich heraus die Scheidewände niederreißt und die Erkenntnis verkündet, die sich an alle Völker der Erde wendet" (who tears down barriers from within himself, and proclaims knowledge, aimed at all the peoples of the world). When Menasseh objected that this was the work of the Messiah, Spinoza replied with a Zionist cliché: "In uns steckt der Messias" (the messiah is in us).[142]

Theilhaber's Zionist messianism is most clearly revealed at the very end of his novel when he has Spinoza write a letter to Menasseh. In this letter Spinoza writes: "Ja, ich würde unbedingt glauben, daß die Juden einmal, wenn die Grundsätze der Religion ihre Geister nicht verweichlichen würden, bei gegebener Gelegenheit, wie nun einmal die menschlichen Dinge veränderlich sind, ihr eigenes Reich in Palästina wiederum aufrichten werden." (Yes, if it were not that the fundamental principles of their religion discourage manliness, I would not hesitate to believe that hey will one day, given the opportunity – such is the mutability of human affairs – establish once more their independent state in Palestine).[143] This is almost a literal translation of the aforementioned passage of the third chapter of the TTP. However, Theilhaber interfered with this quotation, making Spinoza add the words *in Palästina* (in Palestine), thereby making Spinoza a proto-Zionist. Moreover, he had Spinoza add that Jews should stop waiting for the Messiah: "Und wenn Ihr in Zion bloß eine Hochbruch gründen wollt für Mysterien (…). konnt Ihr weiter warten, bis Gott den Messias dazu entsendet. Und Eure Hoffnung wird sich nie verwirklichen." (And when you want to found in Zion merely a setting for mysteries (…). you can wait longer, until God sends the Messiah. Your hope will never be fulfilled).[144] In the novel, Spinoza also gave Menasseh the direct advice, aimed at all Jews, that: "Wenn ihr aber in der Verbannung, in der langen und bangen Nacht des Galuth erkannt habt, die neue Lehre aufzubauen, die sich frei macht von allen historischen Beschwerungen und Belastungen, dann wird Euer Reich erstehen und Zion wird beitragen zum Licht und Glück der Menscheit." (When you in exile, in the long and scary night of the Galuth have understood to build the new teaching, which sets itself free from all historical spells and burdens, then your kingdom will rise and Zion will contribute

[142] Ibid., 128.
[143] Ibid., 168.
[144] Ibid.

to the light and happiness of Mankind).[145] Spinoza's depiction as a proto-Zionist Messiah was complete. For Theilhaber, Spinoza's denial of belief in the Messiah made him into the Messiah.

Historicism and Messianism

Theilhaber's novel shows an interesting ambiguity in the attitude towards the post-Emancipation Jewish secularization of history. On the one hand, he posited Spinoza as an alternative to the Messiah. In this sense, his novel was a departure from messianism. He even had Spinoza argue against messianism, making him say that only a "great man" could bring historical progress, and not "a divine prophet." On the other hand, this "*chiliastischer Roman*" conveyed sympathy for Jewish messianism on almost every page, and Spinoza, who might just be such a "great man" is recognized through the exponent of this messianic fever, namely, Sara.

Looking back, we can find this ambiguity, this middle-ground, between secularized and de-secularized history throughout the Spinoza celebrations. Many elements of the celebrations expressed a secularization of history. Apart from the fact that the celebration of Spinoza always entailed interest in the non-Biblical and, therefore, secular historical subject of Spinoza's life, other elements expressing the secularization of history were developed in the theme that Spinoza marked a watershed period in history, and the belief that Spinoza changed history by initiating the Enlightenment, or inspiring German culture. A secularization of history was also expressed in the Zionist belief that Spinoza could only be celebrated by virtue of the end of messianic expectations.

However, although the meta-historical roles for which Spinoza was celebrated were a departure from messianic expectation, these roles also signified a break with the nineteenth century Jewish tradition of historicism. Spinoza, here, represented a supra-historical figure that influenced history and brought about the Modern era. Far from historicist relativism applied to Spinoza, this implied pointing to Spinoza as a, or at times *the*, most important factor in the progress of history. This still implied a secularization of history, as it was a Man and not

[145] Ibid.

God who was made responsible for progress. It does not, however, then take a great step to see the work of God in Spinoza's significance for history. As became apparent, Spinoza's influence on history was sometimes perceived as the working of a "göttlicher Kraft" (divine power).[146] Moreover, not only did the Zionist novel of Theilhaber and the anti-Zionist novel of Rudolf Kayser use the messianic sentiments of mid-seventeenth century Amsterdam as their backdrop, but, in doing so, both added a messianic element to their celebration of Spinoza. They gave Spinoza's historical significance messianic significance. Both novels made Spinoza into the harbinger of historical change, as well as of messianic change. In the end, the novels took recourse in the religious. Therefore the celebration of Spinoza expressed both a secular vison of history and a de-secularized vision of history.

Celebrating Spinoza as Lieux de Mémoire

This unlikely combination of the secularization and de-secularization of history related to the very nature of the Spinoza celebrations. On the one hand, they were a product of a secularized culture, in that the celebration of Spinoza did not place history in the context of the Bible. The celebration of Spinoza was secular for giving the kind of attention to mere historical events that – from a religious point of view – should be reserved to events in which God's plan for history is revealed. It was a clear break with Jewish tradition to give Spinoza the attention formerly reserved to events like the Exodus from Egypt. On the other hand, any celebration, even the celebration of a heretic like Spinoza, constitutes a de-secularization of history. The ritual nature of celebrations and their pretension of being recurring events (indeed, it can be assumed that the celebration of Spinoza's 300th birth year implies there will be a celebration of Spinoza's 400th birth year), detach the celebrated subject from historical time, and place it in eternity. Thus, the act of celebrating Spinoza could make the one person who stood at the basis of the modern Jewish historicist interest into the subject of an orchestrated anti-historicist collective remembering. In this sense the Spinoza celebrations were typical *lieux de mémoire*. They occupied a middle-ground between the internal interest in history and the

[146] Heinemann, "Spinoza und wir. Zum 250. Todestage am 21 Februar 1927", 22.

anti-historicist need to attribute an external meaning to history, the middle-ground between history and memory. The Spinoza celebrations, in the words of Nora, marked "the rituals of a society without ritual."[147] The enthusiasm for celebrating Spinoza in Weimar Germany shows that non-Orthodox Jewish society had become a society without ritual. It had lost touch with Jewish traditions and tried to substitute them in Modern ways.

The conclusion must then be that, as was the case in the previous chapters, the Spinoza celebrations defy easy categorization. Indeed, the celebration of Spinoza exemplified both a secularization and a de-secularization of history. By focusing on a historical subject, the Spinoza celebrations reflected historical interest and celebrated Man's contribution to history. At the same time, they served the purpose of messianic promise, whether it be Zionist (*i.e.*, the Return to Zion), or Integrationist (*i.e.*, freedom for mankind). Therefore, the Spinoza celebrations combined the contradicting notions that Man ruled over history, and that Man was dependent on God's plan for history. This made the celebrations into neither a pure continuation of the historicism that belonged to the Jewish culture of *Bildung*, nor into a pure product of the Weimar Jewish revival. Again, the Spinoza celebrations turned out to be a mixture of both worldviews.

Ultimately, the secularization of history found in the Spinoza celebrations, shows that German Jews believed in the power of Man over history; and the de-secularization of history identified in the Spinoza celebrations, shows that German Jews were also aware that history could only be made sense of as being part of a Divine Plan. It was an ambiguous position that befitted an age that saw how Man was capable of leaving his mark on society through developments such as the advance of technology, the effects of Modern warfare, or the popularization of the masses in politics, At the same time, this mark on society became so momentous that it could only be made sense of as divine workings.

[147] Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", 12.

CHAPTER FIVE

REJECTING SPINOZA'S CELEBRATION

Although Weimar Jews from almost all denominations united in their celebration of Spinoza, there were a few who remained on the side, or, in some cases, chose to fiercely oppose them. These may be divided into two groups: the orthodox Jews for whom the Era of Emancipation had passed by without believing that it resulted in a fundamental change in the exiled state of Jews and a group of intellectual individuals who were prominent for their ground-breaking philosophical and historical work, but who were very limited in number. They all paired their indignation of Jews celebrating Spinoza with expressions of amazement. Thus they testified to the prominence of Spinoza's celebrations, as well as their limits.

Orthodox Opposition

The orthodox Jews had not thought that the developments of modern Jewish history, such as the emergence of the *haskalah* movement or the Jewish emancipation, necessitated an adjustment of Jewish Law or ritual. On the contrary they considered all reform of Jewish Law heretical, not to speak of the notion of a secular Jewish identity. Consequently, their view of Judaism did not allow them to accept Spinoza's philosophy. They considered him simply a heretic, who deserved, most of all, to be forgotten. The Jewish Spinoza celebrations were too massive, however, for them to ignore. In spite of their reluctance, in some of their newspapers Spinoza's anniversaries were discussed, albeit to express revulsion of how these anniversaries had brought to light the extent of Jewish erring. Both in 1927 and in 1932 the main newspaper of German Jewish Orthodoxy, *der Israelit*, published an article against Jewish participation in the Spinoza celebrations, in 1927 even on its front page.[1]

[1] "Baruch Spinoza, Zur 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages", *Der Israelit* 68, no. 8 (1927); "Spinoza-Jubiläen", *Der Israelit* 73, no. 49 (1932). Both articles are practically

The orthodox criticism of the way Spinoza was admired and celebrated reflected the issues of social alignments, ethical values, and the perception of history to which Spinoza offered an answer for to so many Jews, now, of course, as arguments against the celebration of Spinoza. To begin, the orthodox took issue with the idea that Spinoza could in any way be claimed for Judaism. The anonymous author of one of the articles in *der Israelit* castigated Jews who celebrated Spinoza for behaving in a non-Jewish manner. He put on its head the so often repeated argument that Spinoza influence on other thinkers proved his greatness and entitled him to Jewish admiration writing: "Je höher man (…). die Einwirkungen der spinozistischen Philosophie auf die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit einschätzt, desto gerechtfertigter erscheint objektiv die Härte der Amsterdammer Rabbinen." (The higher one estimates the influence of Spinozist philosophy on the cultural history of humanity, the more justified appears, objectively, the toughness of the rabbis from Amsterdam) For this orthodox author, Spinoza's influence in the non-Jewish world only proved his point that Spinoza was not to be considered a Jew.

The reproach of assimilation is stated even more strongly in another Orthodox newspaper, *Die Jüdische Presse*. This paper regretted that all of the Jewish world, "[a]lle Schattierungen, ob liberal, ob konservativ, ob zionistisch oder nicht" (all denominations, whether Liberal, Conservative or Zionist or nothing) celebrated Spinoza as a Jew. Indeed, according to *Die Jüdische Presse*, it was clear that Spinoza, whom it named an atheist Pantheist, could never be considered a Jew. The paper even dared to compare the Jews who celebrated Spinoza to the anti-Semite Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, who, had once said "Wer ein Jude ist, das bestimme ich!" (I decide who is a Jew!).[2] Referring to those celebrating Spinoza for his influence on German culture, *Die jüdische Presse* commented sarcastically: "Erst wenn die nichtjüdische Außenwelt den Mann anerkennt, beginnt auch die jüdische Welt aufmerksam zu werden" (Only when the non-Jewish world recognizes the man, the Jewish world becomes attentive). In short, for these newspapers, the whole Jewish celebration of Spinoza was an embarrassing example of Jewish assimilation.

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the same. Indeed, the article of 1932 is largely based on that of 1927, of which it copied large sections.

[2] Espe., "Spinoza als "Jude", *Jüdische Presse, Organ für die Interessen des Orthodoxen Judentums* 18, no. 47 (1932).

This criticism was also extended to Zionist celebrations of Spinoza. As separatist as the Zionist celebrations may have been, to Jewish Orthodoxy they only confirmed the universalism inherent in Zionism. *Der Israelit* attacked Joseph Klausner's revocation of the ban on Spinoza on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem, cynically arguing that if one was prepared to celebrate Spinoza as a hero, one might as well also incorporate the founder of Christianity "in das Zionistische Walhalla" (in the Zionist Walhalla).[3] (in fact, Spinoza was often likened to Jesus, for instance as we saw in the previous chapter by Rudolf Kayser, albeit his was a Jesus who had only founded Christianity in the erring mind of the Church).

From an ethical perspective it was even more obvious that Spinoza was not to be admired. To the orthodox, ethical questions were solved by Jewish Law and the many interpretations of it by rabbis. That made any celebration of Spinoza out of the question from the start. After all, Spinoza had not only refused to respect Jewish Law in his personal life, he had also argued that this Law was no longer valid. In his works he had cast doubt on the validity of the Books of Moses and what it prescribed. He had even challenged the authority of the rabbis. In a passage, which incidentally betrayed that the orthodox also had not been immune to the influence of non-Jewish German thought, *der Israelit* phrased this in Kantian terminology accusing Spinoza of having remained deaf to the "kategorische Imperativ des abrahamitischen, des Sinaitischen Offenbarungsrufes" (categorical imperative of the Abrahmist, Sinaist cry of revelation).[4]

That Spinoza had denied the divine origins of Scripture was all the worse because it endangered the traditional hopes for redemption. *Der Israelit* also wrote,

> Nicht nur die Inhalte seiner [Spinoza's] Weltanschauung gestaltete er, als gäbe es für den Juden keine g'ttliche Zielweisung, nach eigenem Wähnen, sondern er war einer der ersten, die dem Thorawort selber den g'ttlichen Charackter absprachen und damit die Quelle verschütteten, aus der allein dem jüdischen Volke ewige Belebung, der Menschheit die einzige Gewähr der Erlösung sprudelt
>
> (Not only did he [Spinoza] craft the content of his worldview to his own delusions, as if there did not exist a divine directive, but he was one of the first to deny the Torah its divine origin, and with that, the only

[3] "Spinoza-Jubiläen."
[4] "Baruch Spinoza, Zur 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages."

> source, from which the Jewish people draw their eternal revival, and from which humanity draws its only awareness of redemption).[5]

We can see then, that *Der Israelit* directly related Spinoza's Bible criticism to the redemption of humanity. According to the newspaper, Spinoza had only demonstrated his blindness to the truth of redemption with his Bible criticism. The only contribution of Spinoza to the progress of history this author was willing to grant, emanated from the fact that Spinoza, for all his historical significance, was also the subject of Divine providence, just like everything else in the world. The article therefore concluded with the words: "Er [Spinoza] gehört wie so viele andere zu den Trägern des großen Menschheitsringens um selbstgefundene, autonome Wahrheit, zu den Werkzeugen der geheimnisvollen Weltentwicklung, die auch Irrende und Sündigende in ihren Dienst stellt und aus den zerbrochenen Scherben menschlicher Denkarbeit den Zukunftbau der G'tteserkenntnis emporsteigen lässt." (He [Spinoza] belongs, like so many others, to the carriers of the great human quest for self-found, autonomous truth; to the instruments of the secret universal development, which also employs erring and sinning people, and lets surge the future construction of the knowledge of G'd).[6]

Orthodox Jews never shared the post-Emancipation confidence in the progress of history. To them, Jews were still suffering the divine punishment of the Diaspora. To them, there was no "self-incurred immaturity" to uphold progress, as Kant believed. Progress was, instead, only made possible, or hampered, by God. Jews' only duties were to patiently await the coming of the Messiah, and to accept their fate of being a dispersed people, suffering the evils of an unredeemed world. These beliefs returned in Orthodox comments on the commemoration of Spinoza – comments that castigated the celebrations for implying confidence in human progress. Here too *Der Israelit* took the lead. In 1927, an editorial on the front page of the newspaper argued that it was only allowed to celebrate Spinoza "[i]nsofern, sicherlich, als auf der großen, vom Eden zur Erlösung führenden geistigen Menschheits-Irrfahrt, die man Kulturprozeß nennt, der Name des von seiner Gemeinschaft ausgestoßenen jüdischen Glasschleifers von Amsterdam einen Markstein von unvergänglicher Bedeutung

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[5] "Spinoza-Jubiläen."
[6] Ibid.

bildet (…)." (As far, surely, as the name of the expelled Jewish grinder of lenses from Amsterdam marks a milestone on the great spiritual human odyssey of humanity, which we give the title of civilization that leads from Eden to Redemption).[7] It is fair to maintain that the proposed celebration of a milestone in an "*Irrfahrt*" would not prompt this author to great festivity.

Schachnowitz

The editor of *der Israelit* from 1908 to 1938 was the Lithuanian born rabbi and novelist Selig Schachnowitz (1874–1952). In 1925 he had published an even more illustrative example of messianic anti-Spinozism. This was the historical novel *Die Messiasbraut, Die Geschichte einer verlorenen Hoffnung*. As in the novel by Theilhaber, Spinoza figured here in the context of a description of the Shabbetean movement. The novel, which initially appeared as a feuilleton in *Der Israelit*, can be read as an apology of Jewish Orthodoxy at a time when it had been forced to defend itself against Reform Judaism and Zionism. Writing about Jewish messianism enabled Schachnowitz to put up this defense. In the post-messianic era, messianic hope was a defining aspect of the Orthodoxy, distinguishing it from Reform Judaism and Zionism. However, Schachnowitz had to be careful in using Shabbetai Zevi. Despite the seemingly supernatural enthusiasm his appearance stirred in Jewish history, to Orthodox Judaism, he proved to be a false Messiah when he converted to Islam. Therefore, Schachnowitz did not center his novel on Shabbetai Zevi himself, but, as did Theilhaber, on his legendary bride, Sara, who was also the main character in Theilhaber's novel.

Schachnowitz used Sara not so much to exemplify the Messiah, as the Jewish longing for the Messiah; she symbolized what Schachnowitz believed to be an authentic Jewish sentiment. It was this longing which accounted for her extraordinary beauty and appeal. In the book, everyone, including Rembrandt, came under Sara's spell. Schachnowitz described her charm to the great artist as something that transcended mere physical attraction, "die sklavische Zuneigung galt nicht allein ihrer Schönheit, er fühlte sich auch vom mystischen Nebel, die sich

[7] "Baruch Spinoza, Zur 250. Wiederkehr seines Todestages."

um sie spann stark angezogen" (the slavish affection applied not only to her beauty, he also felt strongly attracted to the mystical vapour around her);[8] and: "Vielleicht war es nicht einmal Liebe im eigentlichen Sinne, was ihn zu ihr so mächtig hinzog" (Perhaps it was not even love in ist authentic sense, that drew her so powerfully to him).[9] There was just one exception and that was Spinoza. To delineate Spinoza's character, Schachnowitz contrasted it with that of Rembrandt. He describes how, when Rembrandt saw Sara, her beauty struck immediately his artistic eye. He instantly invited her to his workplace so he could paint her. But, whereas Rembrandt immediately fell for the Messiah's bride, she did not move Spinoza at all. The conversations about Sara between Spinoza and Rembrandt are key passages of the book. Schachnowitz made Spinoza look at Sara only with cynicism. Spinoza warned Rembrandt that Sara was either a deceiver or crazy, and therefore a job either for the police, or for doctors. Rembrandt disagreed, retorting that she deserved to be taken more seriously. He argued that because her appearance and messianic predictions had great influence on Jews of the Ghetto, Sara was not to be ignored. Rembrandt's words did not convince Spinoza. Instead, it prompted him to a bitter lamentation about the Ghetto and the way it had turned him down, unwilling to listen and be educated by his enlightening ideas. He described how he attempted to "hineinleuchten ins Dunkel mit der Fackel des Geistes" (enlighten in the dark, with the torch of the intellect), but only found "kleine Kreaturen, die sich an ihre Fesseln klammerten und mich mit Steinen bewarfen" (small creatures, who clung to their chains and threw stones at me).[10]

Rembrandt's answer to these charges was also Schachnowitz' Orthodox reply to a Spinozist criticism of Orthodox Judaism. Thus, Rembrandt says to Spinoza: "[Du] hast stets mit Christen verkehrt, deren Heileslehre gepriesen und Dein Augen den Schönheiten des Ghetto, seines Lebens geflissentlich verschlossen." (You have always been around Christians, whose notion of salvation you have lauded, and who have shut your eyes studiously to the beauties and the life of the Ghetto). When Spinoza objected that he had taught only to put the Bible in its "true light" Rembrandt answered:

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[8] Schachnowitz, *Die Messiasbraut*, 115.
[9] Ibid., 116.
[10] Ibid., 106–107.

> Nein, Benedikt, Lichtverteilung, ich bin Maler, ist Sache des Gestalters und es darf nicht Bloß mit der Hand, es muß mit liebendem Herzen geschehen. Ich bin Freund von Oberlicht!…Du hast ihnen ihre Bibel dem rechten, heiligen Lichte entzogen, sie entheiligt, indem Du die mit kalten Augen gelesen und mit Kritischer Sonde in Einzelteile zerlegt hast. Es fehlte das Oberlicht, Benedikt, das meinen Ghettogestalten bei allem Dunkel den eigentlichen Glanz verleiht…
>
> (No, Benedictus, the distribution of light, I am a painter, that is something for an artist, and this should not be done only by hand, but also with a loving heart. I am a great friend of the light from above!…You have taken the true holy light from their Bible, you have de-sanctified it, when you read it with cold eyes and dissected it with your critical mind. The light from above was lacking, Benedictus, which attributes to my figures from the Ghetto their actual glow, for all their darkness).[11]

This difference in opinion shows us Spinoza's significance for Schachnowitz. Schachnowitz uses Rembrandt in this passage to explain what he saw as Spinoza's mistake. Rembrandt, who frequently painted the Jews of the Amsterdam Jewish Quarter, had a keen eye for the beauty of the Amsterdam Jewish Ghetto and its messianism; but it was a beauty that could not be perceived with the intellect. Therefore, the rationalist Spinoza was incapable of perceiving it. Moreover – in an obvious sneer to non-orthodox Jewish interest in Christianity – Schanowitz has Rembrandt also accuse Spinoza of too close relations with Christians. This made him not only immune to the attraction of Sara's beauty, but also to the beauty of the Jewish Ghetto. What was needed was an artistic eye sensitive not to the light of reason, but the light from above, the "Oberlicht" (Light from above) for which Rembrandt's paintings are famous, and which, in Schachnowitz' interpretation was, of course, from God.

Schachnowitz further emphasized Spinoza's shortcomings in a scene where Rembrandt attempted to sketch Spinoza. Rembrandt wrestled with the sketch, but did not succeed in completing it. It was a self-critical Spinoza who explained the reason for his failure, telling Rembrandt that his attempt to sketch him, "ist auch überigens völlig mißlungen, wie Dir jede Unechteit und Unehrlichkeit mißglückt" (has also completely failed, just like you fail in any inauthenticity and dishonesty).[12] As much as the beauty of Sara inspired Rembrandt, this scene reveals

[11] Ibid., 107.
[12] Ibid., 323.

that the messianic Sara was – in contrast to Spinoza – real and honest. Although Rembrandt later reproached Spinoza for being too harsh on himself, it is clear that Spinoza was speaking what he understood as the truth. By giving a counter-example to the usual admiration of Spinoza for his authenticity, Schachnowitz showed that Spinoza's wisdom was limited when it came to the appreciation of the more mystical or irrational elements of Judaism, in particular, the messianism of the Amsterdam Ghetto that Sara personified. To Schachnowitz, Spinoza was completely blind to the beauty of Jewish messianic hopes, which Rembrandt, with his artistic eye, was able to perceive and admire. According to Schachnowitz, Spinoza stood for the exact opposite of Sara's messianism: inauthentic, rational anti-messianism. Again, this exemplifies the objection of Orthodox Jews to the celebration of Spinoza. Here too, we see that Spinoza is taken to represent inauthenticity and the belief in the secularization of history, and is criticized for it.

Intellectual Opposition

These orthodox voices were joined by another group of Jews that, while most of its members expressed sympathy to orthodoxy, could not really be defined as orthodox themselves. It is a group not easy to characterize, save for the originality of its members and it is fair to argue that it is in fact not a coherent group at all. It was small in size and its members were not joined by a certain religious or political denomination, although most of them knew each other through personal friendships. Their connection can, however, be found in the importance later historians attached to them as intellectuals whose original thought spearheaded the revival of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany and whose ideas left the deepest traces in 20th and even 21th century thinking: The group included Hermann Cohen, Walter Benjamin, Leo Strauss, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and Gershom Scholem. All of these thinkers lacked interest in wholeheartedly joining the chorus of celebrating Spinoza.

Buber may have been the least unwilling to celebrate Spinoza, after all, an article by him was published in the Spinoza issue of the Zionist paper *Jüdische Rundschau* and in it he had been willing to point out the primordial Jewish element in Spinoza.[13] But Buber did so while

[13] Buber, "Der Chassidismus als Antword auf Spinoza."

emphasizing Spinoza's mistakes, and he did not have the enthusiasm he reserved for his real heroes in Jewish history, the Hassidim. Benjamin and Scholem hardly wrote about Spinoza at all and we may only speculate on their reasons for it. It may be explained by their "theological sensibility",[14] which limited their interest in a thinker who had been so critical of theology. Perhaps, also, Benjamin was just not the kind of thinker to write in a classical fashion about figures of the past such as Spinoza, and it may well be that Spinoza was just too much of a rationalist to the mystical mind of Scholem, who seems to have prided himself for not having studied Spinoza. Perhaps also, Spinoza was too much associated with a German Jewish Symbiosis as has recently been suggested.[15]

More interesting to us, are Franz Rosenzweig and in particular Leo Strauss as these thinkers did write about Spinoza albeit not out of pure admiration. Strauss even wrote so much on Spinoza that he is now considered among his major modern interpreters. What makes their writing particularly interesting for us, is that part of both their interests in Spinoza came forth from curiosity in his German-Jewish popularity. It will be good to take a closer look at them as they not only represent part of the Jewish reception in Weimar Germany of Spinoza, but took a specific interest in Spinoza's Jewish popularity as well. Cohen, finally, technically did not belong to this group of Weimar intellectuals, as he had died in 1917, but his towering figure cast a shadow over this era, especially when it came to his Spinoza criticism. Cohen did not live to see the anniversaries of Spinoza in Weimar Germany, his thought belonged to another age, that of the German Empire, but his interest in Spinoza was triggered by a Jewish celebration of Spinoza all the same. Moreover his philosophy was a point of reference to many Jewish thinkers in Weimar Germany, and one of his articles on Spinoza was only published in 1929, whereas the other was republished in his "Jewish Writings" in 1924.

[14] Aschheim, "German Jews Beyond Bildung and Liberalism", 38.

[15] Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted; Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 163; see also Scholem's observation on the German Jewish significance of Spinoza on p. 45.

Hermann Cohen

Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), was the first Jewish professor of Philosophy in Germany. He participated in a Kant revival in German thought and belonged to the founders of the Marburg branch of the neo-Kantian school. He wrote extensively on Kant, and his own thought was heavily influenced by the great German philosopher from Königsberg. In his writings on Judaism he showed himself to be a strong advocate of the German Jewish symbiosis. He believed German and Jewish culture to be intimately connected and consequently was wary of any form of Jewish nationalism. Many Jewish philosophers of the Weimar Era, for instance Franz Rosenzweig, Ernst Cassirer and Joseph Klatzkin, had been his students.

Cohen intensely disliked Spinoza. It may not be such a surprise to see a thinker who was influenced by Kant as much as Cohen was, object to Spinoza's philosophy. Kant himself had never shown the appreciation of Spinoza that philosophers such as Herder and Hegel had demonstrated. Moreover, Spinoza's work has often been described as dogmatic as it lacks the felt need – central to Kant's project of critical philosophy – to prove why true knowledge is possible at all. Whereas both Kant, and his followers such as Cohen, questioned the truth of their statements by searching for the "conditions of possibility" that were necessary to know whether a particular statement was true, Spinoza proceeded in the opposite direction, referring to definitions and axioms he held as self-evident and expecting his readers to also see them as such.

But Cohen's dislike of Spinoza seems to have run deeper than that. The subject truly agitated him. Scholem reports on this in his autobiography, when recalling his memories of hearing Cohen speak in public. There, he describes Cohen as a tiny man, who almost disappeared behind the chair from which he lectured, but showing his face as he got agitated, which happened as soon as he started to speak about Spinozism.[16] Such irritation clearly radiates from the two articles Cohen authored that were devoted to Spinoza. These were articles conceived at the end of Cohen's life as a response to the Jewish popularity of Spinoza, already evident in his time. Cohen had been infuriated by

[16] Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem; Memories of my Youth* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 69.

a lodge of the Jewish brotherhood B'nai B'rith, which in 1910 had decided to name itself after Spinoza. This occurrence triggered him to address the subject of Spinoza and Spinoza's Jewish poplularity in a lecture. In 1915 he published his ideas on this subject in article titled *Spinoza über Staat und Religion, Judentum und Christentum*. (Spinoza on State and Religion, Judaism and Christianity) that was probably based upon that lecture. Later, a decade after Cohen's death, in 1929, Franz Rosenzweig, published the original lecture as it had been preserved from notes that had been taken during the lecture under the title *Ein ungedruckter Vortrag Hermann Cohens über Spinozas Verhältnis zum Judentum* (An unpublished lecture by Hermann Cohen on Spinoza's relationship to Judaism). The other article appeared in 1915 but was also republished in the midst of the Weimar Era, in 1924 in the third volume of Cohen's Jewish writings.[17]

Cohen's judgement of Spinoza is very different from the Jewish praise that we have heard sung to him up to now. According to Cohen, Spinoza was certainly no Saviour, but rather an opportunist,[18] who in writing the TTP had revealed himself as someone ready to sacrifice the good name of Judaism to back the political party of Jan de Witt against the Orangists.[19] For Cohen, Spinoza had misrepresented Judaism in such a way that the ban had been perfectly just. But most of all, Spinoza's mistaken philosophy had become a liability to modern Jews. In fact, in Cohen's eyes, Spinoza held responsibility for spoiling the relations between Germans and Jews that deserved to be so good, as their cultures were so akin.

Cohen believed that Spinoza intentionally misused his renowned Bible criticism for his opportunist purposes. He proceeded to prove his case with detailed discussions of numerous passages of the TTP. Cohen, for instance, disagreed with the way Spinoza represented the Mosaic God as an anthropomorphic God, with a voice and the ability to be jealous. Cohen was irritated by the fact that, whilst describing the God of Moses in such a way, Spinoza put Jesus in much more favourable light. Spinoza had written that Christ had spoken to God "mind

[17] Friedrich Niewöhner, "Vom Elend der Auflkärung. Jüdische Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung im 19. Jahrhundert", in *Juden in der Deutschen Wissenschaft*, ed. Walter Grab (Tel-Aviv: 1986); Hermann Cohen, "Spinoza über Staat und Religion, Judentum und Christentum", in *Zur jüdischen Religionsphilosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, ed. Bruno Strauß, *Hermann Cohens Jüdischen Schriften* (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924).

[18] Cohen, "Spinoza über Staat und Religion", 367.

[19] Ibid., 294, 309.

to mind" whereas Moses had spoken with God "face to face as a man may do with his fellow."[20] In other words, according to Spinoza, contrary to Moses, Christ had grasped God directly, without the deceptive mediation of the imagination. Cohen believed this had been an unfair comparison. He argued, defending Maimonides' understanding of Scripture, that what Scripture said about the way Moses communicated with God had to be understood metaphorically. Therefore it was perfectly reasonable to assume that Moses' understanding of God had been as direct as that of Christ. Moreover, he blamed Spinoza for his treatment of the New Testament. There, Spinoza had been unfair in completely ignoring similar anthropomorphism. After all, Christ had said that he and the Father were one, and that Christ had been directly visible.[21] To Cohen, it was therefore ridiculous and offensive to blame Judaism for anthropomorphism and not Christianity.

What bothered Cohen most of all, however, was that Spinoza understood Judaism as a particularistic religion, and contrasted it to a universalist interpretation of Christianity. It was a mistake Spinoza had made that in his eyes had been ultimately caused by his pantheist worldview. Cohen understood this Spinozist Pantheism as a worldview in which the divine was equated with the natural world and in which there did not exist any separate realm outside of the natural world that could harbour morality. To Cohen this amounted to the practical non-existence of morality, which to him had to be an absurdity. It was for this reason that Spinoza had had to exclude universal morality from his political theory. Consequently, he also disagreed with Spinoza's interpretation of Biblical Jewish history as solely describing the history of the Jewish people, and not an eternal law or system of values. Again he accused Spinoza of reading Scripture selectively. For Spinoza the Mosaic Law was – in contrast to the teaching of Christ – a political Law, with no universal value. It had been useful as a means to ensure the independence of the Jews in biblical times, but had lost its value ever since. Consequently, the election of the Jews should in his eyes not be understood as meaning that the Jews were in any way better or more righteous that non-Jews. It merely meant that they had enjoyed a certain historical period – which had long ended – of independence,

[20] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 399.
[21] Cohen, "Ein Ungedruckter Vortrag Hermann Cohens über Spinozas Verhältnis zum Judentum; Eingeleit van Franz Rosenzweig", 56.

with a specific set of Laws, and in consequence that these laws were no longer valid and had never been significant for Gentiles.

Cohen, in contrast, believed that the Mosaic Law had worked for the establishment of a State, but had also been much more than a temporary political law. To him, it was based upon universal ethical values and these had been the great contribution of Judaism to mankind. These values were conveyed by the prophets, reflected in the Ten Commandments, and most of all in the Noachidan Laws. These were the seven laws that rabbinical tradition drew from the Covenant of God with Noah, and which it based upon commandments that God had given to Adam and Noah. As all men stem from Adam and Noah, these laws are considered meant for Jews and non-Jews alike. To Cohen, these were the Laws which proved the universal nature of Judaism and which, as he put it, Talmudic Law had shaped into an "interkonfessionellen Kulturbegriff" (inter-confessional cultural notion).[22] Cohen accuses Spinoza of completely ignoring them.

Cohen thus believed the TTP had painted an inaccurate picture of Judaism as a caricature of a religion for a particular people in a particular era. The German popularity of Spinoza, exemplified by the praise he was awarded by German thinkers from Goethe to Hegel, was the pride of so many German Jews, and this worried him. To Cohen it signified that Germans had been misled in their opinions of Judaism. Spinoza had made them believe that Judaism was a particularistic religion with relevance only to Jews and in that sense subversive for Jews living in a non-Jewish State such as the German Empire. Thus, "der böse Dämon Spinozas" (the evil demon Spinoza) had not only poisoned the atmosphere between Jews and protestants of his age, but continued to do so in the twentieth century. Alluding to the anti-Semitism of his day Cohen wrote: "Die Kernsprüche, in denen Spinoza seines Rachehasses gegen die Juden sich entlud, finden sich noch heute fast wörtlich in den Tageszeitungen…" (The key formulas in which Spinoza vented his vengeful hate against the Jews, can today be found almost verbatim in the newspapers…).[23] It was for this reason the Cohen called Spinoza "eines Kronzeugen" (a crown-witness)[24] against his own people and that he abhorred the fact that Jews admired Spinoza as a Jewish hero.

[22] Ibid., 65.
[23] ———, "Spinoza über Staat und Religion", 363.
[24] Ibid., 362.

Franz Rosenzweig

Although Cohen's student, Rosenzweig was never as elaborate as Cohen in his rejection of Spinoza, it is clear that he saw little good in the Jewish admiration of the Dutch thinker. This shows in his decision to publish one of Cohen's Spinoza articles, and in the short introduction he wrote for it. There he argued somewhat provocatively that Cohen's hostility towards Spinoza may be explained by the fact that he had understood Spinoza better than his admirers. Rosenzweig's rejection of Spinoza also makes sense in the context of his greater philosophical project, expressed in his most important work *Stern der Erlösung* (*Star of Redemption*). There, Rosenzweig attempted to find a new appreciation of the sense of divine notions such as redemption, revelation and creation which had been discredited first and foremost by Spinoza (at least in their traditional transcendent senses). As such, Rosenzweig's entire philosophical project is an implicit dialogue with Spinoza, or at least with the modern secular thinking that Spinoza epitomized.

Like Cohen, Rosenzweig was intrigued by Spinoza's Jewish popularity and as with Cohen it triggered him to write about Spinoza. As we have seen, Rosenzweig hinted at this in his introduction to Cohen's Spinoza article, arguing that the Jewish popularity of Spinoza revealed, through the signature of the Jewish times, something elementary. Rosenzweig, however, remains quite elusive about what this entails. Besides this introduction, Rosenzweig also wrote another article devoted to one very particular product of Spinoza's Jewish popularity in Weimar Germany, that may give us more of a clue. This was his article *Neuhebräisch?, Anläßlig der Uebersetzung von Spinozas Ethik* (*New Hebrew? On the translation of Spinoza's Ethics*). It dealt with Jacob Klatzkin's translation of Spinoza's Ethica in Hebrew. It is quite natural that Rosenzweig should take interest in this work. Klatzkin's endeavour of translating Spinoza into the holy tongue touched upon the very heart of Rosenzweig's own fascination with language in general and the Hebrew language in particular. The project ran, in a sense, parallel to Rosenzweig's own renowned project of translating the Pentateuch in German. It was, however, also an opposite project. Whereas Rosenzweig translated Scripture from the Hebrew into German, Klatzkin took it upon himself to translate what could be called the Bible of secularism into the holy language.

Rosenzweig appreciated Klatzkin's intellectual exercise, but also held that Klatzkin's effort was doomed to failure. He believed it was inspired by a profound misunderstanding of the significance of the Hebrew language. Rosenzweig understood Klatzkin's Spinoza translation as an ultimate consequence of the political-zionist project of modernizing Hebrew. For Rosenzweig it was not possible to use Hebrew at will. "Hebräisch lessen" he wrote in this article "Heißt die ganze Erbmasse der Sprache anzutreten" (To read Hebrew implies a readiness to assume the total heritage of that language).[25] It meant that as a language it was much more than a means of communication. Hebrew brought with it values and ideas of its own, put there by centuries of classic Hebrew texts.

Klatzkin's work provided for him a test that would prove this point. A successful translation of Spinoza, whose thought, in Rosenzweig's eyes, was completely alien to Judaism, would only be possible if Hebrew could indeed be cut loose from its history. Rosenzweig had high esteem for Klatzkin's expertise. Although the Ethica had been translated before, he believed Klatzkin was the first with the prerequisite intellectual expertise for such a task. Its failure could therefore not be attributed to a lack of expertise on Klatzkin's side. The reason in his eyes, could only be Klatzkin's erroneous presuppositions on the Hebrew language, which had led to his belief that a translation was possible at all.

Rosenzweig tried to explain his point by focussing right on the heart of Spinoza's philosophy, his equalization of God and Nature: He explained that the Hebrew language forced thoughts in Spinoza's texts which were completely opposed to his secular worldview "mag auch das Hebräische unter der Last eines Begriffs wie 'natura sive Deus', die das Lateinische ganz munter trägt, die aber hier eine durch keines Oders Glätte dem Sprachgeist aufzulistende Verkoppelung eines späten Philosophieworts mit einem schöpfungssturmumwetterten Urwort bedeutet, ächzen und stöhnen" (even though the Hebrew moans and groans in the face of a concept such as *natura sive Deus*, which the Latin deals with effortlessly. The lack of the sleek "or" in Hebrew makes it impossible to coax the spirit of the language into

[25] Franz Rosenzweig, "Neuhebräisch? Anläßlich der Übersetzung von Spinozas Ethik", *Der Morgen* 2, no. 1 (1926): 107. English translations from this article are taken from ———, "Calssical and Modern Hebrew", in *Franz Rosenzweig; his Life and Thought*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1998).

combining a term from modern philosophy with a primordial word seething with the storms of creation).[26] Rosenzweig agreed with Klatzkin that Hebrew gave a dimension to Spinoza's text, which the Latin lacked. But Rosenzweig did not buy into Klatzkin's own argument that by translating the Ethics into Hebrew he had surfaced Spinoza's true (Hebrew) thoughts, which the Latin, in which it had been written, obscured. Rosenzweig did not believe that Spinoza, as did Klatzkin, had forged his ideas in his native Hebrew and had written down only a second hand version of them in Latin. Here, he believed Klatzkin had wished for too much as a translator: "Es ist nicht die Auggabe einer Spinozaübersetzung, aus dem Scheintiefsinn dieses großen Verlockers echte Gedanken zu machen"[27] (The translator of Spinoza is under no obligation to convert the pseudo-profundity of this great tempter into true insights), he scorned. To Rosenzweig it rather showed that even Klatzkin, who thought Hebrew could be modernized and cut loose from its heritage, had been forced to admit that a Hebrew translation of a Latin text gave it a new, more Jewish, meaning.

Thus, Rosenzweig's critique of Klatzkin's Spinoza translation was a critique of the project of modernizing Hebrew. Rosenzweig's conviction that Hebrew could not be modernized should be understood within the context of a wider debate on the nature of Zionism. His article was also a critique of the presuppositions of political Zionism, which inspired Klatzkin's project. The Zionist movement was from its early beginnings split over a debate between the so called "cultural" and the "political" Zionist. The cultural Zionists saw Zionism as a cultural movement of national reawakening. They wanted a Jewish settlement in Palestine to be first and foremost a spiritual centre of the Jewish people, necessary for a national revival of Jewish culture. The political Zionists, on the other hand, stressed the political nature of the movement. They strove, firstly, to solve the Jewish Problem as a purely political problem. For them, Zionism was a matter of giving a State to a people that did not have a State, which would offer not so much an impetus to a cultural revival as a degree of political independence, which they could never achieve living in other nation-states. That meant that for the political Zionists, Jewish religion and heritage played a much less important role than in the ideas the cultural

[26] Rosenzweig, "Neuhebräisch? Anläßlich der Übersetzung von Spinozas Ethik", 108.
[27] Ibid.

Zionists developed. Klatzkin's ideas about the modernization of Hebrew, cutting it loose from the languages history, emanated from this notion of political Zionism. Rosenzweig consequently used what he considered the failure of Klatzkin's translation to show the inconsistencies of political Zionism. For him, a Jewish revival was unthinkable without recourse to Jewish traditions and Klatzkin's Spinoza translation made the point. A national revival, especially when it came to the revival of the national language, could never be a solely political endeavour, it had to look to the nations cultural heritage.

Leo Strauss

The question of whether religion was a necessary tool in the way society needed to be organized, did not only apply to the Zionist dreams, but also to German society. It occupied the minds of many Jewish and also non-Jewish thinkers. Leo Strauss was one of them. He famously called this problem "the theologico-political predicament of Jews in Weimar Germany" and it also led him to Spinoza. Leo Strauss started his career working on Spinoza in the heart of the Jewish Renaissance in Weimar Germany as a student of the *Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Academy for the Science of Judaism) in Berlin. Associated with this "Academy" he wrote articles on Cohen's criticism of Spinoza, on Spinoza's bible criticism and his dissertation *Die Religionskritik Spinoza's* (1930) (*Spinoza's Critique of Religion*).[28] This was far before he would become one of the most influential political thinkers of the twentieth century. But even then, the study of Spinoza remained close to his heart.

Like Buber, Strauss did contribute to the wave of articles in Jewish newspapers occasioning the anniversaries of Spinoza. In 1932 Strauss gave his opinion on the celebration of Spinoza in an article appearing in the *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung* titled "*Spinoza's Testament*".[29] Here, Strauss rejected the Jewish celebration of Spinoza

[28] Leo Strauß, "Das Testament Spinozas", *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung* viii, no. 21 (1932); ——, "Cohen's Analyse der Bibelwissenschaft Spinoza's", *Der Jude* (1924); Strauß, "Zur Bibelwissenschaft Spinozas und seiner Vorläufer", *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins zur Gründung und Erhaltung einer Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* 7 (1926).

[29] Strauß, "Das Testament Spinozas."

as being too separatist, which he believed was against the spirit of Spinoza himself. He argued,

> Spinoza is nicht Jude geblieben, während Descartes, Hobbes und Leibniz Christen geblieben sind. Es geschieht also nicht in Spinozas Sinn, daß er in das Pantheon der jüdischen Nation aufgenommen wird. Unter diesen Umständen scheint es uns ein elementares Gebot der jüdischen Selbstachtung zu sein, daß wir Juden endlich wieder darauf verzichten, Spinoza für uns in Anspruch zu nehmen.
>
> (Spinoza did not remain a Jew, whereas Descartes, Hobbes, and Leibniz remained Christians. The admittance of Spinoza into the Pantheon of the Jewish nation is therefore not a Spinozist undertaking. Because of that, we hold that it would be an essential imperative of Jewish self-awareness, for us Jews, to finally refrain from claiming Spinoza as ours).[30]

If Spinoza were to be celebrated, Strauss argued, it could only be a celebration of independence. He wrote: "Spinoza wird verehrt werden so lange es Menschen gibt (…). die wissen, was damit gemeint ist, wenn man sagt: Unabhängigkeit." (Spinoza will be venerated as long as people exist who know what is meant when independence is proclaimed).[31] Strauss, then, rejected a *Jewish* celebration of Spinoza because such a celebration could never do justice to Spinoza's autonomy.

But in 1962, long after the Weimar period, Strauss, who by then had become an American citizen teaching at the University of Chicago, wrote one of the most illuminating text on what was the meaning of Spinoza to Jews in Weimar Germany. The text was occasioned by the English translation of his dissertation, and was published as a preface to it. In it he tried to elucidate to his new English speaking environment what had been his motives for studying Spinoza as a Jew living in Weimar Germany. Looking back he painted his picture of Spinoza's significance in the religious, theological, political and philosophical debates of the Jews of Weimar Germany.

Strauss starts his account of how he got interested in Spinoza describing himself as "a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grip of the theologico-political predicament."[32] This predicament was for Strauss the problem Jews in Weimar Germany

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Leo Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation", in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (Chicago: 1997), 1.

faced of having to choose between political or theological answers to the challenges German society offered. It came down to the dilemma between an adoption of a weak liberalism, or a return to a prominence of religion, that to many was antiquated.

The central role Spinoza played in this predicament was evidenced by "a particularly striking act of celebration of Spinoza on the part of German Jews."[33] Spinoza, he argued had been the hero of a Jewry that had adopted the liberal democratic solution to the theologico-political predicament. This was the solution, stemming from theologico-political treatises against medieval society, to replace human morality for religion as the bond of society.[34] It meant that religion – for the Jews: Judaism – became a private affair, and was not necessary in any way in public life. According to Strauss, the problem was that in Germany this was a solution that did not work because "in Germany, and only there, did the end of the middle ages coincide with the beginning of the longing for the middle ages." In other words, Strauss argued that from the moment German Jews attempted to ban religion to the private sphere, German society longed for it to once again, be the bond of society. That put Jews in a precarious situation. The fact that they adhered to a different religion did not cease to be a social liability. Hatred of Jews, Strauss emphasized, infused all of German culture including the great German minds from Goethe to Heidegger.

An additional and even more serious problem, basic to the weakness of the Weimar Republic, was that liberalism was not capable, in itself to build an adequate defense against such anti-Jewish discrimination. According to Strauss – who here shows his qualities as a razor-sharp political thinker – liberalism had to become its own enemy:

> Liberalism stands or falls by the distinction between state and society, or by the recognition of a private sphere, protected by the law, but impervious to the law, with the understanding that, above all, religion as a particular religion belongs to the private sphere. Just as certainly as the liberal state will not "discriminate" against its Jewish citizens, so is it constitutionally unable and even unwilling to prevent "discrimination" against Jews by individuals or groups. To recognize a private sphere in the sense indicated means to permit private "discrimination", to protect it and thus in fact to foster it. The liberal state cannot provide a solution to the Jewish problem, for such a solution would require a legal

[33] Ibid., 15.
[34] Ibid., 3.

> prohibition against every kind of "discrimination", i.e. the abolition of the private sphere, the denial of the difference between state and society, the destruction of the liberal state.[35]

In Strauss' analysis, the liberal solution to the Jewish problem, then, did not work, and an alternative answer needed to be found. This answer had to be some kind of a return to Judaism. The attempts by people like Buber and Rosenzweig to once again accord Judaism more prominence could be understood in this light. But Strauss showed that though such attempts could not qualify as the classical German Jewish enthusiasm for the liberal solution to the theologico-political predicament, they betrayed at least some influence from the liberalist attacks on religious orthodoxy. Their ideas may have marked some return to Judaism, it was not an orthodox return, and therefore not a return at all. Rosenzweig, for example did not believe in miracles. The fact that he felt free to decide what from Scripture to believe and what not showed that to him the authority of Scripture was not absolute. To Strauss the only true answer could be a return to Jewish orthodoxy, which the ideas of Buber and Rosenzweig could not equate to. But a return to Jewish orthodoxy, Strauss went on, led to one formidable obstacle: Spinoza. It was Spinoza who had rejected the essence of Jewish orthodoxy: Scripture as revealed truth. To Strauss therefore, "Orthodoxy could be returned to, only if Spinoza was wrong in every respect."[36]

It is for this reason that Strauss developed an interest in Cohen, who had not joined the chorus of German Jews that made Spinoza their Saint, but had rather meticulously tried to prove him wrong. He wrote his article *Cohen's Analyse der Bibelwissenschaft Spinoza's* (*Cohen's analysis of Spinoza's Bible criticism*)[37] in search of arguments that would clear away Spinoza's obstacles to a return to Jewish orthodoxy. This would make an orthodox solution to the theologico-political predicament possible. Strauss saw with Cohen eye to eye on many points. He agreed that Spinoza had not been fair in his treatment of Judaism and Christianity, idealizing Christianity at the cost of Judaism. Cohen had also been right in explaining the behavior of Spinoza resulting from a fear of his Christian environment. He also

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[35] Ibid., 6.
[36] Ibid., 15.
[37] Strauß, "Zur Bibelwissenschaft Spinozas und seiner Vorläufer."

agreed that the canonization of Spinoza by German Jews, which had infuriated Cohen, was absurd. But, for all of Strauss' sympathy towards Cohen, he did not find in Cohen convincing arguments for the falsehood of Spinoza's thought. Cohen and Spinoza, according to Strauss, differed in their points of departure. Cohen presumed the necessity of morality, Spinoza that of nature. Therefore Strauss had to conclude that Cohen and Spinoza spoke in different languages, and that Cohen could not be seen as a definitive refutation of Spinoza.

Having not been able to find a convincing refutation of Spinoza in Cohen, Strauss tried to do the job himself and turned to writing his dissertation. There he could develop his own interpretation of Spinoza's text, focussing on Spinoza's critique of religion, and to what was in his eyes its most central element, Spinoza's Bible criticism. After all, he had reasoned that only if Spinoza's critique of religion was refuted, could the authority of revelation once again be established and did Jewish orthodoxy have a new chance. Spinoza and his followers had assumed that the results of modern Bible criticism, partly developed by Spinoza had refuted the claim that Scripture was a divinely revealed text. This, Strauss now argued, was an fallacious argument. To Strauss, any scientific critique of the Bible already implied that the Bible was not a revealed text. The assumption was present in the conclusion. Therefore it was impossible to prove from a critical study of Scripture, that Scripture was not revealed. Strauss reasoned that just as reason could not be proven wrong by revelation because reason does not accept the authority of revelation, could religion not be criticized by reason because it denies the authority of reason. It showed that the whole Enlightenment project of critique of orthodoxy, was misguided. He wrote: "But all the self-consciousness of the Enlightenment cannot conceal the fact that this critique [of orthodoxy], peculiar to the Enlightenment – historically effective as it was – does not reach the core of revealed religion, but is only a critique of certain consequence and is therefore questionable."[38] Strauss thus did not succeed in asserting the authority of revelation, or even refuting Spinoza's rationalist claims. He did, however, manage to refute Spinoza's critique of religion as a critique that missed target. Strauss' thought, therefore, entailed a serious criticism of secular liberalism, and perhaps even opened a window to solve the problems of the theologico-political predicament. But

[38] Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. E.M. Sinclair (Chicago: Schocken Books, 1962), 146.

by the time he wrote this preface Strauss' urgent need for that solution, had disappeared, the bitter reason being that after Hitler, the Jewish problem, which had produced it was, as he put it there, "not solved but annihilated by the annihilation of German Jews."[39]

In a way Cohen, Rosenzweig and Strauss discussed Spinoza for the same reasons most Jews celebrated him. All believed that Spinoza could serve as a key figure in solving the conflicting demands of their era, to reformulate Judaism so that it permitted indulgence in liberal secularism, or to seek some return to authentic Judaism and risk a departure from the promises of liberalism, an ordeal labelled by Leo Strauss as the theologico-political predicament. They only did so in opposing directions. Those who made Spinoza into a Jewish hero, admired him as a majestic mountain shining with the promises of a harmonious world. The philosophers discussed here, saw in his thought a peak that needed to be conquered as it obscured the view of a new landscape. Of course, having actually studied Spinoza much more thoroughly than most others, they could easily win the philosophical argument. There was much to be said for their point that to a serious reader of Spinoza's writings it made little sense to bring them into line with Judaism. But to their antagonists, Spinoza had become much more than a mere philosopher to be logically refuted, or approved. He had become a saviour who would reconcile the irreconcilable. And it was not critical philosophy that had made this apparent, but an amalgam of national pride, secular hagiography and poetic interpretation of philosophy.

[39] Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation", 4.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SIGNATURE OF THE ERA

The 250th anniversary of Spinoza's death and the 300th anniversary of his birth occurred during an exceptionally meaningful period of German history. Karl Jaspers gave voice to this when he wrote in 1931: "Die Frage nach der gegenwärtigen Situation des Menschen als Resultat seines Werdens und Chance seiner Zukunft ist heute eindringlicher als jemals gestellt. Antworten sehen die Möglichkeiten des Untergangs und die Möglichkeiten eines nun erst eigentlichen Beginnens; aber entschiedene Antwort bleibt aus." (The question of the present situation of humanity as a result of its progress and the chance for its future is being asked at the moment more acutely than ever. Answers see the possibilities decline and the possibilities of an actual new beginning that can happen only now, but a decisive answer does not come).[1] Although Jaspers wrote about the general spiritual situation in Weimar Germany, his observations were particularly relevant to German Jews. For them more than any other group, Weimar Germany signified an "erst nun eigentlichen Beginnen" (an actual new beginning), as well as the possibility of an "Untergang" (decline). These two processes of *Beginnen* and *Untergang* had marked German Jewish history ever since the first attempts were made to open the Ghetto in the mid-eighteenth century, and culminated in Weimar Germany. The Weimar Republic itself embodied the crowning glory of the two centuries-long fight for Jewish emancipation. The forces opposing the Republic, however, also managed to gain their decisive victory during the time period of Weimar Germany. This victory would lead not only to the end of German democracy, but also to the complete failure of Jewish integration in German society.

The celebration of Spinoza's birth and death sparked a great deal of enthusiasm in German-Jewish circles. This enthusiasm penetrated into practically all corners of the German-Jewish community, and almost all its periodicals devoted their most prominent pages to these

[1] Karl Jaspers, *Die Geistige Situation der Zeit* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co, 1932), 14.

celebrations. Some of the leading figures of Weimar Jewry, like Ernst Cassirer, Martin Buber, Leo Baeck, and Ludwig Holländer, participated in the celebration of Spinoza by contributing articles to German Jewish journals and newspapers. Barring a few exceptions, mainly Orthodox Jews who raised their voices to condemn the celebrations, Spinoza was the hero of integrationists, Zionists, and of the religious Reform Movement alike.

In retrospect, the widespread enthusiasm for the seventeenth century philosopher was, however, by no means self-evident. Indeed, the celebration of Spinoza embodied the exact opposite of what the Amsterdam Jewish community had hoped for when it imposed its Great Ban on him. The curses that came with the ban, including the prohibition of reading and writing about Spinoza, aimed at erasing Spinoza from Jewish memory. As the records of the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam show, Spinoza's name was literally crossed out from the administration of the Jewish community.[2] Compared to the situation in the seventeenth century, the celebrations of 1927 and 1932 reveal an astonishing turn in the Jewish community's relationship with Spinoza. If anything, these celebrations showed that Spinoza, within three centuries had conquered a place in Jewish memory, in spite of the curses the *Mehamad* had put upon him; the very person that was punished with the severest penalty available to the Jewish community, the Great Ban, came to be warmly embraced by that community as one of its most cherished sons.

Moreover, there was no scarcity of other important, more relevant, news facts at the time the Spinoza celebrations took place, especially in November 1932. The fact that the Spinoza jubilees occurred in 1927 and 1932 might have been coincidental, but it cannot be a coincidence that German Jews decided to celebrate him so massively in such a critical period. Carrying out the celebrations must have fulfilled an urgent need of the German Jewish community, and the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of why this need arose at that particular moment in time. In the introduction, we saw that historians are divided about what the nature of Jewish culture may have been in Weimar Germany. According to George Mosse's school of thought, Jewish culture in Weimar Germany should be understood as a continuation of the Jewish culture of the pre-Weimar era, which was

[2] Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, archief 344, inv. nr. 1052, p. 5.

characterized by the adoption of the original Humboldtian ideals of *Bildung*. A younger generation of historians argues, however, that the culture of Weimar Jewry breaks with the culture of the pre-Weimar years. These historians emphasize the contributions made to Jewish culture by a circle of intellectuals who shaped the Jewish Renaissance. We have seen that many of these forerunners were reluctant to celebrate Spinoza, although some of them were fascinated by him none the less. But the divisions within Weimar Germany ran much deeper than the divide between a handful of ground-breaking intellectuals and the general readership of the Jewish press. They related to fundamental choices Weimar Jews were confronted with and determined whether Jewish culture in Weimar Germany was a continuation of the liberalism to which Jews became attached through their adherence to the Humboldtian, liberal, concept of *Bildung*, or, a rebellion against the culture of *Bildung* and therefore, as an expression of anti-liberalism.

This study focused on three such issues that divided Weimar Jewry and we saw that in every case Spinoza bridged them. First, the Jewish admiration of the Spinoza celebrations by German Jews was assessed to identify the social meaning they were given. Here, the question was to know more precisely how the celebration of Spinoza was used to define the social boundaries of German Jewry. This showed that the Spinoza celebrations reflected an ideology of integration based upon liberal universalism as well as anti-liberal separatism. On the one hand, Spinoza was admired for his universalism. Many people praised Spinoza as embodying the symbiosis between non-Jewish and Jewish Germans, emphasizing his influence on German culture. On the other hand Spinoza was also celebrated strictly as a Jew and for his contribution to Jewish history.

Second, the Spinoza celebrations were examined for the ethical values they conveyed. The questions asked here were to know how Spinoza was seen to set an ethical example? For what ethical values was he deemed worthy of celebration? Again, these ethical values were examined to determine whether they reflected liberalism or anti-liberalism, and, again, the answer was both. On the one hand, Spinoza was celebrated for being the father of liberalism. As such his celebration underscored the value of integration and emancipation, which was an important element of the Jewish mentality of *Bildung*. On the other hand, Spinoza was celebrated for his authenticity. This ethical

value clashed with the liberalist view, and is better suited to the neo-romanticism of anti-liberalism.

Third, we examined how the celebration of Spinoza reflected the Jewish attitude towards history. Here the question was to know whether the Spinoza celebrations were typical examples of the historicism that permeated Judaism post-emancipation, or whether they constituted a reaction against this secular interest in history. As was the case with the social and ethical meaning of the celebrations, their historical meaning is also twofold. On the one hand, the celebration of Spinoza amounted to a secularization of history. This was the case when the celebrations were presented in a purely historicist fashion, when they were meant to convey a belief in the progress of history. On the other hand, the celebration of Spinoza also amounted to a de-secularization of history. This was the case when Spinoza's influence on world history was understood to be the result of divine intervention, or when his influence was used to express a messianic belief that rejected the liberalist notion of gradual Man-made progress.

To sum up, Spinoza turned out to be a unifier of German Jewry. Obviously this led to conspicuous contradictions in the many ways in which Spinoza was celebrated. We saw how a heretic was celebrated for his Judaism; how the "first integrationist" was celebrated for his authenticity; and how the instigator of Bible criticism was considered to be a Messiah. Spinoza was celebrated for both his Jewishness and German-ness, to uphold both his liberalism and authenticity, in a way that reflected both historicism and anti-historicism.

How Concordant were the Spinoza Celebrations?

So why should we not simply assume that Spinoza was not a unifier at all, but that different Jews celebrated Spinoza for different reasons? We could hold that Jews who still believed in the blessings of emancipation, and were still under the sway of their liberal *Bildungsbürgertum*, celebrated Spinoza for his contribution to German culture, as a liberal, and as a milestone in the inevitable historical progress towards the eventual secular victory of the values of the Enlightenment. We could hold that other Jews rebelled against the values of *Bildung*, and celebrated Spinoza as a Jew, for his authenticity, and that their celebration amounted to a de-secularization of history.

To a certain extent this must have been the case. However, the problem with such an explanation is that it fails to deal with the reason the Spinoza celebrations are so intriguing, namely, the consensus among Weimar Jews that Spinoza was worth celebrating. In the end Jews from widely diverging denominations did chose the same hero. That this is more than coincidental is further confirmed by the fact that sometimes the same authors published articles celebrating Spinoza in Jewish papers with different affiliations. David Baumgardt, for instance, celebrated Spinoza in both the integrationist newspaper *der Morgen*, which was financed by the *CV-Verein*, and in the Zionist newspaper, the *Jüdische Rundschau*. These newspapers were involved in a constant quarrel about the question of whether or not Jews were to adjust to German society or assert their separateness. Another example is that of Max Grunwald, who wrote articles with differing messages. Some of his articles were clearly integrationist, celebrating Spinoza for his influence on Goethe, Bismarck, or even an anti-Semite like Julius Langbehn.[3] Other articles Grunwald wrote were separatist, claiming Spinoza exclusively for Judaism.[4] At times, authors celebrating Spinoza expressed varying messages within the same articles. For example, some articles, like that of Katz, used quotations of Goethe to celebrate Spinoza, while at the same time taking pride in Spinoza's Jewishness.[5] In other articles, Spinoza was celebrated both for having defended the liberal value of freedom of thought, and for his authenticity.[6] Finally, Theilhaber, in his Spinoza novel, suggested that Spinoza's influence on human history reflected the idea that history was man-made while, at the same time, attributing messianic qualities to Spinoza.

We therefore cannot be satisfied with explaining the success of the Spinoza celebrations among such differing groups of German Jews simply by arguing that these groups celebrated him for different reasons. Instead, we have to find an explanation for the fact that Spinoza was celebrated in such diverging ways among German Jews, and this explanation must do justice to the unanimity of the Spinoza celebrations among German Jews.

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[3] Grunwald, "Spinoza, aus einem Vortrage aus dem Jahre 1899 von Dr. Max Grunwald."; ———, "Bismarck und Spinoza."

[4] Grunwald, "Der Jude Spinoza"; Spanier, "Zum 250. Todestag Spinozas."

[5] See for example: Katz, "Spinoza."

[6] See for example: Michelson, "Spinoza und unsere Zeit".

The Ritualism of the Spinoza Celebrations

A possible explanation for the contradictions inherent in the Spinoza celebrations may be found in their nature as a form of collective memory or as rituals[7] and, as such, certain rules apply to celebrations that cannot be applied to common ideological statements. John R. Gillis has argued that "commemorative activity (…). involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may seem consensual, when they are in fact the product of processes of intese contest (…)."[8] Rituals have, as David Kertzer stressed, the "virtue of ambiguity." Opinions can differ on the symbolic meaning of rituals, and it is possible for people with different, and even opposing, ideas to find each other caught up in the emotion stimulated by the ritual. So, a critical aspect of the power of ritual is that "it can serve political organizations by producing bonds of solidarity without requiring uniformity of belief."[9]

In this respect, the Spinoza celebrations in the press encompassed a broad range of opinions and manners in which the memory of Spinoza was expressed. Some newspapers, for example, simply celebrated by publishing Spinoza's portrait.[10] In such cases, it is likely that these newspapers assumed the significance of Spinoza to be so obvious that any reader would understand why they printed the fact that a round number of years had passed since his birth or death with a simple portrait. It is clear then, that different groups of people were free to project their own reasons on why Spinoza should be celebrated. That is how Zionists and integrationists, despite their differing convictions, could both participate in the celebration of Spinoza and in this way the Spinoza celebrations had the "virtue of ambiguity", assisting in

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[7] We should be careful in considering the Spinoza celebrations examples of rituals. Most definitions of rituals describe them as some form of symbolic repetitive behavior. David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 8–9. This means that one could doubt whether the Spinoza celebrations were rituals at all as they were a collection of newspaper articles, books, lectures and exhibitions, and not the raising of a flag, or a ceremony around a monument. Still, there is a repetitive and symbolic element present in the idea that attention needs to be paid to certain events every round number of years.

[8] Gillis, ed. *Commemorations*, 5.

[9] Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, 67.

[10] For example:"–", *Israelitisches Familienblatt, Ausgabe für Gross-Berlin: Beilage* 34, no. 48 (1932).

producing "bonds of solidarity" within the divided German Jewish community.

The problem with this explanation, however, is that Spinoza was rarely celebrated without justification. The celebration of Spinoza in a newspaper by only printing his picture was quite rare, and it appears that German Jews did not celebrate Spinoza by minting remembrance medals or erecting monuments in his honor.[11] For the most part, the celebration of Spinoza consisted of of newspaper articles, booklets and lectures explaining the reasons behind celebrating Spinoza. For that reason, arguing that the celebration of Spinoza was only a "ritual" or a "commemorative activity" that resolved opposing points of view by "virtue of ambiguity" is insufficient. The contradictions inherent in the Spinoza celebrations cannot be explained away so easily. Instead of attempting to resolve the contradictions inherent in the Spinoza celebrations, we need to confront them head on.

The Assertion of Contradiction

The multivalent nature of the Spinoza celebrations can enable us to better understand their historical context, and tells us why they aroused such enthusiasm among German Jews in the eventful years in which they occurred. In Weimar Germany, Jews were subject to opposing and contradicting pressures. These pressures were the product of a friction that marked the entire history of Jewish emancipation, and were coming to a climax in Weimar Germany, like so much else. Throughout the nineteenth century, Jews were requested to emancipate and assimilate, and throughout the course of their history they encountered opposition to their equality in society as Jews. This often put Jews in an impossible situation. Richard Wagner wrote, in his pamphlet *Das Judentum in der Musik*, that "Gemeinschaftlich mit uns Mensch zu werden, heißt für den Juden aber zu allernächst soviel als: aufhören Jude zu sein." (To become collectively with us human beings, means for the Jews in the first place as much as: ceasing to be Jew).[12]

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[11] It is impossible to exclude completely the possibility that somewhere a German-Jewish medal was minted in celebration of Spinoza, or somewhere a minor monument erected, but the research for this study has not given any indication that this has been the case.

[12] Richard Wagner, *Über das Judentum in der Musik; Politische Schriften* (Bremen: Faksimile Drucksachen- und Buchauslieferungen GmbH, 1998), 31.

In the same pamphlet, he also argued that even highly assimilated Jewish converts to Christianity, like Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy or Heinrich Heine, were "too Jewish". Heine's case clearly illustrates the frictions this could cause. To answer the demands of German society Heine had taken the radical step to convert to Lutheranism. However, he was not only still dismissed as too Jewish by Wagner, he himself later regretted taking this step.[13]

In the political climate of Weimar Germany, this dilemma gained urgency. It was now part of the general conflict present in the Weimar Republic, or at least in the ideological fundaments of the Weimar Republic. As such, this dilemma became a matter of life and death. On the one hand, the creation of the Weimar Republic was viewed as the victory of liberal forces in German society. For the first time in German history these forces succeeded in making Germany into a liberal and democratic state. Consequently, the Weimar Republic was seen as the fulfillment of the dream of Jewish emancipation. Its liberal constitution was drafted to protect the rights of minorities, like Jews, in an unprecedented manner.[14] It seemed, therefore, that Jewish attempts to Germanize had finally led to positive results. Viewed as a victory of liberalism, the Weimar Republic was evidence that Jews had an interest in liberalism and in the Republic. Indeed, many Jews played significant roles in the revolutions that marked the birth of the Republic. These included not only figures of the radical left, like Rosa Luxemburg, Hugo Haase, Kurt Eisner or Gustav Landauer, but also more moderate figures, like Hugo Preuss, who drafted the Weimar Constitution. Later on, prominent politicians and defenders of the Republic also included Jews, the most famous example of which was Cabinet Minister Walther Rathenau. In this sense, the Weimar Republic embodied the materialization of all that emancipating Jewry always hoped for.

On the other hand, it should be realized that the Weimar Republic could be, and was, viewed in a totally different light. It was also perceived as proof of the weakness of liberalism and of its ultimate defeat. The German experiment with democracy only survived for 14 years. The history of the Weimar Republic is ripe with incidents undermin-

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[13] Meyer, ed. *Emancipation and Acculturation: 1780–1871*, 211.

[14] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 40; Walter Laqueur, *Weimar, a Cultural History 1918–1933* (London: Putnam, 1974), 72, 73. Amos Elon, *The Pity of it All* (New York: Holt, 2003), 358.

ing its stability, including, among others, the use of the *Freikorps* to crush revolutions, the assassination of Walther Rathenau, and the eventual triumph of Hitler. These events were also a lesson to German Jews. The lesson was that the liberal Republic could not protect them, and they therefore had nothing to gain from liberalism. As a result, some Jews came to the conclusion that they had to rescue what was left of their autonomy after more than a century of assimilation, and abandon their commitment to liberalism. This meant abandoning the ideology of *Bildung* that led to their emancipation.

In the face of these two interpretations of the events between 1918 and 1933, the question of what course Jews should take came to be linked with the question of whether the liberalism on which the Republic was based was strong enough to withstand the threats that were facing Weimar Germany in general, and its Jews in particular. The key question was to know whether Jews saw in the Weimar Republic the confirmation of the blessings of liberalism, or its failure? Jews were forced to decide on which horse to bet. Should they risk continuing committing themselves to an ideology that was the fundament of the success of their emancipation, but which was becoming rapidly unpopular? Or, should they risk abandoning liberalism, despite everything it brought them, so they could better address the anti-liberal and anti-Semitic Right? Awareness of this dilemma is the key to what made celebrating Spinoza in such contradicting ways so attractive to Weimar Jewry.

The contradictory nature inherent in the Spinoza celebrations made what seemed impossible seem possible: It enabled Jews in the Weimar Republic to have it both ways. In the polarized climate of Weimar Germany, having it both ways became a necessity to Jews, because they were put in a situation where the pressures of liberalism and anti-liberalism made their position untenable. For this reason, we should not explain the unity in diversity that characterized the Spinoza celebrations with the argument that different authors celebrated him for different reasons, nor because they were an essentially meaningless ritual to which authors could give meaning as they pleased. Instead, we should realize that these paradoxes were the very reason for celebrating Spinoza. The Spinoza celebrations were a statement of the need and wish German Jews felt to combine different and conflicting attitudes towards their place and destiny in German society. This was the core of the "Spinozist alternative" German Jews put forward in the Weimar Era.

On a social level Jews were expected to see themselves as Germans. If they did not, they opened themselves to the suspicion of not being loyal citizens. Once they complied, however, they had to confront the racist principle that it was impossible for Jews ever to be true Germans, and that every effort they made to assimilate was suspect. How could Jews respond both to Heinrich von Treitschke's demand from 1880 that, "Was wir von unseren israelitischen Mitbürgern zu fordern haben, ist einfach: sie sollen Deutsche werden" (What we expect from our citizens of the Israelite persuasion is simple: they should become German citizens),[15] and to his avowal that "es wird immer Juden geben, die nichts sind als deutsch redende Orientalen?" (There will always be Jews, who will be nothing but German speaking Orientals).[16] How could they counter Treitschke's inevitable conclusion, "Die Juden sind unser Ungluck" (the Jews are our misfortune), which the notorious Nazist newspaper *Der Stürmer* published on the front-page of each issue? Our discussion of the social meaning of the Spinoza celebrations showed that Spinoza was celebrated as a Jew, by authors who emphasized his Jewish sources and the Jewish nature of his philosophy. At the same time, Spinoza was celebrated as a German, as someone who had proved himself to be indispensable to German culture. A Zionist could point to Spinoza, and argue that this hero of German culture was a Jew. An integrationist could point to Spinoza, and argue that this Jew was a hero of German culture. Therefore, the celebration of Spinoza served the important purpose of showing that it was indeed possible to be simultaneously Jewish and German.

On an ethical level, the liberalist demand that in return for their emancipation Jews had to assimilate, clashed with the neo-romantic ideal that reproached Jews, with many anti-Semitic stereotypes, for being inauthentic. It was difficult, if not impossible, to assimilate while at the same time remaining authentic. Yet, Spinoza was again used as an example of both assimilation and authenticity. Integrationists used Spinoza to argue that their assimilation need not have impinged on their authenticity. By the same token, Jewish separatists used Spinoza to show that their wish to be authentic Jews did not make them an alien element in German society with whom it was dangerous to live. With Spinoza, separatists could demonstrate that even Zionists did

[15] Heinrich von Treitschke, "Unsere Aussichten", in *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, ed. Walter Boehlich (Frankfurt am Main: 1965), 8.
[16] Ibid., 12.

not plot against humanity, after all, the Jewish Spinoza was widely respected in the non-Jewish world.[17]

The attitudes towards history reflected in the Spinoza celebrations also relate to the wish to combine a liberalist ideology with an anti-liberalist ideology. Here, the dilemma was whether the Weimar Republic gave Jews confidence in the progress of history, or if it caused them to abandon this confidence, and return to the religious hope for redemption. We saw that as a form of historicism, the Spinoza celebrations were very much part of the secularization of history, which was itself part of the Jewish break with tradition that came with their emancipation. Spinoza was also celebrated for his contribution to the liberalist vision of secular progress. At the same time, the historical meaning attributed to Spinoza could obtain, particularly in the context of a celebration, a religious and even messianic quality. Thus, lastly, by celebrating Spinoza, Jews could simultaneously express confidence in historical progress and in divine redemption.

In addition, this enables us to understand some expressions of anti-Spinozism. As celebrating Spinoza combined liberalism and anti-liberalism, it follows that for Jews who were not experiencing this dilemma of adopting a liberal or an anti-liberal worldview, celebrating Spinoza made no sense. The Jewish Orthodoxy completely rejected the integration of liberal elements into Judaism, and could, therefore, never approve a celebration of someone like Spinoza, who although he may have come from a Jewish background, was also a representative of the liberal worldview.

The Multivalent Spinoza

This book dealt with the reception of Spinoza, not with Spinoza himself. For that reason care was taken not to offer an interpretation of Spinoza's thought that would serve as a measure for the correctness of the many Spinoza interpretations discussed. These interpretations, after all, were not discussed to be judged for their accuracy, but for the interests they reflected of the figures that wrote about Spinoza. Still,

[17] It should not be forgotten that, in spite of their pessimism on the future of Jews in Germany, few Zionists were serious about moving to Palestine. Avraham Barkai, *Aufbruch und Zerstörung 1918–1945*, ed. Fred Grubel, IV vols., vol. IV, Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit (München: Beck, 1997), 92.

however, there remains the question whether there was something in Spinoza's thought or biography itself that made precisely this historical figure the choice of so many German Jews. Our conclusion that Spinoza was celebrated in an attempt to assert contradictions may now also help to answer this final question.

What made Spinoza so suitable to the German Jewish purpose of negotiating their quandaries by asserting contradictions, was that much of his work was inherently contradictory. This may seem unexpected for someone who argued that "truth is not opposed to truth."[18] Spinoza presented himself as a great rationalist, wrote two books in the geometric method, and rejected the authority of the Scriptures by pointing out contradictions within them. Still, many philosophers who studied Spinoza intensively noticed the contradictory nature of his work. According to Leo Strauss, Spinoza's work contained both an "obvious" and a "hidden"[19] meaning; one for the people, the other for the philosopher. Strauss based his theory on "a detailed discussion of Spinoza's self-contradictions."[20] The ambiguous language of Spinoza also struck Yirmiyahu Yovel. "Spinoza", Yovel wrote, "was a grand master of dual language and equivocation. He would pass a covert message to anyone capable of grasping it, while using a phrase whose literal sense was the opposite, thus misleading the innocent reader." In this, Yovel saw as a trait typical of the *Marranos*, who had been forced to hide their true tradition and beliefs, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. He wrote: "Just as Rojas and other writers of fiction have turned the equivocal language of the Marranos from a necessity into an artistic value, so Spinoza turned it into a philosophical instrument. In all of these cases dual language was used beyond its social function of prudence and dissimulation; it became an ingredient of a broader cultural enterprise – be it a novel, a drama or a philosophical system. This is one of the chief characteristics (…). that make Spinoza a Marrano of Reason."[21] Pierre-François Moreau – in trying to explain why Spinoza fascinated so many non-professional philosophers – argued that it is Spinoza's way of writing that accounts for ambiguity in his work.

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[18] Spinoza, *Complete Works*, 201.

[19] Leo Strauss, "How to Study Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise", in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity, Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought, Leo Strauss*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 224.

[20] Ibid., 202.

[21] Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, The Marrano of Reason*, 129.

Spinoza, he argued, often denied the original meaning of concepts by using the same concepts in different contexts. Moreau described this as "eine Stilistik der Negation" (a stylistics of negation), and perceived similar ambiguity even in Spinoza's life. He argued that how Spinoza led his life could be viewed as "eine Inszenierung der Negation" (an orchestration of negation),[22] since his behavior was often the opposite of what one would have expected of him. Moreau illustrated this by citing the fact that although Spinoza was ostracized, his punishment never seemed to bother him. In different ways, Strauss, Yovel and Moreau agree that whoever deals with Spinoza has to confront ambiguities.

Philosophers tend to want to resolve such contradictions, either by simply rejecting a philosophical system for its inconsistency – as Cohen did – or by interpreting the text in question in such a way that the inconsistency is resolved – for example by arguing that the author, as Strauss did, had deliberately been inconsistent to hide a hidden meaning. But to the many Jews admiring Spinoza this was not the point. They did not want to resolve these contradictions, instead these contradictions were precisely what drew them to Spinoza.

Weimar Jewish Culture

German Jews of the Weimar Republic were attracted to paradoxes and ambiguities, and these can be found in many manifestations of their culture. One telling example is the great project of Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber to translate the Bible into German, but in a Jewish way that would do justice to the original Hebrew sound of the Scriptures. This was simultaneously a return to Judaism and an embrace of emancipation. Another manifestation of this can be found in the work of the scholar of Judaism Gershom Scholem. Scholem followed the rules of rationalist positivist scholarship, but, by investigating subjects like messianism and the Cabbala, he expressed his love for irrationalism on every page. Such a contradiction can also be found in the institution of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*. With its name, this organization expressed an extreme attempt to

[22] This thought was developed by Pierre François Moreau in a lecture delivered during the conference: *Ein neuer Blick auf die Welt. Spinoza in Literatur und Aesthetik* that was held in Weimar, Germany in September 2004.

consider an organization specifically aimed at Jews as being primarily German.

German Jews were not always blind to the ambiguity of their culture. Often, they were keenly aware of it, but refused to see it as a problem. Illustrative is the remark of Franz Oppenheimer, who wrote: "[I]ch habe niemals verstehen können, warum mein jüdisches Stammesbewußtsein mit meinem deutschen Volks- und Kulturbewußtsein unvereinbar sein sollte." (I have never been able to understand, why my Jewish tribal consciousness would be incompatible with my German national and cultural consciousness).[23] We may even see such an affirmation of contradictions within German Jewish culture in Franz Rosenzweig's description of a strand of Jewish thinking as "*das neue Denken*". This "new thinking", Rosenzweig believed, came closer to true speech and dialogue than the traditional inquiries into the essence of things that were the business of traditional philosophy. Most of all, however, it was new because it replaced existing "Wiederspruchlosigkeits- und Gegenstandstheorien" (consistency-theories and theories of objects).[24] In other words, this "new thinking" tolerated ambiguities and inconsistencies also within Jewish culture.

In deciding whether the Spinoza celebrations present German Jewish culture as Mosse's "beyond Judaim", or as his critics' "beyond Bildung",[25] the answer should be that they were neither and both. To do justice to the Spinoza celebrations, and to other aspects of the culture Weimar Jewry, they must be appreciated for their ambiguity, and not attempted to be understood solely from the perspective of the Enlightenment version of *Bildung*, nor only as a rebellion against such values.[26]

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[23] Barkai, *Aufbruch und Zerstörung 1918–1945*, 157.

[24] Franz Rosenzweig, "Das neue Denken", *Der Morgen* 1, no. 4 (1925): 448. Rosenzweig Gegenstandtheorie is the name of a philosophical theory the German philosopher A. Meinong's developed that is based upon the rejection of contradictions and which is commonly referred to in Englisg as theory of objects.

[25] Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*; Aschheim, "German Jews Beyond Bildung and Liberalism."

[26] It should be noted that both Mosse himself and those that opposed his views at times showed an awareness of this ambiguity. Mosse shows such an awareness when he speaks of the Zionist "attempt to humanize nationalism" Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 76. Brenner speaks of the "ambiguous tendencies of Weimar culture" Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 2. Myers stresses the simultaneous existence of historicism and anti-historicism in the works of the same authors. Myers, *Resisting History, Historicism and its discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, 5.

The Spinoza celebrations should be considered as an expression of two processes of German Jewish history that culminated in Weimar Germany. First, there was an expression of the progress of liberalism: the growing secularization and assimilation of German Jewry that had always been promised as the prize of acceptance into German society. Second, there was an expression of the contrary process towards Jewish self-reliance of which the Weimar Jewish Renaissance was the product: the return from secularization and search towards a modern form of Jewish spirituality. It is the uncertainties inherent in Weimar Germany that made the convergence of these two processes possible; the uncertainty of whether Jews should see Weimar Germany as their final victory, or as their ultimate defeat. Spinoza helped German Jews believe they could solve the dilemmas the Weimar Republic forced upon them. They did not have to choose for or against the Republic, for or against liberalism, for or against Jewish emancipation. The commemorative return to the seventeenth century showed them that these dilemmas were only forced upon them by the issues of the day. In other words, the "signature of the Jewish era" expressed by the "Spinozist alternative" was the stubborn belief that a synthesis was possible between German-ness and Judaism, between assimilation and authenticity, between historicism and messianism, in short, between liberalism and anti-liberalism. It was the assertion of such contradictions that was at the heart of the Jewish adoption of an ostracized Jew.

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