

Jewish engagement(s) with Modern Culture

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1 The challenges of modernization

Looking back at the documented history of mankind, we find in any given society individuals or smaller groups who were ahead of their contemporaries, more daring, more adventurous, more interested in the world beyond the confines of their respective communities. Modernity, understood as a conscious departure from tradition, has always been there. In the context of Jewish history, we can identify many instances where traditional customs and values have been replaced by more modern ones, from biblical times onward. In general terms, political upheaval, war, and forced emigration necessarily challenged individuals and communities to rethink traditional forms of living and to adapt to new circumstances. The Babylonian exile and the emergence of an exilic identity among those removed from Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, for example, could be usefully analysed and discussed in a context of modernisation. Given the mainly diasporic character of Jewish life and culture from the 6th century BCE on, and even more so after the destruction of the Second Temple, such periods of modernisation were often the product of an encounter—in contact, cooperation, or conflict—with the non-Jewish world: in Babylon, in Athens and Alexandria, in Rome¹, from the cities along the North African coast to the centres of Jewish life under Muslim² and Christian rule in »Sepharad« as well as in the settlements along the Rhine river in what was to become »Ashkenas«³.

Traditional Jewish communities acquired new languages⁴, Spanish or Middle High German, new customs, new forms of food or dress, and were influenced by different philosophical and scientific developments long before the dates that are usually noted as markers of the onset of modernity—be it 1492, with the discovery of a world beyond former conceptions of the earth, or 1789, when the French Revolution shattered the feudal societies all over Europe. Still, with this reservation, it is fair to say that the enlightenment in the late 18th century opened up the world

1 See Levine, *The Resilience of Jews and Judaism in Late Roman-Byzantine Eretz Israel*, in: Visotzky/Tilly (Eds.), *Judaism I. History* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

2 See Lieberman, *Jews and/under Islam*, in: Visotzky/Tilly (Eds.), *Judaism I. History* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

3 See Chazan, *Judaism in the Middle Ages 1000–1500*, in: Visotzky/Tilly (Eds.), *Judaism I. History* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

4 See Schreiner, *Languages of the Jews*, below, 72–104.

of thought to a wider degree than ever before, and in its wake the industrial revolution with all its consequences changed the world of traditional communities, including that of the Jews, to such an extent that it makes sense to concentrate on the period that most researchers regard as modernity: from the end of the 18th through the 19th and 20th centuries, and to formulate questions that are of importance until the present day.

For the purposes of this text, we agree on some simple and basic assumptions. Culture is different from nature. Culture begins when people »do something« with nature, when they start to change the given landscape by working on it, by moving through it, by regarding, describing or studying it, by making their imprint on it. Culture, furthermore, is practice. In a narrow sense, we refer to practices such as writing, painting, making music or building houses as »cultural«. In a wider sense, practices such as inhabiting places, making clothes and dressing, eating and drinking, believing in natural or supernatural powers and giving form to such belief, in prayer and ritual, conceiving and rearing children, and educating them, are no less cultural, especially when they form part of processes of change and development—and when they become topics of reflection and forms of cultural production. In our context, »modern culture« evolves continually and offers new perspectives beyond traditional ways of living and thinking. It also needs to be noted that modernity, once set in, did not necessarily move forward unhindered. On the contrary, whenever and wherever individuals tried to depart from traditional ways of life, they met with resistance.

In the history of Judaism, the most famous case in point is the fate of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) who can be regarded as a precursor of later developments. Born in 1632 in Amsterdam to a Portuguese-Jewish family, the intellectually highly gifted thinker »was issued the harshest writ of *herem*, ban or excommunication, ever pronounced by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam«. In his works, Spinoza »denies the immortality of the soul; strongly rejects the notion of a transcendent, providential God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and claims that the Law was neither literally given by God nor any longer binding on Jews«. ⁵ He clearly was an early moderniser, but his departure from traditional values and rituals was regarded as damaging for his community.

The case of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) is not so completely different as one might assume, given the relative success of the Jewish enlightenment—the *Haskala*—that his life and work initiated. But the idea, and ensuing practice, to open the Jewish community of Berlin to the new horizons offered by the translation of the Hebrew Bible into German, the use of the German language in daily encounters, the creation of a »free school«—*Jüdische Freischule*, founded in 1778 by David Friedländer with Isaak Daniel Itzig and Hartwig Wessely—that offered instruction in worldly topics, and a thorough reform programme concerning synagogue services, a weakening of rabbinical authority, and the discontinuation of certain rituals, again provoked

5 Stanford *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. Baruch Spinoza; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/> [25/05/2018].

resistance within the community: »Reform«, in a way, created »Orthodoxy« as a (modern and anti-modern) response, and the path of German Jews towards modernity has been a troubled, ambivalent, and difficult one from the very start.

This can be illustrated with an example from those regions that Prussia acquired during the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century (1772–1795). When Prussian reformers, enlightened and carried on by the ideas of tolerance and a—controlled—emancipation of the minorities arrived in those regions, one of their first activities was to tear down old city walls and to make way for traffic and economic development: an act of modernization. By doing this, they unknowingly also destroyed parts of the traditional *eruv*⁶, the Sabbath border of observant Jewish communities beyond which, according to Talmudic laws, Jews were not allowed to carry things on their holy day of the week. An interesting collection of documents, kept in the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, shows how the rabbis and representatives of those communities, in the years between 1822 and 1835, applied to the authorities in Berlin to be allowed to reconstruct their *eruvim*, their »borders« that, for them, symbolized the continuity of a specific religious tradition and way of life. Permission then partly had been granted, but while some communities decided to re-erect the symbolic »walls« and »gates«, others opted for their abolition and thus opened the path for the members of their congregation: into modernity. In many cases, this initiated the beginning of a large-scale migration process from the smaller towns in Eastern and Central Europe—and similarly from the rural communities in South-West Germany—to the larger cities, most importantly to Berlin from where the heralds of enlightenment, the »Berliners«, had come with such promising news about a new future of emancipation and integration. Confronted with modernisation, those communities saw themselves challenged in two main areas: the tension between traditional religious practice and the culture of their host societies and, in more general terms, the relation between their existence in exile and the no less traditional longing for a return to the land of Israel.

As Rabbi David Ellenson, the eighth president of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), has argued,

the advent of modernity led to radical political and legal changes for Jewry, particularly in the West. Coercive belonging to a community was replaced by voluntary adherence to what might best be called a congregation. [...] Modernity has affected many disparate areas including new forms of Judaism, opting out, Jewish identity, marriage, gender relations and expression, interfaith dialogue, attitudes toward universalism and particularity, and so on. Modernity has stimulated assimilation but also has fostered new ways of expressing Jewish identity.⁷

Modernity for Jews, Ellenson argues further, »begins first and foremost when the governmental structures that formerly marked the medieval *kehila* (community)

6 See Dorff, Halakhah (Jewish Law) in Contemporary Judaism, below, 44–71.

7 David Ellenson, »How Modernity Changed Judaism,« in: *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* no. 36: September 15 (2008), <http://jcpa.org/article/how-modernity-changed-judaism-in-interview-with-rabbi-david-ellenson/>. Interview by Manfred Gerstenfeld.

collapsed«. The American and French revolutions also brought with them the separation of religion and state. Ellenson's teacher, the eminent historian Jacob Katz,

contended that a major criterion for determining when modernity began was to analyze the moments when Jews began to think in cultural patterns taken from the non-Jewish world⁸.

We can see this development in France, shown by Frances Malino's work on the Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux⁹ where he describes the high degree of acculturation of their mores and manners. Similarly, Todd Endelman's book on the Jews of Georgian England¹⁰ tells how Jews began to adapt and live like non-Jewish people. But, Ellenson concludes,

if one wants to understand the essence of how modernity influenced Judaism, one has to study the developments in German Jewry. That was the only country where the changes in Jewish life were based on ideological justifications.

While this chapter will indeed concentrate on developments in Berlin, different paths to modernity need to be considered as well. As Lois Dubin and David Sorkin have shown, Sephardic trading families and communities—whose ancestors had been expelled from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1496—in the Early Modern Period had been allowed to settle in a string of port cities that reaches from Amsterdam, London and Hamburg in the North via Bordeaux, Bayonne, Livorno, Venice, and Trieste down to Sarajevo, Sofia, and Constantinople.¹¹ Even without an enlightenment »ideology«, practical life that required international contacts and cultural exchange enabled the »Port Jews« in those cities to establish a comparably important network of reformed communities with an equally strong interest in education and integration: again, in the context of urban societies which often were marginal in relation to their respective countries, but central for the creation of international trading routes and for the emergence of cultural practices related to the economy: cartography, translation, printing, activities that enabled them to participate in modern culture of a different kind.

A newly founded city on the shores of the Black Sea, Odessa, which was neither »ashkenazi« nor »sephardic«, maybe best represents the ambivalence between the positive and the negative aspects of Jewish urban fantasies during the 19th Century. Free of settlement restrictions, able to vote and even to be elected, Odessa's Jews, invited by Catherine the Great in 1794 and growing into the city's largest ethnic group in the course of the 19th century, experienced everything »modernity« had on offer: a relatively high

8 Ibid.

9 Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978).

10 Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979).

11 David Cesarani, »Port Jews. Concepts, Cases, and Questions,« *Jewish Culture and History*, vol. 4.2 (2001), Special Issue: Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, ed. David Cesarani, 1-11; 1; David Sorkin, »Port Jews and The Three Regions of Emancipation«, *ibid.*, 31-46; Lois Dubin, »Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond«, *ibid.*, 47-58.

level of equality *and* violent outbreaks of anti-Semitism; amazing wealth in the case of some entrepreneurial families *and* great poverty among the working class; a high degree of cultural exchange with Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, Italian, and Russian neighbours *and* the emergence of nationalist movements (as a response they created their own national movement, Zionism¹², with a »practical« fraction initiated by Leon Pinsker and the *Hoveve Zion*, and a very influential »cultural« fraction, supported by Achad Ha'am and Chaim Nachman Bialik). Odessa became the creative centre for the development of modern Jewish literature¹³ not just in Yiddish (Sholem Aleichem, Mendele Moikher Sforim) and in Hebrew (Bialik, Shaul Tchernichowsky) but also in Russian (Vladimir Jabotinsky, Isaak Babel), and ideas that were born in Odessa travelled the Jewish world, from Warsaw to Berlin and Paris, London and New York, Buenos Aires and of course Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Urbanization, then, in different forms, has been the most important factor for the modernization process and for the Jewish encounter with modern culture. But again, the ambivalent character of modernity and modernization needs to be considered. The big and growing city is a theatre of opportunities. Life in an urban and ever urbanizing context offers new forms of education and cultural activity unheard of in the places of origin: free schools, access to libraries and museums, theatre and concerts far beyond any religious content, and—maybe most importantly—the chance to make one's life outside of the traditional framework of the community. In Berlin more than elsewhere, this chance has been taken by the majority of those who became »German Jews« and saw themselves on the path to emancipation and integration within the wider society. Alongside the traditional institutions, synagogues, schools, hospitals, and charitable organisations, they created German-Jewish societies, from the »Gesellschaft der Freunde« to the bibliophile »Soncino-Gesellschaft«, as a means of integrating Jewish initiative with German culture, language, and lifestyle.

At the same time, the city provided the immigrant communities from Russia and Eastern Europe, not least Ḥasidic groups who had already rejected traditional rabbinical authority in their very own way, with the space to build up their own institutions, *shtiblech* and private synagogues, aid societies, *landsmanshaftn* (to use a Yiddish notion that gained most prominence in New York and other North and South American cities), areas of retreat and reclusion where members of those traditional groups could lead non-modern lives within the framework of modernity. This contrast has become obvious in Berlin, where the liberal *Neue Synagoge* of 1866 on Oranienburger Straße, a symbol of belonging and self-confidence, with a widely visible golden cuppola, stands not more than 200 yards away from the orthodox synagogue of *Adass Jisroel*, that opened in 1869 in a backyard on Artilleriestraße (today Tucholskystraße). German-Jewish history in the following period would be characterized by this duality, and other tensions would follow—between the more established community that regarded itself as German, and the new arrivals that

12 See Kloke, Zionism and the state of Israel, in: Michael Tilly, Burton L. Visotzky (Eds.), *Judaism I. History* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

13 See Morgenstern, Modern Jewish literature, below, 139–168.

were regarded as »Ostjuden.« Later, the struggle was between those who in 1893, as part of their fight against emerging anti-Semitism, formed the »Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens« (CV) and new movements such as Jewish renaissance and, most importantly, Zionism.

2 Hopes of belonging and experiences of rejection

While these ambivalences have principally been based in a religious context, they have often been played out and made visible by different attitudes towards modern culture. One important and very urban cultural practice of »belonging« among those who saw their place firmly established within the modern European societies was the support given by prominent Jewish individuals and families to the institutionalisation of modern culture in art museums and archaeological collections, in concert halls and opera houses. The author Theodor Fontane who, with his later novels, became a representative of Berlin's culture and identity towards the end of the 19th century, conceded in an article of 1878 for the aptly-named journal *Die Gegenwart*, that the Prussian aristocracy (whom he used to admire and praise in his early works) had nothing more to contribute to the new times, to sciences and the arts. They were too poor in spirit, too provincial, not cosmopolitan enough, whereas the new and emerging bourgeois society, and specifically the Jews, began to step in:

Here then is superiority, while narrowness unfolds and the provincial is stripped off. Great interests are negotiated, the gaze has expanded, it goes across the world. Customs are refined, purified, improved. Especially Taste . . . The arts and the sciences, which otherwise went begging or were dependent on themselves, here have their place. Instead of stables, observatories are built. Instead of images in blue and yellow and red, the works of our masters now hang in rooms and galleries. The state may have lost, the world has won.¹⁴

Whether the »exposure to the modern world« was »forced« (Pierre Nora¹⁵) or voluntary, its result was a profound change to the traditional ways of Jewish life. Generations of scholars have debated the question of whether modern art—music, literature, fine and graphic arts, photography, film, popular culture—created or

14 Theodor Fontane: »Adel und Judentum in der Berliner Gesellschaft«. Mitgeteilt und kommentiert von Jost Schillemeit unter dem Titel »Berlin und die Berliner. Neuaufgefundene Fontane-Manuskripte« in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, Band XXX/1986: 35–82, here 37f.: »Hier entfaltet sich eine Ueberlegenheit und das Enge, das Provinziale ist abgestreift. Große Interessen werden verhandelt, der Blick hat sich erweitert, er geht über die Welt. Die Sitten sind verfeinert, geläutert, gebessert. Vor allem der Geschmack. (...) Die Kunst, die Wissenschaft, die sonst betteln gingen oder auf sich selber angewiesen waren, hier haben sie ihre Stätte, statt der Pferdeställe werden Observatorien gebaut und statt der Ahnenbilder in Blau u. Gelb und Roth hängen die Werke unserer Meister in Zimmern und Galerien. Der Staat mag verloren haben, die Welt hat gewonnen.«

15 Pierre Nora, »Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire,« *Representations* 26, no. Special Issue: Memory and Counter Memory (Spring 1989): 8.

supported by Jewish individuals can be regarded as »Jewish«.¹⁶ Would such a description not be essentialist or even exclusive? Has it not been a consistent strategy of anti-Semites to denounce creations or ideas »as Jewish« (and therefore, by conclusion, not »German« or »French« or »Polish« enough)? Following Karl Popper, cultural identity should not be imposed on a person or on their work, and self-identification is the important criterion for our contemporary assessment of these contributions. Individual Jews regarded the opportunities offered by modernization as a chance—and often enough as a risk—to participate in and to contribute to the emergence of a civic society in many areas, from natural science to urban sociology, from entrepreneurship to banking, from education to modern art.

A key figure in this context is James Henry Simon (1851–1932), who was born in Berlin. His father Isaac and uncle Louis had arrived there in 1838 and built up a cotton trade company. James went to school in the renowned *Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster* in Berlin where he developed an interest in Latin, Greek, and Ancient History. He played the piano and the violin and would have loved to study classical languages. Instead, he joined the family business and became one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the city. His house, a villa in Tiergartenstraße 15a, was regarded as one of the finest addresses in Berlin, filled with an art collection for which he received advice from Wilhelm von Bode, the central personality for the development of Berlin's museums. In 1900, Simon donated his collection of Italian Renaissance art to the newly founded Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (today's Bode-Museum). He supported the »Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften« and the »Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft«, founded in 1898, and he financed the archaeological excavations at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt which brought the famous bust of Nefertiti to Berlin.

It has been said that Simon donated about one third of his yearly income, not just for the creation of museums and scientific institutions but also for social projects such as hospitals, public baths, children's homes, or »start-ups«, as we would say today, for Eastern European Jewish immigrants. While he was not an observant Jew, his public engagement has been grounded in the Jewish tradition of *Zedakah* and in the civic spirit that began to develop in imperial Germany. This tradition contributed to progress in science and technology, as well as the arts, and turned the formerly provincial Prussian capital into the modern metropolis before World War I and during the seemingly »Golden Twenties«. Simon, who died shortly before the Nazi's rise to power in Germany, was part of a world that Thomas Mann summed up in a letter to his brother Heinrich, after a first visit with his future Jewish father-in-law: »One is not at all reminded of Judaism among those people: one feels nothing but culture.«¹⁷

Simon's engagement with modern culture had contemporary alternatives. Here, we consider the contribution of Jewish folklorists, both in the Russian Empire and in Germany, such as Solomon An-ski (Shloyme Zaynvl Rapoport), or Rabbi Max Grünwald.

16 See Morgenstern, *Modern Jewish literature*, below, 139–168.

17 Thomas Mann to Heinrich Mann, 27 February 1904, in *Briefwechsel, 1900–1949* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1968) 27; see Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1996).

Between 1912 and 1914, An-ski headed ethnographic expeditions to the Pale of Jewish Settlement. In his view, »only folklore would be the basis for creating a contemporary Jewish culture«. ¹⁸ His was a different, but no less valid, response to modernity than that of his contemporaries who opted for linguistic and cultural assimilation, not just in the sense of an »embourgeoisement« as in Germany, but also in a proletarian context. The *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeyter Bund in Lite, Poyln, un Rusland* (The General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), known simply as »the Bund,« was founded in Vilna in October 1897 by a group of Jews who were profoundly influenced by Marxism and intended »to attract East European Jews to the emergent Russian revolutionary movement«. ¹⁹ In a distinct alternative to such assimilationist programmes, An-ski looked for a specifically Jewish response to modernity, and he found it in »tradition«. The folkloristic material itself that was collected during the *Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society's* expeditions in Volhynia and Podolia can be regarded as the material expression of traditional religious practice (often made of wood, leather, and other simple fabrics)—but its collection, and its representation in exhibitions and museums, for example in St. Petersburg in 1917 and again between 1923 and 1929, was an act of modern cultural politics: to preserve local customs and surviving material objects in the face of modernisation and of potential loss.

With a comparable intention, Max Grünwald (1871–1953), an alumnus of the *Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar* in Breslau, whose PhD thesis had been dedicated to Baruch Spinoza, and who officiated as a rabbi in Hamburg from 1895, founded the *Gesellschaft für jüdische Volkskunde* in 1898. Until 1929, he edited the »*Mitteilungen*« of this society that intended not only to preserve and to exhibit monuments of the Jewish past but to use them as a means of Jewish self-understanding and self-confidence in view of modernity and its challenges. Both initiatives inspired an eclectic movement, mostly in Germany, that has been termed »Jewish Renaissance«, an attempt on many artistic levels to both safeguard Jewish cultural heritage and to adapt it to the new realities. Advocates of this movement who lived through a first creative period between 1900 and 1914 and a second during the interwar years, reacted to similar tendencies in different European societies and tried to work out the specifically Jewish potential of a return to the roots which ideally functioned, at the same time, as a step towards the future. Two longer quotations by Martin Buber can illustrate the ideas of this movement, since they discuss, importantly, tradition and modernity in dialogue rather than in opposition to each other:

So we see universal and national cultures melt together in the deep unity of becoming. The best spirits of our time are illuminated by the idea of a human life saturated by beauty and benign strength, created and enjoyed by every individual and every people, each according to their ways and their values. That part of the Jewish tribe that understands itself as the Jewish people is placed within this new development and set aglow by it just like any other group. Still, its national participation in this development has a very distinct character: that

18 Benyamin Lukin, (2017). An-ski Ethnographic Expedition and Museum. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/An-ski_Ethnographic_Expedition_and_Museum.

19 Daniel Blatman, (2010). Bund. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund> [25/05/2018].

of a contraction of muscles, a looking up, an elevation. The word »resurrection« forces itself on one's lips: an awakening that is a miracle. History, however, does not want to know miracles. But history does know the streams of popular life that, seemingly run dry, continue to flow underground and break forth after millennia, and history knows the grains of nationhood that conserve their power to germinate over thousands of years. A resurrection from half-life to full is imminent for the Jewish people. Therefore we may call its participation in the modern national and international cultural movement a renaissance.²⁰

As noted above, the two main areas of engagement were religious and cultural practice on the one hand and the question of national identity, between exile and diaspora on the other:

It will be more difficult for the Jewish people than for any other to enter into this renaissance movement. Ghetto and Golus, not the external but the internal enemy powers that bear these names, keep it back with iron shackles: Ghetto, the unfree intellectuality and the coercion of a tradition divested of all significance, and Golus, the slavery of an unproductive monetary economy and the hollow-eyed homelessness that undermines all unitary intent. Only through a fight against these powers can the Jewish people be born again. The outer redemption from Ghetto and Golus, which can only happen in a revolution far beyond anything granted today, needs to be preceded by an internal one. The fight against the pathetic episode of »assimilation«, which lately has degenerated into a wordy banter poor in substance, needs to be replaced by a fight against the deeper and more powerful forces of destruction.²¹

20 Martin Buber, *Die jüdische Bewegung 1900–1914* (1920); <http://www.lexikus.de/bibliothek/Die-Juedische-Bewegung-1900-1914> [25/05/2018]. The German original reads: »So sehen wir in der tiefen Einheit des Werdens allgemeine und nationale Kultur verschmelzen. Was den besten Geistern unserer Zeit vorleuchtet, ist ein von Schönheit und gütiger Kraft durchtränktes Menschheitsleben, in dem jeder Einzelne und jedes Volk mitschafft und mitgenießt, ein jedes in seiner Art und nach seinem Werte. Jener Teil des jüdischen Stammes, der sich als jüdisches Volk fühlt, ist in diese neue Entwicklung hineingestellt und wird von ihr durchglüht wie die anderen Gruppen. Aber seine nationale Teilnahme an ihr hat einen ganz eigenen Charakter: den der Muskelanspannung, des Aufschauens, der Erhebung. Das Wort »Auferstehung« drängt sich auf die Lippen: ein Erwachen, das ein Wunder ist. Freilich, die Geschichte will keine Wunder kennen. Doch sie kennt Ströme des Volkslebens, die zu versiegen scheinen, aber unter der Erde weiterfließen, um nach Jahrtausenden hervorzu brechen; und sie kennt Samenkörner des Volkstums, die sich Jahrtausendlang in dumpfen Königsgräbern ihre Keimkraft bewahren. Dem jüdischen Volke steht eine Auferstehung von halbem Leben zu ganzem bevor. Darum dürfen wir seine Teilnahme an der modernen national-internationalen Kulturbewegung eine Renaissance nennen.«

21 Ibid. The German original reads: »Schwieriger als jedem anderen Volke wird es dem jüdischen werden, in diese Wiedergeburt einzutreten. Ghetto und Golus, nicht die äußeren, sondern die inneren Feindesmächte dieses Namens halten es mit eisernen Fesseln zurück: Ghetto, die unfreie Geistigkeit und der Zwang einer ihres Sinnes entkleideten Tradition, und Golus, die Sklaverei einer unproduktiven Geldwirtschaft und die hohläugige Heimatlosigkeit, die allen einheitlichen Willen zersetzt. Nur durch einen Kampf gegen diese Mächte kann das jüdische Volk wiedergeboren werden. Der äußeren Erlösung von Ghetto und Golus, die nur durch eine weit über das heute Gewährte hinausgreifende Umwälzung geschehen kann, muss eine innere vorausgehen. Den Kampf gegen die armselige Episode »Assimilation«, der zuletzt in ein wortreiches und inhaltsarmes Geplänkel ausgeartet ist, soll ein Kampf gegen tiefere und mächtigere Zerstörungskräfte ablösen.«

The crisis of modern culture, in a wider perspective, had affected not just European society as a whole, but also individuals and their relationship to traditional concepts such as the family, generation, gender—and even the self, both in body and soul. The following discussion will also widen the perspective from the situation in Germany to Central Europe. Two distinct authors whose language was German but who lived in two of the main cities of the Habsburg Empire, and later in the capital cities of newly emerged independent states, Prague (Czechoslovakia) and Vienna (Austria), need to be considered: Franz Kafka (1883–1924) and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). In his recent biography of Sigmund Freud, Adam Phillips discusses the question »how Jewish« Psychoanalysis was. He calls it »a story about acculturation; about how individuals adapt and fail to adapt to their cultures, and about the costs of such successes and failures.«²² European Jews, living as a minority in different societies, experienced the ambivalence of modernisation—the »Dialectics of Enlightenment«—more deeply than most of their contemporaries. »Now two things seem to be going on here: Jews are going to know about assimilation and adaptation. And they are going to know about the cost of assimilation. But that is also true of any colonized group. It knows it has to adapt in order to survive. And that adaptation is going to make you feel a lot of things very intensely.«²³ Phillips finds a convincing way to place this Jewish experience in its wider context:

Yes, it is Jewish in the sense that it's bound up in Jewish history. But it's also to do with modern history, where there have been generations of colonial and imperial invasions. That said, it does want to make a different kind of Jewish life possible. It's a kind of democratic wish: that as Jews you can be citizens and that you can politically participate. But at the same time that you could be more self-defining, and less defined than the people who are hostile to you.²⁴

In an atmosphere of growing anti-Semitism, particularly in Vienna, Freud's work and public eminence created a counter-narrative to the seemingly successful history of modernisation. Modernity came at a price for each individual and his or her relationship not just with others, but with the self. Family and gender relations, sexuality, and the mechanisms of remembering and forgetting could now be discussed in public. Loneliness, melancholy, depression, and ill health came to be regarded—and researched—in their relation to the society and its apparent progress. Failing father-son relations, insecurities about love and marriage, the challenges of bureaucracy and modern technology, or in more general terms, the »indecisions« of identity and belonging are central themes in the work of Franz Kafka whose short life has been marked by so many experiences of loss and failed attempts at belonging. Neither the Jewish family heritage, nor the promised home-

22 J.P. O'Malley, Jews and the »mad science« of psychoanalysis. Adam Phillips' biography of Sigmund Freud explains the creative thinker's ideas in layman's terms. *Times of Israel*, 11 July 2014. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/jews-and-the-mad-science-of-psychoanalysis/> [25/05/2018].

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*