Late 19th Century German-Jewish Körperkultur and its Philosophical and Aesthetic Sources

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The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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by
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Abstract

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A thesis presented to the NEJS Department

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
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This thesis examines the philosophical and aesthetic sources informing the emergence of late 19th century German-Jewish Körperfultur, specifically as it was iterated through the gymnastics movement. Our emphasis is upon ideas and iconography relating to the mind and the body, and their socio-political significances. An analysis of 19th century identity, both German and German-Jewish, we examine how the German-Jewish gymnastics movement responded to fin-de-siècle German anti-Semitism.

Chapter One offers an overview of the key philosophical and aesthetic elements informing the development of a modern German, and German-Jewish, identity. Starting in late 18th century, this chapter considers the impact of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought upon German cultural perceptions of Jews and Judaism. We examine the role of Bildung in the formation of a modern German-Jewish
identity, and consider the impact of a developing German art-historical discourse upon aesthetic perceptions of Jews and Judaism.

Chapter Two examines how Richard Wagner radicalized, and aestheticized, the anti-Judaic elements present within Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment German thought. We analyze Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, and how Wagner's notion of performative art in the service of national regeneration informed 19th century völkisch nationalism. Finally, we examine selected works by E. M. Lilien, the first and most famous artist to explicitly tie his artwork to Zionism. These images are analyzed through prism of Wagnerism, in order to determine its relative impact upon Lilien's vision of Zionism.

Finally, Chapter Three will consider the German-Jewish gymnastics movement itself. Specific attention will be paid to the ways in which, during its brief existence, the movement itself struggled with the very issues it sought to resolve. We will also examine how notions of performance and display in the service of nationalism were expressed through athletics. Our discussion will be contextualized through an analysis of fin-de-siècle German anti-Semitism, and how the intersecting discourses of science, medicine and aesthetics reinforced notions of immutable Jewish difference and inferiority vis-à-vis the German. Finally, we will see how these notions impacted German-Jewish gymnasts, and how these socio-cultural developments contributed to the fracturing of the Jüdische Turnerschaft between those committed to remaining German nationalists, and those who chose to embrace Zionism.
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Introduction

“In this artist-created world the man who is bundled together stretches himself straight; the shrivelled [sic] broadens out; the fraction of a man becomes complete....” -Max Nordau, from On Art and Artists, 1907

“Curiously enough, a process very similar to the one we observed while following the efforts of the German nation toward unity is taking place in the history of the Jewish people: it also started with a national gymnastics movement....” -Hermann Jalowicz, publisher of the Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba journal, circa. 1902

Ostensibly, this thesis concerns itself with the appearance and development of Jewish Körperkultur in Germany during the closing years of the 19th century, as exemplified in the German-Jewish Gymnastics League (Jüdische Turnerschaft). Upon attempting to locate the deeper socio-cultural significances revealed by German-Jewish Körperkultur, I was nonetheless unavoidably drawn into an examination of the philosophical and aesthetic forces which contributed to its eventual emergence. As such, this work is as much about the mind as it is about the body. Why German-Jewish Körperkultur? Initially, the decision to focus upon Körperkultur, and the establishment of Jewish gymnastics clubs in fin-de-siècle Germany, was motivated by my abiding interest in early Zionism as a fundamentally Western, or more accurately, Central European fin-de-siècle phenomenon. As both a nationalist ideology, and a praxis-

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oriented socio-political movement, early Zionism sought to enact an historical process through the reclamation of a mythically-grounded collective identity. In this sense, Zionism truly was a product of 19th century European thought. Indeed, notions of change, whether revolutionary or evolutionary, became perhaps the guiding leitmotif of the variegated philosophical and scientific endeavors pursued during that century.

Particularly fascinated with Max Nordau’s conception of the “Muskeljudentum” (“Muscle Jewry”), I sought to understand the significance of Jewish corporeal regeneration within the context of an emerging Jewish nationalism. This in turn led to a broader consideration of the body as a location upon which social, political and historical meanings are “written”. It soon became clear to me that, as the 19th century progressed to its turbulent end, the Jewish body had increasingly become the main focus of anti-Jewish rhetoric and behavior. Concurrently, I was led to a consideration of aesthetics vis-à-vis the Jewish body, and how art-history, as a scholarly discourse emerging in Germany during the transitional decades of the late 18th, and early 19th centuries, helped reinforce long-term notions of Jewish corporeal discreteness, such that Jewish difference became as much a matter of visuality as of ideology.

In attempting to trace the social and ideational origins of this development, I was thus led back a century and more, to the end of the German Enlightenment, and to the twin births of German Idealism and German Romanticism. Most particularly, the Kantian notion of rational autonomy, and the Hegelian development of this theme through the dynamics of dialectical nullification (Aufhebung), revealed a certain pattern of perception which was to be recapitulated, albeit with some variation, again
and again by German thinkers from Wagner to Nietzsche and beyond. Stated simply, whether considered solely from the perspective of theology (Judaism *qua* Judaism), or in anthropological terms (Jews as practitioners of Judaism *and* as a distinct ethnocultural community), 19th century German philosophical thought consistently invoked the theme of binary opposition. Despite pronounced, sometimes radical, differences between these thinkers, perceptions of Jewish shortcomings remained remarkably consistent: Jews and Judaism suffered from a lack of authentic spirituality. Whether iterated through a base concern with “this worldly” matters, or an unwillingness to engage in the dynamics of self-negation for the greater good of the polity, the Jew revealed his or her unquestioning acceptance of external, *irrational*, criteria - behavior which was incommensurable with the ideals of the late *Aufklärung* and early German Idealism. Despite the contemporaneous emergence of a Jewish Enlightenment movement (*Haskalah*) vigorously pursuing the goals of acculturation through *Bildung* (see Glossary), the German-speaking Jew nevertheless continued to be perceived, and cast, in the role of the “other” *par excellence*. As shall be shown, this ideational pattern informed not only German-Jewish identity, but was in fact an important component in the creation of a modern *German* national identity.

Thus, the road to *fin-de-siècle* German-Jewish *Körperkultur* leads through the dense thicket of 18th and 19th century German philosophy. *Fin-de-siècle Mitteleuropa* was also the birthplace of Zionism. Zionism revealed the degree to which German-Jewish identity during the 19th century had ultimately failed to overcome the socio-cultural prejudices which contributed to its persistent bifurcation between German and Jewish cultural models. Historically, the German-Jewish gymnastics movement
represented one striking attempt at establishing an integral German-Jewish identity. Why it ultimately failed to do so represents the final destination of this thesis. In order to arrive there, however, we will need to travel upon our own circuitous road.

Chapter One begins with an overview of the main philosophical issues under dispute during the latter phases of the German Enlightenment, and their implications for German-Jewish identity. Specifically, we will examine the crisis which Reason underwent during the closing decades of the 18th century, and how its philosophical reconsideration foreshadowed the growth of alternative models for conceiving of individual and collective identity within a socio-political system. Within this discussion, we will examine the role played by Absolute Idealism in attempting to overcome the dualisms inherent in "post-critical" Kantian philosophy, particularly as existed between the mind and the body, and the impact which this had upon the subsequent philosophical shift towards bodies as the site of social, cultural and political meaning. From there, we will consider the role of Bildung in the formation of a German-Jewish identity based upon a belief in the collective ameliorative potential embedded within this fundamentally individualistic ethos of cultural self-perfection. We will see how the blossoming of a German-Jewish Enlightenment based upon a commitment to Bildung overlapped with a period in which German society witnessed the first true stirrings of modern nationalism. Rounding out Chapter One, we will examine how the emergence of modern art-historical scholarship in Germany recast the theme of Jewish difference through aesthetics. We will see how the notion of Jewish aniconism, or "artlessness," developed as a critical theme demonstrating both a spiritual and physical handicap on the part of the Jew. Starting with an analysis of J.J. Wincklemann's writings upon the
beau ideal of Hellenic sculpture, and Gottlieb Ephraim Lessing’s separation of aesthetic cognition into the mutually-exclusive realms of visuality and sonority, our survey will plot the trajectory of a developing discourse within 19th century German culture which regarded aesthetics as recursively related to notions of national authenticity. We will examine how the growth of a völkisch nationalism co-opted and assimilated notions of Hellenic beauty, and how these processes foreshadowed the fin-de-siècle turn to somatic criteria as a principal basis for socio-political membership (or exclusion). Equally, we will consider how the adoption of Greek aesthetic models in the service of German nationalist aims reinforced notions of a binary opposition inhering between German and Jew. Within this discourse, German-Jewish exclusion was thus further reaffirmed through an implication of aesthetic exteriority. Finally, we will examine how German-Jewry responded to these developments through the processes of absorption, recapitulation and inversion.

In Chapter 2, I have chosen to focus upon Richard Wagner’s aestheticization of socio-political themes via his notion of the Gesamtkunстwerk, or “Total Work of Art”. It is my contention that, as a vehicle designed to transmit both the Hegelian notion of Aufhebung, specifically as it related to the sublation of individual desires and drives in the service of the ideal German polity, Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk powerfully radicalized previous notions of Jewish difference. Wagner’s profound antipathy towards Jews and Judaism is presently a matter of common knowledge. Nonetheless, the role of his aesthetic philosophy as an intermediary point between a rationalized, if still implicitly theological anti-Judaism, and an antisemitism relying upon racial stereotyping, needs to be recognized. The power of Wagner’s
Gesamtkunstwerk lay precisely in its ability to literally “em-body” Jewish exteriority through the dynamics of spectacle and display. Towards these ends, we will examine Wagner’s best-known example of Gesamtkunstwerk, Der Ring das Nibelungen, and how it was designed to function as an allegory for immutable Jewish difference. Ultimately, our analysis of Wagner and his ideas will be expanded to include a consideration of how Wagnerian ideas paradoxically impacted the development of Zionist aesthetics. Specifically, I mean to demonstrate the degree to which the explicitly Zionist artwork of E.M. Lilien recapitulated many Wagnerian themes, including notions of a primordially-grounded national identity, and the role of aesthetic experience in precipitating an authentic national consciousness. As we shall see, Lilien’s depictions of regenerated Jewish bodies acting in the service of nation-building gave striking expression to some of the tensions inherent in late fin-de-siècle German-Jewish identity.

Chapter 3 will focus upon the emergence of fin-de-siècle German-Jewish Körperkultur initiatives, specifically as enacted through Jewish gymnastics. The two quotes which opened this introduction speak directly to the underlying significance of fin-de-siècle German-Jewish Körperkultur. At a fundamental level, each utterance points to the physically re-invigorated, explicitly male Jewish body as the primary locus of social, political and national identity. Indeed, Max Nordau wrote the lines above roughly four years after his most explicit statement regarding the concept of the Müskeljudentum, delivered in a speech to the Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba.3

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Within the text of that speech, Nordau avers to the principal benefit of Jewish athleticism as “straighten[ing] us in body and in character…….” It is my contention that the semantic similarities found in his twin descriptions of aesthetic and physical praxis were purposeful.⁴ In my opinion, Nordau’s language reveals the extent to which an explicitly visual expression of reconstituted physicality in the service of national aims was a central component of fin-de-siècle German culture. This chapter will investigate how the Jewish gymnastics movement sought to demonstrate socio-political and national fitness through display, and how these displays, much as Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk, were intended to convey certain messages for certain audiences.

Contextualizing discussion somewhat, this chapter will also consider the direct impact of post-Darwinian scientific discourses upon the development of German anti-Semitism, and the role which bodies played in enacting the regeneration, or degeneration, of German society. By the last decades of the 19th century, revolutionary advances in the fields of medicine and biology were being used by race theorists to expound upon the genetically-predicated degenerative tendencies of the Jewish body. Throughout these decades, the growth of a race-based German anti-Semitism mirrored a similarly pronounced turn to anti-liberal socio-political models. The growth of populist initiatives known as Lebensreform (“life-reform”) partook of both discourses, extolling the regenerative capacities of the German body partly through a comparison with its immutably degenerating Jewish antipode.⁵ What is crucial for our survey is the

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⁵ Ibid.
metonymic function which the body came to play during the *fin-de-siècle*; as hinted at above in reference to both Lilien and Nordau, the body became a semiotic device, a visceral (and visual) signifier signifying relative socio-political health or disease. Within this formulation, the healthy Teutonic body represented the fundamental building-block for German society; the Jewish body was a principal source of pathological infection. The emergence of Jewish *Körperkultur* initiatives were thus intended as a physicalized reproof of these scientifically-grounded contentions. However, it would be a mistake to assume that, during these and following decades, science was able to supplant history as the framework within which to gauge German cultural norms. Rather, science represented a tool with which to press the claims of an unfolding historical process, offering seemingly incontrovertible evidence as to the superiority of an ideal, endogamous German society. Science merely helped in reifying notions of Jewish exteriority, notions which post-Enlightenment German philosophy had similarly predicated upon historical grounds. Thus, the German body derived its health from a historically-determined authenticity, as newly demonstrated through the axioms of biology. Equally, Jewish difference was similarly conceived within historical terms, through the parallel processes of continual degeneration. Considerable attention will therefore be devoted to analyzing the degree to which ideologues within the German-Jewish gymnastics movement utilized historical arguments to argue for the possibility of regeneration.

An impressive array of recent scholarship has focused upon the role of Jewish gymnastics in the service of Zionist aims. Rather fewer studies have focused upon an equally important node of this movement: Jewish gymnastics as an expression of
German nationalism. Chapter Three will conclude by focusing upon the uncomfortable division which developed within the Jüdische Turnerschaft between those members advocating Zionism, and those that continued to identify with the Second Reich and its goals. Indeed, until the eve of World War One, a pronounced majority of German-Jewish gymnasts fell into the latter category. It took the bitter experience of widespread anti-Semitism amongst the Kaiser’s troops to convince many gymnast-veterans to actively support Zionist initiatives through athletics. As we shall see, pre-War German nationalism amongst Jewish gymnasts was at least partly dictated by socio-political circumstances. From the beginning, the preponderance of gymnasts belonged to the Jewish middle and upper-middle classes (the Bildungsbürgertum). Indeed, the issue of Bildung, and the bourgeois (Bürgerlich) values with which it was identified, maintained a stubborn topicality for German-Jews well into the 20th century. In large part, the founding members of the Jüdische Turnerschaft sought, like the majority of educated German-speaking Jews during the fin-de-siècle, to demonstrate their dedication to the Reich through the pursuit of Bürgerlich values. Although Thomas Mann famously declared that “[t]he German is synonymous with the Bürgerlich... Bildung is Bürgerlich,”7 during the closing decades of the 19th century Bürgerlich life increasingly became identified with a brand of nationalism which left less and less room for the Jew in its midst.

Methodologically, our examination combine elements of textual and visual

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analysis. Text, derived from both primary and secondary sources, will provide this thesis with an overall grounding in the historical facts and ideas pertinent to our subject-matter. The inclusion of visual evidence, in the form of paintings, illustrations, and photographs, is intended to provide relevant examples of the contemporaneous visual culture which accompanied, and gave expression to, the philosophical issues under consideration. Although "visual culture," as a recognized discipline (or sub-discipline), is still relatively new, its potential as a tool for critical analysis has gained increasing currency during the past two decades. However, rather than conceiving of this field as a discrete cognitive framework, most current scholars tend to agree that its increasing distinctiveness is fundamentally definitional rather than functional, inasmuch as historians have long used images in order to corroborate arguments based upon textual analysis. In his book *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), Peter Burke suggests that the use of images for historiographic and pedagogic purposes has in fact existed for quite some time.\(^8\) Similarly, in his introduction to *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), co-editor Norman Bryson argues for the importance of developing this new field within the context of the social sciences, as art and image have "always engendered rather than merely reflected political, social, and cultural meanings...."\(^9\) It is hoped that, by offering a combination of discursive and non-discursive sources, this thesis may provide a more nuanced

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examination than could be derived from textual analysis alone.
Chapter 1

The growth of German-Jewish Körperkultur initiatives during the late 19th century gave striking expression to the critical issues informing German-Jewish identity, both individually and collectively. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the establishment of the Jüdische Turnerschaft (League of Jewish Gymnasts). Ultimately, the German-Jewish gymnastics movement sought to repair the fractured and contested nature of fin-de-siècle German-Jewish identity. My analysis of this "internal" Jewish discourse, and its relationship to the overall development of a modern German identity, demonstrates how German-Jewish Körperkultur represented a response to the persistent, and increasingly popular, claims of immutable Jewish difference which developed within German society over the course of the 19th century.

Our examination of late 19th century German-Jewish Körperkultur is as much concerned with aspects of the mind as the body. Indeed, the emergence of German-Jewish athletic initiatives, most notably in the form of the Jüdische Turnerschaft, represented the self-conscious enactment of specific philosophical and aesthetic imperatives. This chapter adumbrates the principal aspects of these imperatives via an historical overview of their sources, and the impact they had upon German-Jewish life and thought.

Where should such an examination begin? Ultimately, our journey must begin in the latter part of the 18th century, during the dynamic period which George L. Mosse has aptly termed the "autumn of the German Enlightenment [the
Germany during the late Aufklärung was a socio-cultural entity undergoing a process of profound intellectual change. The factors contributing to these convulsions emanated from both within and without its territorial and cultural borders. Due at least in part to the persistent influence of French and English Enlightenment, Germany’s philosophical and artistic development during the 18th century was remarkable for its vitality and breadth. Further, indeed despite, the state of overall socio-political fragmentation which had continued to persist from at least the late 13th century, German intellectual life also drew upon a vibrant university culture which produced many formidable minds. Early German Enlightenment figures such as Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), and Christian Wolff (1679-1754), were towering intellects whose learning and scholarly output extended from mathematics and logic to linguistics and medicine; underpinning their respective achievements was a confirmed belief in the power of rationalism as a critical tool guiding their endeavors. While accepting the primacy of rationalism as the guiding force within speculative thought, those thinkers who came to be identified with the Hochaufklärung (1750-1780) were increasingly critical of the Leibnizian/Wolffian model. Such criticism centered around a growing sense that this mode of learning, termed Schulphilosophie, had become disconnected from German society as a whole, its practitioners both unable and

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1 Mosse, George L. *German Jews Beyond Judaism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.)
4 John H. Zammito offers these dates as roughly corresponding to the emergence and decline of this latter stage of the German Enlightenment. His point of reference relative to the Hochaufklärung’s demise was the impact which Kant’s “critical” turn of the 1780s wrought upon German philosophy. See Zammito, John H. *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.) Introduction and Chapter 1.
unwilling to utilize their academic positions in order to effectuate social and political progress.\(^5\) Figures such as Moses Mendelssohn, F. Nicolai, G. E. Lessing and (the "pre-critical") Immanuel Kant promoted the notion of *Popularphilosophie*, a reformulation of academic methods which was intended to make philosophizing and speculation more accessible, and more socially applicable, to the wider German public.\(^6\) As John H. Zammito has summarized the mission of the *Popularphilosophen* during the *Hochaufklärung*:

*Popularphilosophie* signified ‘philosophy for the world,’ a redefinition of philosophy’s mission away from the traditional preoccupation with logic and metaphysics, with theoretical knowledge and its certainty, to a new *ethical and sociopolitical agency for change and progress*…(emphasis mine)\(^7\)

This shift towards imbuing philosophy and philosophizing with a sense of socio-cultural relevance was a defining feature of the *Hochaufklärung*, and is important relative to our specific focus. For German-Jews of the late 18th century, the overall ameliorative possibilities of learning were strikingly illustrated by the life and work of one of the *Hochaufklärung*’s leading lights, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786). More will subsequently be said regarding Mendelssohn’s role as the founding figure of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), and what the *Haskalah* represented within the context of early 19th century German culture. Perhaps most importantly, Mendelssohn’s life and work reflected his commitment to effectuating a progressive

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\(^5\) Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 15.
\(^6\) Ibid., Introduction.
acculturation of German-Jews within German society as a whole, whilst nonetheless preserving the integrity of a separate Jewish identity based upon religious practice. For Mendelssohn, and for the German maskilim ("enlighteners") who followed in his footsteps, the key to resolving the many seeming contradictions inherent within such a process lay in the transformative potential of Reason. Mendelssohn’s defense of Judaism as an eminently reasonable religion suggests the power which rationality, as a concept, held for those German-Jews wishing to improve their own social and political circumstances. Mendelssohn’s conviction might seem somewhat naïve from today’s vantage point. However, when viewed against the backdrop of the German Enlightenment, Mendelssohn’s strategy becomes more understandable. Christian Thomasius (1655-1728), for example, sought to temper religious orthodoxy through an emphasis upon both rationality and a more personalized understanding of religious commitment. That Thomasius’ early ally in these efforts was the Lutheran reformist movement known as Pietism is, from our vantage point, somewhat ironic; by the mid-18th century, Pietism itself had become markedly dogmatic. Nonetheless, if many later Aufklärer regarded Reason as singly capable of mending the wounds of sectarian prejudices which continued to fester between Protestant and Catholic, a fortiori why not for Germany’s Jews? After all, as Mendelssohn was to argue, Judaism possessed the “lower floor” of the edifice upon which Christianity was built. 

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8 Baader, Benjamin Maria. Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.) 62.
9 Zammito, Kant. 9.
Our next section will deal in depth with the Aufklärung commitment to a process of inward cultural self-perfection (Bildung), and how Mendelssohn and his successors utilized Bildung as a means for constructing an integral German-Jewish identity spanning the aporia of religious difference. However, before turning to a consideration of Bildung, its defining role in late 18th and 19th century German-Jewish identity formation, and the reasons for its failure to overcome the persistence of anti-Judaic bias in German thought and life, we must first take one last preparatory step. This step consists in considering the crisis which Reason underwent during the final decades of the German Enlightenment. Perhaps more than any other event within the intellectual life of a Germany on the cusp of modernity, this crisis had a direct impact upon the eventual turn to aesthetics and corporeality in the development of a more cohesive national German identity.

From one perspective, the growing reconsideration of Reason’s unassailable authority during the closing years of the Aufklärung was inevitable. Simply put, if critical scrutiny constituted an indispensable part of rational inquiry tout court, then logic dictated that Reason itself could, and perhaps should, undergo a process of similar scrutiny. But if this “self-evident first principle” of Reason was turned upon itself, where lay the irreducible ground upon which to build human knowledge? One response to this conundrum took shape in a re-invigorated call amongst certain late Aufklärung figures for the re-assertion of religious faith as the fundamental basis upon which all epistemic and/or speculative systems needed to be built. Thus, the writings of

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Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88), in particular his *Aesthetica in nuce* (1762), and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819), were largely dedicated to a debunking of Reason as either the exclusive, or even principal means through which concepts such as truth, morality and religion could be understood. Jacobi's role in instigating the "Pantheism Controversy," which unfolded between 1783 and 1786, with himself and Mendelssohn as the primary combatants, is generally regarded as the single event which most directly precipitated the downfall of the *Aufklärung*.\(^{12}\) Although it is beyond the parameters of this thesis to engage in an exhaustive analysis of the controversy, certain aspects must nonetheless be considered for at least one crucial reason. Although the gestalt of the dispute concerned the limits (and inherent dangers) of rational inquiry, its ramifications extended with equal force to the problematic pattern, persistent within Western European philosophy since (at least) Descartes, of categorizing human experience and knowledge along dualistic lines.\(^{13}\) Such dualisms had variously assumed the form of natural versus supernatural phenomenon, subjective versus objective mental realms, intellectual versus intuitive knowledge and, of course, the mind versus the body. In particular, it was this most latter issue which was to contribute to the aesthetic (and corporeal) turn which, as we have already mentioned, a more modern German identity was to take.

Turning back to the Pantheism Controversy for a moment, we find that Jacobi used the "disclosure" of Spinozism on the part of perhaps the most famous *Aufklärer* of all, G.E. Lessing, as a veritable Trojan Horse for storming the castle of Reason.

\(^{12}\) Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 46.
\(^{13}\) Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 13-15, 39-42.
Through the purported admission of Spinozism by Lessing, Jacobi sought to demonstrate the inevitable consequences of an unavering (and authentic) commitment to rationalism. Such a commitment resulted either in the radical skepticism described by David Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740) or, alternately, it led to an understanding of the world and its (spatial and temporal) features, including the human mind, in strictly mechanistic terms, as nothing more than an infinite series of finite efficient causes.\(^4\) As to the former, Jacobi argued that Hume had decisively demonstrated that unlimited critical inquiry, which necessarily excluded a *salto mortale* ("mortal leap") into religious faith, ultimately led to a state of solipsism. In such a state, the only certainty man could reasonably obtain was an imprisoning *uncertainty* regarding anything outside of his constant, passive reception of fleeting sense-impressions.\(^5\) Why? Precisely because of the mind’s potential to engage in a process of logical reduction *ad infinitum*. By extension, this situation only reinforced the chasm existing between mind and body, since even the existence of an individual (human) body in space would become little more than a mode of mental representation, rather than a "thing-in-itself."\(^6\) By contrast, if the mind, along with the body, was in fact part of the natural world, as Jacobi argued Spinozism should be understood, then rationalism, taken to its logical limits, represented no less than the death of Divinity. Stripped of even the most basic powers of self-determination, a Spinozistic universe rendered notions such as human freedom and morality entirely

\(^4\) Ibid., 3, 81-83, Zammito, *Kant*, 19.
\(^5\) Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 67, 3-4.
meaningless.\textsuperscript{17} For Jacobi, Reason unbridled represented both the source \textit{and} product of Spinozism; such an unmitigated reliance upon rationality ultimately led to atheism, fatalism, and "nihilism," a term which he himself coined.\textsuperscript{18}

Many years earlier, Hamann had mounted a similar argument against both an undue belief in the powers of Reason, and the mechanistic cosmos which contemporary scientific models seemed to suggest.\textsuperscript{19} Like Jacobi, Hamann directed his attack at the naturalizing Deism of the \textit{Aufklärung}: Hamann's belief in the primacy of Holy Scripture, and the immanence of God within the world, such that any distinction between the realms of natural and supernatural were a moot point, certainly impacted Jacobi's subsequent formulations.\textsuperscript{20} However, as Frederick C. Beiser has pointed out, Jacobi and Hamann parted company at one critical juncture; Hamann averred to the general compatibility of rationalism and religious faith, as long as the former understood its role in the service of the latter.\textsuperscript{21} By contrast, Jacobi sought to demonstrate the danger which Reason posed to true faith.\textsuperscript{22} Interestingly, Paul Franks suggests that Jacobi's criticisms were directed at the dogmatic nature of \textit{over}-rationalization, and that he was in fact committed to saving Reason from the clutches of philosophical tyranny.\textsuperscript{23} Nonetheless, Franks also argues that Jacobi failed to clarify his own position regarding Reason, and its proper relationship to true faith, until the

\textsuperscript{17} Beiser, \textit{The Fate of Reason}, 84.
\textsuperscript{19} Beiser, \textit{The Fate of Reason}, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{20} Beiser, \textit{The Fate of Reason}, 47.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Paul Franks. “Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon,” 95-100.
very last years of his life.\textsuperscript{24} Therefore, it seems likely that many of his peers would have perceived his persistent critique of Reason as equivalent to an irrational assault upon its basic legitimacy.\textsuperscript{25}

Unlike Mendelssohn’s dispute with the theologian Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801) some years earlier, a dispute which effectively demanded proof of Judaism’s basic consonance with Reason (e.g., its non-dogmatic nature), this last battle with Jacobi placed him in the unenviable position of defending Judaism despite its inherent reasonableness! In defending the claims of Reason against Jacobi’s argument that Reason \textit{qua} Reason inexorably led to atheism (or pantheism), Mendelssohn sought a middle route which would permit the maintenance of religious faith \textit{and} speculative inquiry, each in their appropriate place. Nevertheless, by explaining to Jacobi, as he did in his \textit{Erinnerung}, that “My religion recognizes no obligation to resolve doubt other than through rational means...it commands no \textit{mere faith in eternal truths} (emphasis mine),”\textsuperscript{26} Mendelssohn was perhaps both begging the question of what in fact constituted legitimate religious faith, and avoided answering the core question posed by Jacobi: what truly are the limits of Reason?

It was precisely this latter question which Immanuel Kant sought to answer, once and for all, beginning with the publication of the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} in 1781. Like Jacobi, Kant himself had, since the 1770s, become an increasingly harsh internal critic of the \textit{Aufklärung}. However, his reasons for disputing current philosophical trends emanated from a radically different source. Rather than

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Beiser, \textit{The Fate of Reason}, 79.
questioning the veracity of Reason, Kant sought to rigorously delineate its aspects and functions, in order to definitively demonstrate its authority.\textsuperscript{27} By making its practitioners cognizant of Reason’s fundamental limits, Kant believed he could save “it,” and the Aufklärung more generally, from both the depredations of Counter-Enlightenment figures like Hamann and Jacobi, and its inappropriate theoretical (metaphysical) use by the Popularphilosophen. Although part of Kant’s purpose in delimiting Reason’s purview was in fact to provide religious faith with its own sphere of operation,\textsuperscript{28} his main goal was to protect critical inquiry from the twin dangers of radical skepticism and determinism/mechanism. Kant sought to conclusively demonstrate the fundamental autonomy of Reason, such that rational inquiry could provide a self-evident, and universal, basis for human morality and human agency.\textsuperscript{29}

As far as the Pantheism Controversy went, Kant weighed in by criticizing both Mendelssohn (albeit posthumously), and Jacobi for subverting Reason. The former he criticized for consistently conflating rational inquiry with metaphysics; the latter he understood (correctly) to be engaged in an all-out assault upon Reason’s autonomy.\textsuperscript{30}

Kant regarded Mendelssohn, and the Leibnizian/Wolffian outlook which he represented, as having erred in imagining that theoretical constructs could demonstrate moral truths, such as God’s very existence.\textsuperscript{31} Kant’s insistence upon the necessity of an active engagement with moral knowledge, such as could be derived only from a

\textsuperscript{27} Beiser, “The Enlightenment and idealism.” 22.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Beiser, The Fate of Reason, 116.
“practical” combination of intellection and imagination, was itself a foreshadowing of the turn which German thought was to take during the 19th century. That Kant was ultimately unable to overcome, through his own rigorously applied system, the divide which was perceived to exist between concept and sensibility, provided a crucial impetus for subsequent attempts at effacing problematic dualisms in favor of notions of totality (see discussion of Hegel below). Despite his apparent ambivalence towards the controversy itself, Kant nonetheless aligned himself with Mendelssohn on one essential point. Like Mendelssohn, Kant upheld the authority of Reason as the final judge in matters of religion. As Kant’s 1786 essay “Was heisst: Sich im Denken orientiren? (What Means are Guided in Thinking?)” explained, every expression of faith must at least meet the minimum requirement of not contradicting Reason. In addition, Kant argued that a truly “rational faith” (Vernunftglauhe), one based solely upon the logical, and universal, extension of a given moral maxim (the Categorical Imperative), would necessarily make Jacobi’s salto mortale both meaningless and irrational. Wouldn’t Kant then, by extension, have affirmed the viability of a continuing Jewish identity as part and parcel of a larger German-Jewish identity? For, if Mendelssohn could demonstrate that Judaism posed no threat to Reason, and could coexist comfortably with “rational religion,” wouldn’t this represent a clear harbinger for the eventual integration of Germany’s Jews? Indeed, evidence suggests that Kant deeply admired Mendelssohn’s most famous work, Jerusalem, or On Religious Power

34 Beiser, The Fate of Reason, 116.
35 Beiser, The Fate of Reason, 116.
and Judaism (1783). However, as we shall soon see, even Reason itself could turn (or be turned) upon Germany’s Jews.

German Thought, German-Jews, and Bildung

Paradoxically, the centrality of Bildung in the formation of a persistent and powerful collective German-Jewish identity was a function of the deeply individualistic ethos residing at its core. A product of the Aufklärung’s belief in man’s innate potential for moral and intellectual growth, Bildung referred to a fundamentally inward process, a self-driven, continual striving for cultural self-perfection. Across Enlightenment Europe, the increasing currency given to notions postulating a basic level of human equality led to calls for the greater civic enfranchisement of Jews. Within German culture, Bildung implied a similar egalitarianism. Each individual, whether Christian or Jew, was equally capable of personal improvement through the development of his moral, cultural and rational faculties. While it would be incorrect to suggest that Bildung was considered as a step towards the complete effacement of religious differences, it did suggest the possibility of societal inclusion. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Kant’s favorite student, a founding figure of both modern anthropology and modern German nationalism, considered Bildung a universal

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36 Ibid., 114.
37 Mosse, German Jews Beyond Judaism, 3.
principle, enabling its practitioners to overcome externally imposed inequalities. This model was reaffirmed within the pages of German belle lettres, from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, to Friedrich Schiller’s *Don Carlos*. The deeply humanitarian, cosmopolitan, and universalist messages communicated through these works were to have a profound effect upon German-Jews seeking an identity which could accommodate the retention of traditional Jewish elements (e.g., ritual observance), whilst nonetheless permitting socio-cultural integration through a commitment to rationalism and its political node, liberalism. The extent to which 19th century German-Jewish identity could be perceived as co-terminus with Bildung, and the degree to which that identity posited Bildung as the decisive essence of Judaism, is demonstrated in the works of the German-Jewish writer Berthold Auerbach (1812-1882). In his *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (*Black Forest Peasant Tales*, 1843), Auerbach constructed an “authentically” German world in which the spirit of Bildung operated as a vehicle for overcoming provincialism, religious bigotry and irrational superstition. Although the principal characters of these tales were Christian, the message of Bildung as nearly equivalent to religiosity was equally directed towards those German-Jews seeking to effectuate greater acceptance within German society as a whole. For Auerbach, Bildung represented no less than “an inner liberation and deliverance of man, his true rebirth…”

As mentioned earlier, Moses Mendelssohn came to embody German-Jewish

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identity through *Bildung*. Expanding our previous discussion of *Jerusalem* somewhat, Mendelssohn argued for greater tolerance of (Jewish) religious difference by mounting a spirited attack upon the conflation of religion and politics. Arguably, Mendelssohn himself needed to resolve the seeming contradiction inherent in his dual commitments to German culture and the explicitly theocratic elements found within the Torah, Judaism’s foundational text. Indeed, the charge of political compulsion, and the enslaving irrationality which results, formed the substance of Lavater’s argument for the superiority of Christianity relative to Judaism. In order to answer this charge, Mendelssohn postulated that the *Ur-event* of Jewish *biblical* identity, the Sinaïtic Covenant, represented just that: a fixed *historical* moment during which God imparted a set of legal statutes. According to Mendelssohn, these statutes represented “divine legislation” - laws, commandments, ordinances, rules of life” given to the “Israelites” - note Mendelssohn’s use of the *biblical* appellation - in order that they might “conduct themselves in order to attain temporal and eternal felicity…”⁴² These laws undeniably formed (and continue to form) the basis of Jewish ritual practice, and at one point constituted the foundations of a political system. However, Mendelssohn also posited that any *externally*-derived release from an obedience to Mosaic legislation ended with the destruction of the Second Temple. This historicized reading of Judaism, so peculiar for a thinker who within the same text denied the progressive nature of human history,⁴³ underpinned Mendelssohn’s repeated call for the abolition of traditional Jewish civil/judicial autonomy, a situation which had existed within Europe for

centuries. Amongst other things, Mendelssohn’s defense of Judaism within the pages of *Jerusalem* offered a radically individuated interpretation of Judaism, a move thoroughly consonant with the basic nature of *Bildung*.

Thus, by comparison, Mendelssohn’s Judaism bore little in common with the “*supernatural revelation of religion*” upon which Christian doctrine and practice was (and is) based.\(^4^4\) By arguing that the Sinaitic Covenant represented a fixed moment in history, Mendelssohn certainly seemed to minimize its trans-historical significance. As opposed to “eternal” truths, such as God’s essence, or the verities of “pure mathematics” for example, specific moments in history thus appeared to be of a lesser order.\(^4^5\) Nevertheless, Mendelssohn still allowed for the possibility that Jewish ritual observance could provide a system through which to arrive at a greater understanding of those “eternal truths” which enabled one to achieve “salvation and felicity”.\(^4^6\) But, the Judaism which Mendelssohn proffered as authentic “boast[ed] of no exclusive revelation of eternal truths.”\(^4^7\) In sum, Mendelssohn seemed to turn the tables upon Lavater. In Mendelssohn’s reading, Judaism was intrinsically less irrational than Christianity, precisely because it contained no essential dogmas, and represented only a system of obligatory ritual performance. Such a charge must have resonated with many who read *Jerusalem*; after all, its principal audience lived within a Germany still deeply divided, socially and politically, along sectarian lines. Nevertheless, in demonstrating Judaism’s basic consonance with Reason, Mendelssohn unwittingly brought into

\(^4^4\) Ibid., 90.
\(^4^5\) Ibid., 90, 91.
\(^4^6\) Ibid., 93.
\(^4^7\) Ibid.
question Judaism’s existential *necessity*. Put bluntly, if every individual (again this central leitmotif of Enlightenment thought) was equally capable of discovering the “universal religion of mankind” - Mendelssohn’s description of Reason - via different epistemological frameworks (Christianity, Judaism, etc.), why remain Jewish at all? Could not *Bildung* reasonably replace Judaism entirely?

Up until this point, we have focused upon developments within late *Aufklärung* intellectual life, and have tried to contextualize the nature and position of German-Jewish identity during this period. As hinted at previously, one might imagine that Kant, the self-appointed savior of Reason, would have maintained a positive attitude towards the prospect of greater Jewish inclusion within German society. Kant’s own writings on the subject, however, paint a far more ambiguous picture. And, in spite of the seismic shifts which occurred in German thought following Kant’s “critical” turn, a certain consistency in anti-Judaic bias can be traced from Kant through the subsequent development of German Idealist philosophy, as represented by thinkers from Fichte to Hegel.

Recounting the progress of German philosophy from the *Aufklärung* up through the development of German Idealism and Romanticism during the first half of the 19th century represents a considerable task, with many potential entry points. For our present purposes, we should recognize that, despite the seeming eclipse of theology by the sun of Reason during the 18th century, theologically-grounded perceptions regarding the nature of Judaism and Jews persisted. In large measure, these biases should be regarded as a mirror of sorts, to the extent that the growth of
the natural sciences in late 18th century Germany, as exemplified by vitalism, anthropologic, for instance, still had to contend with issues of Christian teleology. Thus, it is rather unsurprising that German thinkers, from Kant to Hegel and beyond, continued to seek a means of combining the needs of Reason and Faith within one framework. One way was to argue for the essential rationality of Christian doctrine, denuded of its dogmatic accretions. For both Kant and Hegel, such a purified Christian rationality was ultimately meant to find its highest expression within the political sphere. In this context, however, the term “political” referred to considerably more than a formalized matrix of laws and institutions determining individual behavior. In its ideal manifestation, the true political entity was seen as enacting the collective ethical imperatives incumbent upon its constituent members, imperatives which were ultimately derived from a spiritual, rather than empirical or contingent, source. In the pages that follow, we will examine how Hegel and a number of his Idealist peers adapted and developed aspects of Kantian thought relative to Judaism and Jews, and how changing socio-political circumstances in Europe arguably helped to radicalize existing notions of Jewish difference.

Ironically, Kant’s prejudicial account of Judaism and its practitioners was grounded in a perception of Jewish existence as containing a deleterious overabundance of corporeality. In order to explain both how and why Kant reached this conclusion, and, in turn, why this purported emphasis upon what we may term

48 Beiser, The Fate of Reason, 13.
Jewish “bodily-ness” was inimical to German society and culture, we need to examine the revolution in philosophical thought which Kant affected. Within the pages of his first critique, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant laid the epistemological foundations for his ethical-political philosophy, a philosophy he subsequently elaborated upon in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787), and the *Critique of Judgment* (1790).  

Rejecting previous philosophical models which attempted to demonstrate the relationship which purportedly inhered between the observable world and some metaphysical correlate, Kant sought to ground all human action solely upon the dictates of rationality, such that the individual would cease “asking questions as to the hidden significance of empirical objects”.  

That is, Kant refused to admit any postulate inside the realm of Reason which could not be *shown* to exist within the field of possible experience. However, in separating the “thing in itself” - the *noumena* - from our perception or representation of it -the *phenomena* - Kant was not advocating a radically materialist conception of reality or its significance, *a lâ* Spinoza or Leibniz.  

Rather, Kant argued that recognition of the unbridgeable chasm inhering between *noumena* and *phenomena* would ultimately liberate human thought from a fruitless concern with *eines unbekannten Etwas* (“an unknown something”).  

By making this move, Kant sought to divorce ethics, as a mode of being, from an unnecessary (and fundamentally mistaken) reliance upon material reality, such that morality, as both thought and praxis, would emanate from an autonomous field. Such

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52 Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew*, 25.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
a field would be governed solely by what the mind could logically demonstrate to be
*universally* applicable truths (again, the Categorical Imperative). Ethics therefore
became predicated upon *a priori* fundamentals which were separate from either the
external world of representations, or a transcendent realm inaccessible to experience.
Instead, Kant envisioned a universe in which moral content would emanate from
within, rather than from without, the individual. In other words, the genuinely rational
subject would become fully autonomous.

For Kant, Judaism and Jews represented the archetypal antithesis of Reason
liberated from necessity. In contrast to Kant’s formulation of rational autonomy, Jews
enacted a “heteronymous” materialism.\(^{55}\) Why? Michael Mack suggests that Kant’s
conception of autonomous Reason directly corresponds to the Christological theme of
a “Christ-like dying away from the worldly,” such that the individuals comprising an
ideal German political community would, based upon this secularized and paradoxical
understanding of the fundamentally illusive nature of material reality, overcome the
contingent, the empirical, and thus the bodily.\(^ {56}\) Along these lines, Mack states by way
summation that, for Kant, “Christ’s body on the cross stood in for the body that had
been translated into the body politic…”\(^ {57}\) In comparison, Judaism literally and
figuratively embodied an obverse, compulsive fixation with “this worldly” matters. The
Jew understood his religion as enacting a system of *quid pro quo*, such that temporal
success, maybe what Mendelssohn had been referring to when speaking of “temporal
felicity,” was contingent upon the due fulfillment of certain ritual behaviors, or the

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 28.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 32.
diligent avoidance of others.\footnote{Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 34.} Regarding this system as little more than a theological framework promoting an enslavement to materialism, Kant (somewhat like Mendelssohn) politicized and \emph{historicized} its foundations. For Kant, a true understanding of Judaism was to be found within the Biblical model:

[I]n this government [Jewish theocracy] the subjects remained attuned in their minds to no other incentive except the \emph{goods of this world} and only wished, therefore, to be ruled through rewards and punishments in this life-nor were they in this respect \emph{capable} of other laws except such as were in part imposed by burdensome ceremonies and observances…\emph{and the inferiority of the moral disposition was in no way at issue}-so this institutional order did no substantial injury to the \emph{realm of darkness} but only served to keep ever in remembrance the imprescriptible right of the first proprietor (emphasis mine).\footnote{Kant, Immanuel. \textit{Schriften zur Ethik und Religionsphilosophie}. (2:735), cited in Mack, Michael \textit{German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses}. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.) 34.}

Although Mack offers certain compelling insights, he arguably fails to trace the changes, some quite radical, which occurred in Kant’s perception of Judaism as his philosophical worldview matured. In \textit{Kant and the Limits of Autonomy} (Cambridge, 2009), Susan Meld Shell argues that these changes were at least partly informed by personal relationships and circumstances. Most specifically, Shell focuses upon Kant’s relationship with the \emph{maskil} Marcus Herz, a favored disciple and, during the 1770s, his personal physician.\footnote{Shell, \textit{Kant and the Limits of Autonomy}, 307.} It appears that, up until the early 1790s, when his \textit{Religion within the Boundaries of Pure Reason} was published, Kant had in fact held Judaism in high regard. Herz was far from the only Jewish thinker under Kant’s tutelage; one wonders if the intellectual astuteness of some of his Jewish acolytes led Kant to consider Jews
as particularly capable of sustained speculative thought. Clearly, Kant was struck by the “penetration and subtlety of mind” which Solomon Maimon’s commentary upon his (Kant’s) first Critique revealed.\(^\text{61}\) Further, Kant’s famous contention, stated within his Critique of Judgment (1790), that the Mosaic proscription of graven images represented an archetype of morality freed from empirical constraints, seemed (in this instance) to place Judaism in a position above Christianity, at least as each system had historically been practiced.\(^\text{62}\)

Shell suggests that Kant’s change in attitude came as a result of a congeries of historical and personal events. First, she argues that the failure on the part of Kant’s Jewish associates, such as Marcus Herz, to take the “critical” jump into his Transcendental Idealism contributed to Kant’s growing belief that Jews were somehow incapable of spiritual, and therefore social, progress.\(^\text{63}\) The degree to which Kant came to consider these behavioral modes an immutable aspect of Judaism and its practice, operating upon a trans-historical level, is suggested by him in a later text, The Conflict of Faculties (1798). Within its pages, Kant suggested that a “pure moral religion,” one derived solely through the axiom of rationality’s autonomy, would result in a “euthanasia of Jewishness,” such that only the messianic (and thus, idealist) element revealed within Jewish theology would be retained by the ideal rational-Christian community.\(^\text{64}\) Recalling the lengthy excerpt offered above, the Jew was thus cast by Kant as a purely materialistic animal. By implication, remaining a Jew meant

\(^{61}\) Beiser, The Fate of Reason, 285.
\(^{62}\) Shell, Kant and the Limits of Autonomy, 313.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., 316.
\(^{64}\) Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 35.
remaining outside a polity constructed according to the dictates of rationality.\textsuperscript{65}

Secondly, Shell suggests that Mendelssohn’s \textit{Jerusalem}, with its powerful argument against the inherent rationality of Christianity, might have placed Kant in the position of having to re-assert the superiority of Christianity. Ignoring traditional assertions of Christ’s divinity, Kant instead argued that the life of Jesus the \textit{human} represented an historical, and meta-historical, template for a morality freed from empirical concerns.\textsuperscript{66} By comparison, the blind acceptance of ceremonial laws, given on an authority whose source was beyond man’s purview, demonstrated to Kant the utter incompatibility of Judaism with spiritual and (thus) ethical autonomy.\textsuperscript{67} Ultimately, Kant’s later critique of Jews and Judaism resembles a rationalist’s re-casting of pre-Enlightenment (Christian) anti-Judaic themes. Kant regarded religion as a system for conditioning the ethical development and constitution of the individual and the polity. His conclusion that Jews, as self-identifying Jews, were spiritually crippled due to a surfeit of contingent concerns, seems to reiterate the classic canards of greed and avarice. That Kant’s criticisms of Jews and Judaism revolved around questions of spiritual, rather than anthropological, fitness reflects the nascent nature of racial and biological discourses at this point in European history. It would still be many decades before the individual Jewish body became the principal evidentiary material for demonstrating Jewish difference.

Again, it is worth remembering that during precisely this period, the topic of Jewish civic and political emancipation was emerging as a question which, by

\textsuperscript{65} Mack, \textit{German Idealism and the Jew}, 35.
\textsuperscript{66} Shell, \textit{Kant and the Limits of Autonomy}, 315.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 316.
extension, drove to the very heart of a developing German national identity. The almost messianic fervor with which the French Revolution was greeted by many a *Hochaufklärer* soon changed to dismay, once the violent excesses of French Republicanism became known. A reactionary political climate soon followed, with the accession of Frederick William II to the throne of Prussia in the early 1790s. This decade was undoubtedly a sobering one for those German intellectuals who had firmly believed in the eventual triumph of social reforms based upon the tenets of universalism and cosmopolitanism. Although Hans Kohn has astutely recognized that “[f]ew German states proved as immune to German nationalism at the turn of the [19th] century as Prussia,”68 the seeming superiority of a tightly-centralized political entity, directed by a charismatic leader whose policies embodied the (perhaps unconscious) will of his people, was already being expressed by the young Hegel before 1806.69 Although Hegel by no means regarded Prussia as the most likely source of such authoritative leadership,70 it was the newly emerging notion of the “will” which is worthy of remark, particularly as it reflected the nascence of new philosophical criteria for the formation of a collective identity.

The tumultuous decade which opened the 19th century witnessed the rapid ascent of just such a charismatic leader in the form of Napoleon. By 1806, the Corsican had established the Confederation of the Rhine, which included virtually all of the German-speaking territories save Prussia and Austria, and had officially

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69 Ibid., 72.
70 Ibid.
dissolved the Holy Roman Empire. At this juncture, most German intellectuals, as well as a newly emerging bourgeois (Bürger) class still greeted the prospect of widespread socio-political reform positively, regardless, or perhaps even because, of its French provenance. Without question, Germany’s maskilim were among the most enthusiastic supporters of Napoleon, as his reign represented the first time many of them had had any experience with full civil liberties. As if in anticipation of these future developments, the closing decades of the 18th century had witnessed the growth of maskilic initiatives such as the founding of the German-language (Hebrew-character) journal Ha-Meassef (1783), the translation of the Torah and other Jewish religious texts into German, and the establishment of the first Jewish Frei-schule (1778).

At the same time, the question must be posed as to exactly what kind of society these progressive individuals within the German-Jewish community were seeking entry into. Of course, one may simply answer the question by arguing that Germany’s Jews wanted a place within German culture and society, as their adherence to Bildung so clearly suggests. However, the question of German identity, outside of the somewhat amorphous notion of Kultur was, at precisely this moment in history, one of the most difficult questions to answer with any clarity. This conundrum led Goethe and Schiller to quip: “Germany? But where is it? I don’t know how to find

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71 Ibid., 73.
72 Ibid.
73 Baader, Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture, 9.
such a country....(emphasis mine)”\textsuperscript{75} The acidity of this comment accurately illustrates the general ambivalence which late \textit{Aufklärung} figures such as Goethe and Schiller (and many others) felt towards matters purely territorial or political. It is in fact a cardinal feature of German thought, both during and directly following the \textit{Aufklärung}, that matters of the spirit (\textit{Geist}) still far outweighed matters of bodily constitution, whether that body was individuated or collectivized. Strikingly, Goethe wrote to a friend in 1808 that: “The German nation is nothing... The Germans should be dispersed throughout the world, like the Jews, in order fully to develop all the good that is in them for the benefit of mankind....”

Thus, one answer to the question posed above was that Germany’s Jewish reformers desired to be accepted within a community of spiritual equals. The extent to which many \textit{maskilim} went in order to minimize the formal differences between Jewish and Christian ritual practices has been impressively documented by many scholars.\textsuperscript{76} For our purposes, one episode along the path to German-Jewish religious reform resounds with particular force. David Friedländer (1750-1834), a prominent figure amongst the \textit{maskilim} of Berlin, went as far as to suggest, in the form of an open letter to a leading Protestant provost, Wilhelm Teller, that Berlin’s Jewish community (with himself included) undergo a “dry baptism” in exchange for the extension of full civil rights.\textsuperscript{77} Such a conversion process would grant Jews a special place within the Lutheran community, based upon a recognition of the Church’s authority -

\textsuperscript{75} John Gascoigne, “The German Enlightenment and the Pacific,” 142.
\textsuperscript{76} I have relied mainly upon Benjamin Maria Baader’s \textit{Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870} (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2006) for my perspective on this aspect of German-Jewish history. -A.S.
\textsuperscript{77} Pickle, “Schleiermacher on Judaism,” 123.
nonetheless, without having to recognize the divinity of Christ! But, even beyond the startling nature of this proposition was the response which it garnered from one of the period’s leading Lutheran thinkers, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). In 1806, less than a week before he finished his *Speeches*, a manuscript in which he criticized the *Aufklärung* tendency to universalize religious faith, Schleiermacher received news of Friedländer’s proposal.\(^{78}\) The timing of the open letter with the completion of the *Speeches* was fortuitous: the *Speeches* became both Schleiermacher’s response to the growing confusion surrounding expressions of positive religion within Germany (as demonstrated by Friedländer’s proposal), and the deleterious effect upon religious piety which Schleiermacher perceived as the inevitable by-product of state involvement within matters spiritual. Schleiermacher himself was a close friend to a number of prominent *maskilim*, including the well-known Henriette Herz (the wife of the aforementioned Kantian, Marcus Herz).\(^{79}\) In an implicit defense of traditional Jewish religious practices, the *Speeches* located Judaism within the same normative field as Christianity, as the only other religion tied to Western European culture.\(^{80}\) Unsurprisingly, this privilege was ultimately tempered by the clearly superior nature which Schleiermacher assigned to Christianity. However, Schleiermacher rejected the evangelical notion of religious succession, stating that “I hate that kind of historical reference…Each religion has its own internal necessity.”\(^{81}\) Rather, in a clear foreshadowing of the increasing importance which notions of totality were to have in

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\(^{78}\) Ibid.

\(^{79}\) Pickle, “Schleiermacher on Judaism,” 117.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 119.

\(^{81}\) Ibid.
19th century German thought, Schleiermacher postulated that Christianity represented a more “mature” form of spirituality. Such maturity stemmed from Christianity’s all-inclusive grasp of the *infinite*, despite the great diversity of specific, *finite* expressions of formalized observance.\(^82\) Hegel would postulate a similar argument in his dialectical model of world-history. Although Schleiermacher lauded the “beautiful childlike nature” of Judaism, Christianity, unlike Judaism, possessed the sophistication to maintain its universality, despite the many sectarian divisions which positive (or “provisional”) Christianity had historically propagated.\(^83\) But, instead of calling for the gradual effacement of Judaism through a process of piecemeal proselytizing, Schleiermacher suggested that such a process would only result in conversions of convenience.\(^84\) The danger posed to both the “converts,” and the church which accepted them was, according to Schleiermacher, no less than spiritual hypocrisy.\(^85\) In the final analysis, Schleiermacher’s *Speeches*, and his direct response to Friedländer’s open letter, represented a call for religious autonomy which, in its own way, echoed arguments which had been put forward by both Spinoza and Mendelssohn.

But most significantly, Schleiermacher offered a reading of contemporary German-Jewish existence which was uncannily similar to arguments put forward within the pages of Berlin’s *Ha-Meassef*: the principal strengths of Jewish religiosity, such as prophesy and revelation, arose within a specific environment, and during a

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\(^82\) Ibid.
\(^83\) Ibid., 118.
\(^84\) Ibid., 128.
\(^85\) Pickle, “Schleiermacher on Judaism,” 128.
particular period in the history of the Jewish faith.\textsuperscript{86} Like many maskilim, Schleiermacher regarded the complex legalisms which arose after the Biblical period as so many anachronisms, accretions which concealed true (Jewish) piety in a web of casuistry. In fact, Friedländer himself confirmed that Schleiermacher’s critique of Judaism within the \textit{Speeches} accorded exactly with his own views.\textsuperscript{87} Schleiermacher’s assessment of Judaism, and the confusions regarding civic and political identity which it introduced into a rapidly changing German society, mirrored an already established internal Jewish discourse. Like the Jewish reformers, Schleiermacher searched for a way to more fully integrate Jews within German society, but without sacrificing Judaism’s spiritual integrity. Like others, he viewed the firm separation of Church and State as the real solution. However, as we shall see in chapters two and three, even this formality was to fall well short of its hoped-for results.

In the same year as Schleiermacher’s \textit{Speeches}, another set of \textit{Speeches}, of a radically different nature, were issued. Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s \textit{Speeches to the German Nation} (1806) was an impassioned tract which called upon that still unidentified quantity, the “German,” to actively resist French occupation. Within the text, Fichte postulated a \textit{national} identity based upon the idea of a meta-historical German \textit{Urvölk} (“primordial people”). According to Fichte, “[o]nly the German - the original...truly has a \textit{Völk}, a \textit{Völk} upon which they can count, and only the German is capable of having a wholly rational love of their nation...”\textsuperscript{88} As the

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{88} James, \textit{The Murderous Paradise: German Nationalism and the Holocaust}. (Westport: Praeger, 2001.) 101.
italicized portion of the quote suggests, the Kantian notion of rational autonomy clearly figured into this early expression of modern German nationalism. However, in arguing for the progressive development of German society through a re-grounding in its original, organic essence, Fichte was revealing his greater emphasis upon the powers of intuition. Indeed, in Fichte’s assertion that, through a renewed connection with the *Völk*, the individual German could attain “eternal life,” recasts a classic Christological theme in nationalist terms. A theologian by training, Fichte’s *Speeches* reflects the impact which two centuries of utopian Pietist thought had upon the eventual development of modern German nationalism. Rooted in the German Reformation, Pietism combined an eschatological, redemptive vision of future German national greatness with a belief in the possibility of an individual, inward transcendence through God. Within this formula, the fulfillment of millenarian hopes would be signaled by the mass conversion of (German) Jews to the Christian faith. The necessity of this process was mentioned again and again by prominent Pietist thinkers such as Jacob Böhme (1575-1624), Johann Heinrich Callenberg (1694-1760), and Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705). Often marked by a contradictory openness to German-Jews as potential converts, whilst nonetheless excoriating them for their waywardness, Pietist thought stood at a midpoint between a German identity co-terminus with a form of non-denominational Christianity (the Pietists had run afoul of both the Catholic and Lutheran Churches), and one grounded in the mythical past of the *Urvölk*, a condition

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89 Ibid., 100.
90 James, *The Murderous Paradise*, 81-83.
which implicitly preceded any substantive Christian identity. Thus, Spener could asperse the German-Jews of his day by baldly stating that “[t]hey spend their lives in...sloth, they thrive from trade and haggling, and never do any work,” while simultaneously qualifying these remarks, arguing that the Jews:

...are not entirely guilty, for they do not have their own land upon which to build, and nor are they permitted to learn or develop a trade...[t]he poor among them, as is among Christians, constitutes [sic] the greatest number of their people....(emphasis mine)\footnote{Ibid., 83.}

This passage, with its oblique equation of under-classes, whether Jewish or Christian, at least infers the possibility of Jewish inclusion within German society, provided the appropriate steps are taken (e.g., conversion followed by greater civic and economic inclusion). Little more than a century later, the nation-state-Völk nexus had progressed to the point that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), himself from a staunchly Pietist background, defined Jews as a form of Völk, distinct and distinctly inferior to Germans. At one point referring to Jews as a “parasitic plant upon the stems of other nations,” Herder averred that:

this Völk [the Jews] is and remains as a foreign Asian Völk, which is bound to what they acknowledge is a [sic] irrevocable law given to them in a distant place. To what degree this law and the way of thinking or living can be accommodated by our states is no longer a religious dispute...rather a simple question of state....(emphasis mine)\footnote{James, The Murderous Paradise, 94-95.}

In reading these lines, one is duly struck by the fact that Herder, in comparison to some of his contemporaries, maintained a complex relationship with Judaism and

\footnote{Ibid., 101.}
“Jewishness” throughout his life. A scholar of the Hebrew language, Herder considered many aspects of Jewish literature and thought to have positively impacted the development of European culture, particularly in the realms of science and art.\textsuperscript{94} Despite this, Herder rejected the traditional Pietist notion of Jewish salvation through conversion, principally because he regarded Judaism and Jewish behavior as inseparably linked to Jewish existence, such that “[t]he religion of the Jews is, just as they say so themselves, a [sic] heirloom of their race [Geschlecht], their \textit{inalienable inheritance} … (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{95} Thus, to the peculiar conflation of mystical Christianity and “Germanness” which the German-Jewish writer Saul Ascher (1767-1822) commented upon in his 1815 tract \textit{Die Germanomanie (The German-mania)},\textsuperscript{96} was added this newer conception of the \textit{Deutsches Völktum}, an idea clearly reflective of the growing impact of anthropology, led in Germany by figures such as the Forster family, \textit{père et fils}, and Herder himself. More importantly, Herder’s references to race and inalienable differences foreshadowed the increasing turn to bodies, as the boundary between post-Enlightenment German Idealist thought and the aesthetics of an early Romantic German nationalism became less clear. If an authentic German identity was indeed predicated upon a primordial national essence, then the very presence of Jews living within German territories, and potentially achieving civic emancipation through political recognition, fatally compromised the integrity of this identity. Likewise, if a Jew converted to Christianity, the specifically German link with a mythical (and mystical) past was, at least theoretically, similarly ruptured. In some sense, these

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 119, 95.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 117-118.
questions implied a dialectical situation, wherein a clear German identity could only be crystallized through a definitive resolution (or negation) of the German-Jewish identity. As we shall presently see, before turning to the second and final section of this chapter, Hegel adopted just such a strategy in considering the role of Judaism and Jews within German society.

In large measure, Hegel’s socio-political interpretation of the *Judenfrage* (the problematic status which Jews bore within post-Napoleonic German society) functioned as a critical illustration of the historical dialectic. Expanding upon Kant’s transcendental philosophy, Hegel came to regard Judaism as the persistent embodiment of a *rejection* of dialectical thought and function. To understand how this works, we must first examine how Hegel attempted to “bridge” the Kantian chasm existing between materiality and thought, between the objective and the subjective. Already prior to the turn of the (19th) century, Fichte had attempted to overcome the problematic dualisms found in Kantian thought through his *Science of Knowledge*.97 However, Fichte’s conception of an absolute ego, as the subject and object of experience, seemed to create more problems than it solved. Radicalizing Kant’s notion that objects correspond to our concepts of them, rather than *vice-versa*, Fichte’s absolute ego actually posited the world outside of itself.98 Beyond the fundamental implausibility of such a scenario, Fichte failed to explain how the ego and non-ego, as the two aspects of the absolute ego corresponding to the active and passive elements within the world, could exist within the limits of possible experience. In other words,

how can man know the objectivity of non-ego, if its unification with the ego represents a transcendent moment? Hegel sought to overcome the new dilemmas which Fichte’s *Science of Knowledge* created, such as its tendency towards radical subjectivity, and the seemingly unbridgeable chasm which it opened between the constant striving of this absolute ego (the ideal), and the world as actually given to man (the real).⁹⁹

Hegel’s eventual solution to these problems came in the form of Absolute Idealism. As Frederick C. Beiser has shown, the term itself is famously difficult to define precisely, as its use varied to some degree, depending on which thinker was invoking it.¹⁰⁰ However, the basic unifying thread linking its use was the definitively naturalistic turn which it suggested. For the Idealists and early Romantics, such as Novalis and Schlegel, the crux of the problem lay within the Cartesian notion of matter’s fundamental inertia. Adopting a more organic (or vitalist) outlook, these thinkers envisioned all substance as finite modalities of a single living force.¹⁰¹ For Hegel, this meant that the distinctions which philosophy had previously made between the mind and the body, the subjective and the objective, or the noumenal and phenomenal, entirely missed the native interdependence of these supposedly discrete categories. As Hegel famously stated in his *The Philosophy of Right*: “What is actual is rational, what is rational is actual…”¹⁰² The monism implicit within Absolute Idealism thus provided the “bridge” between mind and body, thought and extension.

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⁹⁹ Ibid., 30.
All matter was seen as differentiated, whilst still constituting a single living force.\textsuperscript{103} Within this matrix, nature \textit{did} in fact have its own existence independent of the mind. Nevertheless, Hegel still considered rationality to be the core component informing morality, and therefore the faculty which would lead to the authentic (inner) liberation of mankind from the bonds of a bifurcated existence.

Adopting an eschatological view of world history, Hegel argued that humankind was engaged in an upward process of spiritual development. As to dynamics, Hegel envisioned an infinitely-recurring negation of materialism, through a process of \textit{Aufhebung} (dialectical nullification). According to Hegel, man was most able to apprehend the governing mechanisms of the universe by engaging in this process of \textit{Aufhebung}, as the subsumption of discrete, finite modalities (including man) within the infinite totality of the Spirit (\textit{Geist}) represented the ineluctable, and never-ceasing, dynamic of the cosmos. Hegel is perhaps best known for his application of these ideas to the socio-political realm. Stated somewhat crudely, Hegel echoed Fichte’s sentiments regarding the loss of individuality within an ideal (but eminently real) totality; for Hegel, the future of Germany lay within the establishment of a state which would actualize the ethical and spiritual potential of its body-politic. Without question, Hegel’s growing belief in the necessity of such an entity reflected a more widespread dissatisfaction with the atomizing tendencies resulting from the Enlightenment’s radical emphasis upon individual autonomy. Equally, it suggested the growing impact of early 19\textsuperscript{th} century German historicism, and the re-engagement with

\textsuperscript{103} Beiser, “The Enlightenment and idealism,” 33.
politics which historians such as von Humboldt were advocating.\textsuperscript{104} But how would such an engagement with the body-politic happen? Precisely through the dynamics of dialectical nullification.

But what does this have to do with German-Jews? For Hegel, Judaism suffered from a fatal flaw, in that it failed to grasp the freedom man has as a self-determined agent. In Hegel's account, this self-determinacy found its most concrete expression in the laws and institutions of the state. As mentioned earlier, Hegel posited that world-historical development was revealing Germany's future as just such a state.\textsuperscript{105} For Hegel, the native irrationality of Judaism and its adherents stemmed from a slavish and exclusive commitment to "this worldly" matters, such that Jews had consistently failed to recognize the illusory nature of an empirically-constituted reality.\textsuperscript{106} Clearly echoing the themes of Jewish materialism and spiritual bankruptcy found within Kant, Hegel extended and arguably made visceral these charges through an examination of Jewish dietary laws. In brief, Hegel considered the legal (\textit{Halakhic}) proscription surrounding the consumption of blood as demonstrative of Judaism's unwillingness to recognize the dialectical nature of existence. This, because Hegel argued that Jewish law regarded blood as equivalent to the life-force of a given sentient organism (including man). Jewish insistence upon ritually slaughtered (and therefore de-"sanguinized") food thus represented a self-imposed failure to embrace the totality of material

\textsuperscript{104} For a substantive overview of the development of German historicism, see Georg Igers, \textit{The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present}. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1968.) - A.S.


\textsuperscript{106} Mack, \textit{German Idealism and the Jew}. 44.
existence, as the consumption of another’s blood paradoxically demonstrated the potential nullity of the consumer’s own being.\textsuperscript{107} Herein lies Hegel’s innovation relative to empiricism; only through a recognition of the obverse side of physical being (e.g., nullity), could an individual apprehend the ideality of an empirical existence. For Hegel, Jews were profoundly handicapped due their inability, and/or unwillingness, to take this step. Perhaps most pertinently, Hegel regarded the radical materialism propagated by Judaism as resulting in a such a “frenzy” of selfishness as to make any identification with a collective spirit impossible.\textsuperscript{108} And despite Hegel’s increasing support for religious pluralism during the latter period of his life,\textsuperscript{109} certain earlier words seem to suggest that Hegel regarded this selfishness, and irrationality, as contributing to the atomization of German society:

The German people may be incapable of intensifying its obstinate adherence to particularism to that point of madness reached by the Jewish people - a people incapable of uniting in common life with any other. The German people may not be able to carry separatism to such a pitch of frenzy as to murder and be murdered until the state is wiped out. Nevertheless, particularism has prerogative and precedence in Germany.\textsuperscript{110}

Hegel used eating as a powerful biological metaphor for the workings of the ideal political community. Just as the consumer of blood becomes aware of the illusion of materiality through this process, he likewise becomes cognizant of the fact that rational free will demands an acceptance of his own potential sacrifice in the service of

\textsuperscript{107} Mack, \textit{German Idealism and the Jew}, 48.
\textsuperscript{108} Avineri, \textit{Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State}, 55.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 55.
the ideal state. In fact, his own rationality (and thus spirituality) demands a recognition of the concordance of aims between the state and its constituents, whereby “citizens...have transformed their free will by internalizing the autonomous will of the state.”\footnote{111}

Like Kant, Hegel leaves an ambiguous legacy as regards German-Jews and Judaism. A certain level of support on the part of both philosophers for the gradual amelioration of German-Jewish existence through political reform is present; nevertheless, such sentiments are clearly tempered by the assertion of an historically-embedded lack of exactly those qualities essential for full civic equality. Hegel’s critique of Jews and Judaism represented not only a development of Kantian themes, but introduced a resonant physiological dimension. In doing so, Hegel gave these anti-Judaic (or anti-Jewish) sentiments a certain corporeality. Consumption, as arguably the second-most essential physiological act sustaining the body, thus functioned as a metonym for Jewish difference and inferiority. The Jew consumes without being consumed; by implication, he is a parasitic element, a static obstacle to the progressive, world-historical development of an ideal Germany.

\textbf{Aesthetics and Identity}

We may recast the many issues regarding identity formation discussed above in more aesthetic terms. For example, what would distinguish German-Jews from other

\footnote{111}Mack, \textit{German Idealism and the Jew}, 46.
Germans in a post-emancipation, *Bildung Germany?* Figure 1a, *Lavater and Lessing Visit Moses Mendelssohn* (1856), painted by the German-Jew Moritz Oppenheim (1800-1882), depicts the eponymous Mendelssohn and Lavater, along with fellow-Enlightener and philo-Semite G. E. Lessing, engaged in two arguably archetypal *Bildung* activities: chess and philosophical discourse. Surrounded by books in a well-appointed sitting-room (itself symbolic of the *Bildungsbürgertum* values Oppenheim identified Mendelssohn as representing), the three figures are themselves constitute a model *Freundschaftsbünd, the “friendship society” system popular amongst intellectuals and aesthetes during precisely this period.* Such groups idealized the formation of intimate friendships based upon *Bildung, Kultur, and the common pursuit of Sittlichkeit (“respectability”).* The inference here is that, apart from Mendelssohn’s skullcap, no *apparent* difference inhere to this Jew relative to his Christian peers. In *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe,* Richard I. Cohen acutely highlights the impact which this image arguably had upon German-Jews wishing to realize, for themselves, the *beau ideal* of inclusion symbolized therein; reproductions of this work were popular items within the 19th century German-Jewish home, and second-rate copies (such as those executed by Louis Katzenstein) appeared soon after. Seen from broader vistas, Oppenheim’s painting embodied a counter-narrative, aimed as a corrective to the variety of deprecatory images then in circulation (Figures 2a thru 5a). Although these examples represent only a smattering of the

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114 Ibid., 166.
diverse array of images designed to impugn Jews and Judaism, they are nonetheless highly instructive in highlighting the shifting emphasis of anti-Jewish visualizations away from theological symbolism, and towards a more secularized visual language. Figures 2a, 3a, and 4a re-capitulate well-established (by the turn of the 19th century) Christian anti-Judaic tropes, with the Jew identified as either literally Satanic (Figure 2a), or as an intimate accomplice acting in his service (Figures 3a, 4a, and 5a). Of particular interest is the specific inclusion of the Jewish badge featured in the copper engraving (Figure 5a); although the text and the image of the bound infant surrounded by surgical instruments clearly indicate the theologically-predicated narrative of the image (blood-libel), the artist of this piece nevertheless felt it necessary to clearly define the figures below as Jews through this pre-emancipation mark. In contrast, Figures 6a depicts post-emancipation German-Jews. This image is taken from a poster advertising the anti-Jewish stage-play Our Social Intercourse, written by Karl Sessa and performed in 1819. Here, in the place of distinctly theological markers, these images identify the Jewish-ness of its subjects through socio-cultural caricature. The variety of poses and costume imply that Jewish emancipation represents a contradiction in terms, with the more nattily-dressed figures engaging in what amounts to little more than a grotesque mimesis of Bildung and Sittlichkeit. These figures are clearly meant to represent creatures who exist wholly outside German society and the body politic (such as the “Trodel Jude,” Abraham Hersch).

If we accept Griselda Pollock’s assertion that “[r]epresentation is not just a fancy word for picturing, depicting, imagining,” but is “to be understood as a social relation enacted and performed via specific appeals to vision, specific managements
of imaginary spaces and *bodies for a gaze* (emphasis mine),” it becomes clear that the above examples point to a growing shift in perception, amongst both Jews and non-Jews, as to what exactly constituted Jewish-ness.¹¹⁵ For centuries the Jewish body, as the object of what Lacan might have termed the European-Christian “gaze,” was an eminently theological construct. The early 19th century marked a critical juncture, wherein the *perceived* characteristics representing Jewish difference began to shift. In one sense, Figure 6a can be regarded as a visual proof-text, intended to demonstrate the faulty logic inherent within a pro-emancipation work such as Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden (On the Civic Improvement of the Jews)*. Published some decades prior to this engraving, the text contended that Jewish regeneration,” morally, intellectually, and physically-speaking, would be the certain outcome of political emancipation.¹¹⁶ Dohm’s argument on behalf of Prussia’s Jews clearly revealed an acceptance and recapitulation of current anti-Jewish perceptions, such as excessive materialism, greed and social parasitism. However, by arguing for historic contingency as the primary source of these character flaws, Dohm inferentially discarded any suggestion of Jewish immutability, either in terms of character or body.¹¹⁷ Taken to its logical conclusion, Dohm’s argument suggested that, given time, the differences distinguishing the Jew from the German, including corporeality and appearance, would be largely effaced. In contrast, our engraving

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 25.
suggests just the opposite, by literally em-bodying this difference through posture, expression, and even physiognomy; note the intentionally non-European features of the *parvenu par excellence*, “Jacob: Sohn des [of] Abraham Hersch” (Figure 6a).

Post-dating Johann Schudt’s illustrated *Jüdische Merkwürdigkeiten* (Jewish Peculiarities) by over a century (1711)\(^{118}\), roughly coterminous with the rise of Franz Joseph Gall’s science of phrenology\(^ {119}\) and the beginnings of anthropology, but predating German eugenics and racial hygiene by at least half-a-century, *Our Social Intercourse* (Figure 6a) marks an intermediate point in perception, between the Jew as blasphemer/Christ-killer, and the Jew as a biological organism embodying the “Stammeseigenthümlichkeiten” (“innate tribal peculiarity”) of his phylum.\(^ {120}\)

In his book *The Artless Jew: Medieval & Modern Affirmations & Denials of the Visual*, Kalman P. Bland refers to the “double bind” which German Idealism and a nascent, modern art-historical discourse placed upon German-Jews, relative to the perception of Jewish visual capacities.\(^ {121}\) This, because those German-Jews working to enact greater social integration through an adoption of *Bildung* and *Sittlichkeit* values, eagerly sought to interpret the regnant philosophical and aesthetic discourses in a way which would positively reflect their Jewish identity. Thus, when Kant argued that “perhaps the most sublime passage in the Jewish Law is the commandment: ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image’,” the implicit reference to an embedded,

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\(^{119}\) Ibid., 27.


historical-religious Jewish aversion to image creation, or “aniconism,” was regarded as an unmitigated compliment. Likewise, when Hegel, some three decades later, reversed this interpretation by stating that “everything genuine in spirit and nature alike is inherently concrete and, despite its universality, has nevertheless subjectivity and particularity…therefore the Jews…have not been able by art to represent their God, who does not even amount to…an abstraction (emphasis mine),” his comments were, in light of Kant’s, considered (by German-Jews) as a fundamental misreading of Jewish spirituality. Nevertheless, this did not prevent 19th century German-Jewish thinkers from frequently adopting Hegelian constructs in pursuing socio-cultural inclusion. In order to better understand the complicated dynamics informing the 19th century German construction of Jewish aniconism, and why German-Jewry initially accepted and re-capitulated this idea, we must first consider the ideational foundations of modern art-history.

In his 1766 essay, *Laocoön, or On the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, G. E. Lessing drew a distinction between painting as a static expression of visual-spatial dynamics, and poetry as the embodiment of motion. In positing this distinction, Lessing chose the *Laocoön*, a Greek sculpture from antiquity, in which the eponymous mythological figure is being strangled by two serpents, whilst remaining sublimely impassive in the face of his violent and incipient demise (Figure 7a). His choice was far

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122 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 16
from incidental; in selecting the *Laocoön* for analysis, Lessing intended to answer J.J. Wincklemann’s assertion that this sculpture embodied not only an aesthetic ideal, to be used as a template for considering the relative worth of modern artistic creations, but in fact revealed the stoic core of ancient Greek culture, a model inferentially to be imitated by the German.\(^{126}\) As George L. Mosse has stated in this regard, “[b]eauty meant order and tranquility; it thus revealed an unchanging, genuine world of health and happiness... Greek beauty provided the ideal-type, which set the aesthetic criteria to which man must relate himself...”\(^{127}\) According to Lessing, Wincklemann had erred in conflating the seemingly tranquil expression of the *Laocoön* with a surfeit of stoicism on the part of the Ancient Greeks.\(^{128}\) Further, Lessing’s rejoinder can be read on two levels. Most explicitly, Lessing was challenging the limits of representation offered by visual media in communicating the diverse array of existential states and emotions native to humankind. Rather, he argued that visual art, as exemplified by its Ancient Greek practitioners, sought only a static crystallization of beauty.\(^{129}\) By contrast, Lessing regarded poetry, in the broadest sense of this term (drama, prose, etc.) as offering both the composer and the reader an opportunity to experience the “whole gamut of emotion[s],” as rhyme and meter functioned within the realm of temporality.\(^{130}\) On a deeper level, Lessing challenged the tendentious Hellenism which *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755), and subsequent works, reflected. Stated differently, Lessing detected within

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\(^{126}\) Lessing, “*Laocoön,*” 67.
\(^{127}\) Mosse, George L. *Toward the Final Solution*, 10-11.
\(^{128}\) Lessing, “*Laocoön,*” 61.
\(^{129}\) Ibid., 64.
\(^{130}\) Ibid., 67.
Wincklemann’s thought the conviction that Ancient Greek sculpture, with its physically-robust and perfectly proportioned figures, demonstrated the unrivalled health, beauty, and stoicism of the Ancient Greeks themselves. To this, Lessing responded by averring that “He [the Greek] both felt and feared; he uttered his pain and his trouble…he was ashamed of no human weakness…”\textsuperscript{131} In other words, Lessing regarded pain and fear, suffering and crying as a universal quality, given to all mankind; the “outer” tranquility of the \textit{Laocoön} sculpture therefore presented the viewer with only a frozen glimpse which (according to Lessing) obscured as much as it revealed. As we shall see, aspects of Wincklemann’s art-historical theories, and Lessing’s response to them, played a significant role in the development of Jewish aniconism, and its connections to the Jewish body \textit{and} the Jewish body-politic.

Wincklemann considered Ancient Greek sculpture as the acme of corporeal representation, and clearly advocated its use in developing contemporary European aesthetic sensibilities. Additionally, within the opening section of his \textit{Thoughts}, Wincklemann advanced a rather convoluted theory regarding the historic transmission of the germinal seed of Ancient Greek aesthetics to German soil, stating that “the reign of the great Augustus marks precisely that \textit{happy moment} at which the arts, as a foreign colony, have been introduced to Saxony…”\textsuperscript{132} However, one can in no sense consider Wincklemann a German chauvinist, or even proto-nationalist; rather, his Hellenism was a construct predicated upon an Apollonian vision, wherein the

\textsuperscript{131} Lessing, \textit{“Laocoön,”} 61, 62.
celebrated rationality and measured quality of Ancient Greek life was offered as a
direct correlate to the German Enlightenment. In fact, Wincklemann regarded Bildung,
with its emphasis upon individualism, intellection and cosmopolitanism, as a
contemporary embodiment of these ancient principles.\textsuperscript{133} Nevertheless, Wincklemann’s
near deification of Greek sculpture was to have profound, if unintended, consequences
upon the subsequent development of a German national consciousness, such that the
Greek \textit{beau ideal} eventually became inextricably bound-up with the construction of
the ideal \textit{German} male. Why? George L. Mosse suggests that the “survival and
strength of classical symbols” during the formative decades of German nationalist
thought provided the imagined nation with a “slice of eternity,” a visual iteration of the
\textit{Ur}-myth underpinning the authenticity of German people-hood.\textsuperscript{134} Even after the final
defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Germany was to remain a diffuse conglomerate of
territories for another five decades. Arguably, the co-optation of bodily imaginaries
seated within the mists of an averred-to German antiquity, but in fact derived from an
\textit{exterior} source, facilitated the construction of a primordial German history which did
not privilege one province or region at the expense of the others.

Admittedly, language, rather than art, became the primary tool for postulating
an authentic (German) national identity. For Hegel, language functioned on a dual
level, generating general meaning, since “what I say, i.e. I, is what everyone is,”\textsuperscript{135} as
well as the most particular identity, as “[w]hat I only \textit{mean is mine}, belongs to me as

\textsuperscript{133} Nisbet, H.B. \textit{German aesthetic and literary criticism: Wincklemann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder,
\textsuperscript{134} Mosse, George L. \textit{Nationalism and Sexuality}, 15.
\textsuperscript{135} Hegel, G.W. Friedrich. \textit{Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline (1817)}, cited in
Bowie, \textit{Aesthetics and subjectivity}, 160.
this particular individual….” At about the same point in time (circa 1815), the Romantic nationalist Ernst Moritz Arndt arguably recast the latter aspect of this equation by averring to the primordial speech which the German language represented. Its purity self-reflexively demonstrated and reinforced the radical endogamy of the German people themselves. Although perhaps less prominently, developing visual representations of the German nation, and its authentic people, were emerging. As detailed in Chapter 3, Ludwig Friedrich Jahn’s *Turnkünstler* (gymnast) represented a striking expression of this ideal through physical display. We will now consider how Wincklemann’s idealization of the Hellenic body was made German by the Romantic nationalists, and how its co-optation functioned to marginalize the German-Jew through the charge of Jewish aniconism.

**Kant’s “Einbildungskraft” and the Limits of German-Jewish Acculturation**

In part, the emergence of the body as a litmus for the reconstitution of the German *Völk* can be traced to the concept of *Einbildungskraft*. This term, which roughly translates to “imagination,” was used by Kant to describe the processes of ordering “the multiplicity of sensuous images” which man receives. Although Kant recognized its legitimate place within the matrix of human faculties, and its role in the

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136 Ibid.
creation of cognitive “schemata,” he nonetheless rejected the notion that sensuous intuitions alone provided access to “the highest principle of philosophy, the I…."

Even though Kant was ultimately unclear as to the exact differences inhering to “concepts,” which embody pure rationality, and “intuitions,” which are directly related to Einbildungskraft, there is little question that Kant regarded the former as constituting a higher form of “reality” than the latter. Overall, Hegel reaffirmed this ordering of faculties, but with a notable caveat. Perhaps reflecting the growing impact of Romantic thought, Hegel regarded beauty, the “sensuous appearing of the Idea,” as a distinct manifestation of the Geist, such that its iteration through art represented a legitimate expression of Idealit. This, because its creation demanded the shaping, transforming and conquest of materiality. Corresponding directly to his notion of Aufhebung, Hegel imbued the destructive forces revealed through man’s impulse to “create” with a normative valence. Predictably, Judaism’s exclusive emphasis upon “immediate being” precluded them from engaging in the cathecting of beauty via art.

In comparison, Hegel considered the Ancient Greek impulse for molding nature into ideal forms as reflecting an inherent fearlessness, which in turn revealed a willingness to engage in the processes of dialectical nullification. What Hegel was expressing here was an historicized, and aestheticized, belief in the dialectical opposition between Hellene and Jew, wherein each constituted one-half of a mutually-excluding relationship. Anticipating central aspects of both Wagnerian and Nietzschean thought,

\[\text{139} \text{ Ibid.} \]
\[\text{140} \text{ Ibid., 23.} \]
\[\text{141} \text{ Bowie, Aesthetics and subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche, 166-167.} \]
\[\text{142} \text{ Mack, Michael. German Idealism and the Jew, 58.} \]
\[\text{143} \text{ Ibid., 59.} \]
this early perception of Jew existence as fundamentally lacking *Einbildungskraft* became embedded within the increasingly anti-rationalist turn which German philosophy was taking. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) provides a case in point. Over against Kant’s insistence upon rationality as the *fons et origo* of individual identity, Schopenhauer asserted that the body and its sensual impulses (the “Will”) in fact constituted Kant’s *das Ding an Sich* (the “thing-in-itself”).\(^{144}\) Schopenhauer’s explanation of the Will still followed the basic structure of German Idealist thought, particularly in its search for a unifying totality. However, in positing intuition as the only channel of access available for experiencing Will, Schopenhauer redirected German philosophical thought *away* from intellect towards both the Romantics’ emphasis upon art, and the body as the primary locus of communal identity through self-knowledge.\(^{145}\) Perhaps most significantly, this philosophical turn to physicality coincided with the gradual conflation of Hellenic and German bodies, such that the binary opposition of Hellene and Jew was morphing into that which inhered between German and Jew.

As the 19\(^{th}\) century progressed, German-Jewish thought inadvertently reinforced growing perceptual differences by confirming the intrinsic non-sensuality of Judaism. In 1841, the reformist rabbi Dr. Solomon Formstecher (1808-1889) published a work entitled *Die Religion des Geistes, eine wissenschaftliche Darstellung des Judenthums nach seinem Charakter, Entwicklungsgange und Berufe in der Menscheit* (*The Religion of the Spirit, a Scientific Exposition of Judaism*.

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\(^{144}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{145}\) Bowie, Andrew. *Aesthetics and subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, 263.
According to its Character, Historical Development, and Vocation to Humanity).

Within its pages, rabbi Formstecher offered an interpretation of Jewish existence which recapitulated the theme of Jewish aniconism, and averred to its crucial role in preventing polytheistic tendencies. Formstecher praised the Second Commandment proscription of graven images, arguing that the plastic arts represented a “severe foe” to Jewish spiritual integrity.146 By contrast, Formstecher regarded poetry as eminently permissible, since its “charms... accompanied by melody and rhythm,” motivate religious feeling.147 Although Lessing is not mentioned here, the theme of art versus poetry, and the Jewish relationship to these two “poles” of aesthetic expression, seem to resonate with meaning. As the title suggests, Formstecher had accepted the historical-spiritual model introduced by the Wissenschaft des Judenthums movement.

His tract was clearly apologetic, and was arguably intended to reaffirm a German (and German-Jewish) identity based upon Enlightenment values. Likewise, the themes of Jewish aniconism and Judaism’s purported emphasis upon the verbal and the auditory were echoed by the historian Heinrich Graetz. In an essay published five years after Formstecher’s work, Graetz not only drew a clear distinction between the visual and the auditory realms, but explicitly linked the former with polytheism, and the latter with Judaism:

Paganism sees its god, Judaism hears Him; that is, it hears the commandments of His Will...[1]he artistic act created in Greek paganism, in accord with its sensuous God-concept, is the art of sculpture...[1]n Judaism, on the other hand, which perceives its God in the alternating loud and soft sounds...in the rhythm of word sounds,

the artistic drive...gave birth to music combined with religious poetry...[t]he sharp opposition of Judaism to *paganism sunk in idolatry and immorality*...is nothing but the *broad antithesis between the religion of the spirit and the religion of nature*.....(emphasis mine)\(^\text{148}\)

Similarly, but with entirely different intentions, Heinrich Heine wrote some eight years later that he “could *not forgive* the law-giver of the Jews for his hatred of all visual imagery [*Bildlichkeit*] and the plastic arts [*plastik,*]” whilst nevertheless concurrently averring that “[p]oetry...becomes to be the truly *vital* art...oral revelation, *beginning with Moses*, has never confronted visual art...without some misgivings...(emphasis mine)\(^\text{149}\)

What these comments suggest is that, by the mid-19\(^{th}\) century, German-Jewish identity had become inextricably bound-up with the mutually informing discourses of visuality as *sensuality*, and sensuality as a force informing a *völkisch* construction of German national identity and its corporeal embodiment. Further, in recasting the charges of Jewish aniconism and lack of *Einbildungskraft* as a *positive* characteristic, these German-Jewish intellectuals revealed their desperate unwillingness to relinquish the central role which *Bildung* played in mediating between the German and Jewish nodes of their cultural identity. Delving even more deeply, one may argue that *refuting* the charge of Jewish aniconism inferentially required positing Jewish visuality, or the artistic process leading to its realization, as a metonym for a distinctly Jewish national identity. Clearly, this entailed an existential reconfiguration which, until the emergence

\(^{148}\) Ibid., 22.
of Zionism, most German-Jews could scarcely entertain. However, claims of an inherently “Jewish” predisposition towards music, with its emphasis upon the transitory, could be sharply employed to suggest a lack of historical (e.g., nationally “authentic”) stability. Thus, in 1843, the German art historian Karl Schnasse wrote of the Jews: “Their fantasy is too much in motion, the movement is too vigorous…to permit it to be carried out quietly in the visual arts. Every pictorial image that is introduced in the soul immediately evokes a new one, which drives out the first….”

This description of the ceaselessly perambulating Jew calls to mind a roughly contemporaneous image, The Wandering Jew, by the Frenchman Gustave Doré (Figure 8a). Here, Ahasuerus, the eternally Wandering Jew of medieval Christian folklore, is caught in full stride, his shut eyes suggesting the rapid and ceaseless motion of a peripatetic mind; his feet barely touch the barren earth which, according to the legend, can never truly be his resting-place.

Thus, Moritz Oppenheim’s Return of the Jewish Volunteer from the War of Liberation to His Family Still Living in Accordance with Old Customs (1833-34) (Figure 9a), with its idyllic depiction of a concordance of values (German-Jewish patriotism and a modernized confessional Judaism), expresses in visual form the logical limits of a German “national” identity for the 19th century German-Jew. Although clothed in the uniform of the German volunteer, and displaying an official commendation received for exemplary bravery, this Jew is surrounded by other Jews; his “home” is most literally the house in which he sits. Doting family, including a father

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who has interrupted his religious studies to admire the medal pinned to his son’s chest, palpably communicate a sense of *Biedermeier*, or “cosy small town-ness,” so popular within German paintings during this period. Still, the father keeps his right index-finger upon the text of the *Talmud*; ultimately, the authentic Jewish home is located within the Torah. Sadly, adherence to *Bildung*, the pursuit of *Sittlichkeit*, and the desire to actualize the bourgeois existence which these values engender, is a matter for the individual or individual family, not the nation.

This point might perhaps become clearer by comparison. Caspar David Friedrich’s *Hutten’s Grave* (Figure 10a) was painted roughly one decade prior to Oppenheim’s *Return*. Ostensibly, it is concerned with the same basic theme. It was executed in honor of the 10th anniversary of the War of Liberation, and its symbolic content reveal core meanings which are diametrically opposite to those suggested by Oppenheimer. The Gothic ruins, covered in moss and lichen, which dwarf the lone figure in the foreground, resonate with the symbolism of an immutable *Deutschtum* (“Germaness”). The architectural shell which embraces both the dead and living *Urvölker* has itself been submitted to an endless process of regeneration, the German soil and its products literally reclaiming the carved stone. The figure, probably representing Friedrich himself, is unmistakably costumed in *Aldeutsche Tracht*, the “old German dress” synonymous with early *völkisch* nationalist agitation. Indeed, the wearing of *Aldeutsche Tracht* had in fact been declared illegal in some German states by the time

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152 For a brief overview of Oppenheim’s art, and its visualization of early 19th century German-Jewish attempts at acculturation, see for example Ezra Mendelssohn’s *Painting a People: Mauryce Gottlieb and Jewish Art*. (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2002.) 70.
of the painting’s execution. The grave, as the title announces, is that of Ulrich von Hutten, a 16th century Pietist rebel and proto-nationalist. Upon this imaginary monument are engraved the names: “Jahn,” “Arndt,” “Stein,” “Scharnhorst,” and “Görres,” all members of the famed Lützow Freikorps which distinguished itself in the Wars of Liberation. Finally, Friedrich relies upon a visual trope used again and again throughout his ouvre; a young sapling, nurtured by the rich loam of the immortal German soul.

In our next chapter, we will examine the role which Richard Wagner’s conception of Gesamtkunstwerk (the “Total Work of Art”) played in radicalizing the notions of Jewish materialism, aniconism and a fundamental lack of Einbildungskraft. We will explore how his notion of art expanded upon Absolute Idealism’s vitalist monism, and the growing role of aesthetics in realizing a synthesis of experience and thought. Equally, we will examine how Wagner developed the Hegelian notion of Aufhebung, by positing art as the critical mediating force enabling the individual German body to sublate itself within the body politic. Of course, we will examine how Wagner foreshadowed the still-nascent discourse of Jewish biological difference and degeneracy, and the role which visuality and appearance played within his theories. Finally, we will examine the explicitly Zionist artworks of E. M. Lilien through the prism of the Gesamtkunstwerk, demonstrating Wagner’s posthumous influence upon the development of a radically new corporeal aesthetic for fin-de-siècle German-Jewry.

Chapter 2

May it serve as a lesson to these serious people that I am convinced that art is the highest task and the real metaphysical activity of this life in the sense of the man to whom, as my sublime pioneer on this trail, I wish to dedicate this book....

Friedrich Nietzsche, "Forward to Richard Wagner," *The Birth of Tragedy.

I worked on it [*The Jewish State*] every day to the point of utter exhaustion. My only recreation was listening to Wagner's music in the evening, particularly to Tannhäuser, an opera I attended as often as it was produced....

Theodor Herzl.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that Wagner's conception of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the "Total Work of Art," represented a logical product of the German Idealist concern for notions of totality and, most specifically, the role of aesthetic experience in realizing individual freedom through collective identity. Wagner envisioned *Gesamtkunstwerk* as the acme of performative aesthetics, combining "sound, word, image, and movement" in a manner meant to convey the epic and

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primordial nature of German identity. We will examine how Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk represented an enactment of his philosophical ideas, and how his lasting and posthumous impact upon the cultural life of Western Europe (and beyond) informed multiple reinterpretations of these ideas. Proceeding chronologically, the opening section of the chapter will explore the ways in which Wagner combined elements of early Idealist Naturphilosophie with a developing völkisch nationalism. Continuing our previous discussion of binary oppositions from Chapter One, specific emphasis will be placed upon Wagner’s development of existing anti-Judaic themes as a means for accentuating the authenticity of a German identity freed from its Jewish doppelgänger. As we shall see, Wagner’s brand of Idealism, and anti-Judaism, reflected and informed the emergence of a discourse which located socio-political fitness within the human body. More strikingly, Wagner utilized visualized performance as a vehicle for the communication of these ideas. Thus, the characters and scenarios depicted in many of his stage works, most notably Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring Cycle), were carefully constructed allegories designed to transmit, through display, the insuperable opposition which inhered between German and Jew.

For the second and concluding section of this chapter, I have chosen to engage in an examination of selected artworks by the Galician-born Zionist E.M. Lilien, specifically as seen through the lens of Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk. Although Lilien maintained a healthy epistolary relationship with his wife, little written evidence as to

his aesthetic influences exist. To the knowledge of this author, the only explicit mention Lilien ever made regarding Wagner was an acknowledgement (in a letter to his wife) of having read (ironically) the published correspondence between Wagner and his probable mistress, the minor German poetess Mathilde Wesendonck.\textsuperscript{158} Rather, Lilien’s Zionist illustrations, with their repeated emphasis upon the revitalized, re-sexualized male body as the site of national reconstitution are redolent with many Wagnerian themes. Issues of regeneration and degeneration, mythopoeia, display, and an ethno-national authenticity which emanated from one’s rootedness to a particular geographic locale all figured prominently in Lilien’s work, much as they did in the writings and compositions of Wagner himself. Lilien’s implicit utilization of Wagnerian themes towards the realization of Jewish nationalist hopes clearly admits of paradox and inversion. Again, any definitive demonstration of a self-conscious attempt on the part of Lilien to intentionally recapitulate explicitly Wagnerian themes is both impossible, and besides the point. Rather, this chapter merely seeks to suggest how these themes informed developments within the world of \emph{fin-de-siècle} aesthetics, and particularly in relation to artwork done in the \emph{art nouveau} idiom. Indeed, Wagner’s conception of \emph{Gesamtkunstwerk} seemed to function, in the years and decades following his death, as a durable and capacious palimpsest, permitting repeated erasure and elision. Our analysis strives to get at some of the internal contradictions inherent in \emph{fin-de-siècle} Wagnerism, and how its peculiar malleability arguably contributed to Lilien’s re-aestheticized vision of Jewish existence.

\textsuperscript{158} The full text of this letter, dated the 29\textsuperscript{th} of August, 1905, can be found in E. M. Lilien: \textit{Briefe an seine Frau, 1905-1925}. (Königstein: Athenäum Verlag GmbH, 1985.) 46.
Wagner’s “Total Work of Art” and the Aesthetics of Exclusion

Theodor W. Adorno’s terse aphorism that “Both [Hegel and Wagner] reveal the mythical origin of German [I]dealism”\textsuperscript{159} is an appropriate point of departure, inasmuch as Wagner’s belief in art’s transformative role relative to socio-political membership was a polyphonic variation upon the Idealists’ (and Romantics’) search for a principle of unity in a “post-Providential” philosophical world.\textsuperscript{160} In developing his concept of Gesamtkunstwerk, Wagner recapitulated a central feature of Hegelian thought, wherein pure spirituality is realized in its dialectical relationship to political praxis.\textsuperscript{161} In addition, Wagner clearly absorbed the Idealist interest in “genius,” and the role which the genius would play in realizing the collective Zeitgeist through his individual creations.\textsuperscript{162} In the struggle to reclaim the primordial authenticity of the German people, Wagner regarded himself (and was regarded by scores) as just such a genius. From Hegel, Wagner adopted and adapted the notion of Aufhebung, or dialectical nullification.\textsuperscript{163} However, one may distinguish Wagner’s use of this concept from Hegel’s, as Wagner was far less concerned with offering a philosophy of state.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{159} Adorno, Theodor W. “Musikalische Aphorismen,” in Michael Mack, German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.) 64.
\textsuperscript{160} Bowie, Andrew. Aesthetics and subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.) 120.
\textsuperscript{162} Bowie, Aesthetics and subjectivity, 121.
\textsuperscript{163} Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 65.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
Rather, Wagner’s reliance upon the dynamics of dialectical nullification seemed to reflect F. W. J. Schelling’s emphasis upon mythos as a source of individual and collective unity, and the role which aesthetic experience could play in sublating the selfish drives of an atomized (modern) existence within a re-spiritualized understanding German identity.\textsuperscript{165} Adumbrating Wagner’s own profound criticism of modern, bourgeois German society, and its failure to recognize the mythic origins of its identity, Schelling’s \textit{Naturphilosophie}, particularly as it was developed in his \textit{Philosophy of Art} (1802-03), argued for the re-assertion of mythos as a means for transmitting cultural meaning.\textsuperscript{166} For Schelling, this return to myth would occur through a direct and \textit{unmediated} experience between man and art.\textsuperscript{167} Schelling’s call for a new mythology, one which would overcome rationalism’s bifurcation of intellect and intuition \textit{via} the unifying dynamics of aesthetic experience,\textsuperscript{168} directly informed Wagner’s \textit{Gesamtkunstwerk}. Ultimately, Schelling regarded aesthetic experience as key to unlocking the gateway to a spirituality freed from the problematic separation of subject and object,\textsuperscript{169} and the twin constraints of skepticism and materialism (see Chapter One).\textsuperscript{170} As we shall presently see, one of Wagner’s chief innovations to the German Idealist tradition was his explicit politicization of these ideas.

In his essay “Concerning State and Religion” (1864), Wagner suggested that

\textsuperscript{165} Bowie, \textit{Aesthetics and subjectivity}. 127.
\textsuperscript{166} Bowie, \textit{Aesthetics and subjectivity}. 127.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 127-28.
\textsuperscript{168} Bowie, \textit{Aesthetics and subjectivity}. 129-130.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
politics and spirituality (the latter of which he refers to as “religion”) existed in a state of mutual exclusivity, so that “the highest and purest religion only appeared in the world [in die Welt getreten - literally ‘stepped into the World’] exactly at the point at which it completely separated itself from the state and sublated the latter into itself [und in sich diesen vollständig aufhob - ‘and in itself this completely canceled’] (my translation).”¹⁷¹ In uttering these words, Wagner was hardly advocating political anarchy, or a radically individualist conception of minimal state authority. Despite standing next to Bakunin on the barricades during the Revolution of 1848,¹⁷² the mature Wagner in fact revealed political sympathies which had much more in common with monarchism than representative democracy.¹⁷³ Like Hegel, Wagner’s belief in the transformative power of charismatic leadership corresponded to notions of genius. However, Wagner’s philosophical outlook reflected his preference for the native powers of the artistic (rather than political) genius, and how such genius would transcend the limits of partisan politics through an alliance with the ideal state. Stated simply, Wagner gave aesthetic experience pride of place. Within this matrix, the Gesamtkunstwerk functioned as the primary tool enabling the erection of an authentically völkisch, and thus spiritually unified political community.¹⁷⁴

Thus, Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk did not emerge ex nihilo. Rather, we may regard his philosophy as consonant with an Idealism searching to erase Kantian dualisms. In addition to the influence of Hegel and Schelling, Schopenhauer’s

¹⁷³ Kohn, Hans. The Mind of Germany, 176.
¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 190.
conception of the “Will” as the primary and primal source of all human behavior likely impressed Wagner with its visceral vitality. Perhaps more importantly, Schopenhauer’s focus upon bodily drives as the most immediate expression of the Will, such that “[t]he parts of the body must...completely correspond to the main desires via which the Will manifests itself,”¹⁷⁵ seems to speak directly to the explicit corporeality of Wagner’s art. In addition, since only intuition can provide access to the Will, Schopenhauer regarded aesthetic experience as playing a crucial role in re-spiritualizing human experience.¹⁷⁶ That Schopenhauer focused upon the body as the site and source of a unifying identity between subject and object¹⁷⁷ further foreshadows Wagner’s use of mythic individuality (e.g., Siegfried, Lohengrin) as anthropocentric signifiers for a collective and unifying German identity. In adapting these and other elements of Idealism and early Romanticism, Wagner’s own philosophy revealed the overall trajectory of German thought as the 19th century unfolded, and its gradual but pronounced shift towards a reclamation of the intuitive, the aesthetic, and the bodily as vehicles for cultural and spiritual reconstitution. As Michael Mack has stated in this regard:

> [i]f reason was the medium through which humanity could attain ‘freedom’ in terms of autonomy from empirical reality in the eighteenth century, then by the middle of the nineteenth century it was art that promised to link the individual to the organic unity of the Völk…¹⁷⁸

How did Wagner use Gesamtkunstwerk as a means for radicalizing the anti-Judaic themes present in late 18th/early 19th century German thought, as described in

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¹⁷⁵ Bowie, Aesthetics and subjectivity, 262.
¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 262.
¹⁷⁷ Bowie, Aesthetics and subjectivity, 264.
¹⁷⁸ Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 67.
Chapter One? In one sense, the historical forces at work during Wagner’s lifetime directly inform Wagner’s anti-Jewish conceptions and rhetoric. Germany at mid-century was a conglomeration of states undergoing the initial stages of heavy industrialization; Chapter Three details the effects of this process, in terms of population growth and the progressive urbanization of large portions of German society. A patchwork of emancipatory legislation had wrought a similar process amongst Germany’s Jews, such that the pursuit of a bourgeois existence, and the socio-cultural integration which it represented, seemed increasingly feasible. For those Germans opposed to Jewish emancipation and the social mobility which it enabled, the familiar themes of Jewish materialism and greed were duly vitalized. In an open letter of June 1862, published in the Bremen newspaper Courier an der Weser, Wilhelm Marr expressed just such a perception, arguing that “[t]ribal peculiarities cannot be legislated away with the stroke of a pen,” warning his intended audience (pro-emancipation supporters) that “[y]ou will create allies for despotism, and through the exclusivity inherent in the tribe you will form a limited company which viribus unitis will also be detrimental to the economic life of your state....”¹⁷⁹ Likewise, Wagner regarded Germany’s Jews as both the primary source, and principal agents, of a societal degeneration enacted through the mechanisms of an economic system increasingly based upon capitalist exchange and finance. Echoing Kant’s contention that Jews were purely concerned with empirical matters, operating under “no other

¹⁷⁹ Moshe Zimmerman. “From Radicalism to Antisemitism,” 249.
incentive except the goods of this world,” Wagner accused the German-Jews of exploitative intentions, of utilizing their intrinsically materialist instincts in order to achieve political and economic dominion.\textsuperscript{181}

Although Wagner’s focus upon the political nature of Jewish machinations might well have been derived from Kantian sources (see Chapter One, Section One), it nevertheless coincided with the increasing politicization of German society as a whole over the course of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The chasm which had traditionally existed in Germany between the realms of state and \textit{Kultur}, so clearly reflected in the cosmopolitanism of the \textit{Aufklärung},\textsuperscript{182} was giving way to a renewed sense of concordance between the two. Although aristocratic prerogatives and institutional backwardness remained well-entrenched at least until German unification (and, arguably, were re-institutionalized by the Prussians themselves), the progressive growth of a self-identifying middle-class, the \textit{Bildungsbürgertum}, accompanied the spread of populist politics and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{183} The most obvious expression of these changes was reflected in the growth of Liberalism, a movement whose fortunes within Germany were fatally, if not immediately, compromised by the failed revolution of 1848. Hans Kohn has suggested that part of this failure can be laid squarely at the feet of German Liberalism itself: Citing the influential role which historians from Leopold von Ranke to Leopold von Treitschke played in formulating 19\textsuperscript{th} century German

\begin{footnotesize}
180 Mack, Michael. \textit{German Idealism and the Jew}. 34.
181 Ibid., 67.
\end{footnotesize}
attitudes towards Liberalism, Kohn argues that an “idealization of state and power” represented a consistent leitmotif within 19th century German culture.\textsuperscript{184} Such deference to authority ultimately tempered the classical humanism of the Aufklärung, and revealed the tensions which would continue to persist between the desire for national unity and the pursuit of individual liberties.\textsuperscript{185} The hopes for civil equality and reform which Germany’s Jews entertained prior to, and during, the revolution of 1848 were to go unfulfilled for another twenty-three years. In reality, those who were prompted to revolt from purely ideological motives were in the minority; the majority of the rioters, such as farmers and craftsmen, artisans and a rapidly increasing urban “proletariat,” were driven by food shortages, unemployment, inflation and the like.\textsuperscript{186} No longer solely the realm of the student Burschenschaften (fraternities), or elitist societies such as the “Christian German Dinner Club,”\textsuperscript{187} the appeal of anti-Jewish (and soon to be anti-Semitic) rationales and rhetoric for explaining social and economic dysfunction coincided with an increasing industrialization. Recursively, industrialization increased the production of periodicals and other mass-produced printed materials; anti-Jewish sentiments could thus be disseminated to an ever-widening audience.\textsuperscript{188} Further, the growing tensions between worker and employer, rural artisan and urban factory worker, and the multiplicity of political parties designed

\textsuperscript{184} Kohn, The Mind of Germany, 131-32.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 137-38.
\textsuperscript{187} James, The Murderous Paradise, 122, 105. A famous social club, known for its vociferous anti-Jewish sentiments, as well as its collection of distinguished literati, such as Clemens Brentano, Ludwig Achim von Arnim and others. -A.S.
\textsuperscript{188} James, The Murderous Paradise, 140.
to represent these discrete socio-cultural and economic classes, only increased the appeal of a German nationalism which highlighted the distinction between autochthonous nationhood and the purportedly Jewish sources of modernity’s various ills (class divisions, economic exploitation, etc.).

In 1850, Wagner provided modern German nationalism, and modern anti-Semitism, with a powerful literary template. His tract *Judaism in Music* relies on the theme of Jewish rootlessness, typified in the myth of Ahasuerus, in order to accentuate the primordial bonds between the true German and his/her *Heimat* (homeland). Mutatis mutandis, Wagner’s argument echoed J. J. Wincklemann’s contention that aesthetic expression is directly reflective of ethno-national and geographic characteristics (see Chapter One). Due to their lack of authentic people-hood, Wagner argued that the Jews were eternal foreigners, cultural interlopers whose inherent lack of true spirituality expressed itself in an aesthetic mimesis which was both false and empty. In comparison, Germans displayed a cultural integrity which could only be inherited. Expressed variously through authenticity in language (*Urmuttersprache*), location (*Ursitzen* and *Urheimat*), and bodies (*Urvölk*), Wagner argued that even a multi-generational presence upon German soil could not alter the intrinsic qualities of the Jewish character. If Kant and his immediate Idealist successors regarded Jewish failings as contingent upon a certain approach to life, they nevertheless implied - at the very least - that change was possible. In Wagner, we find one of the first explicit

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189 Ibid.,
190 Ibid., 139.
191 James, *The Murderous Paradise*, 139.
192 Ibid.
expressions of Jewish immutability.

Despite the marked shift towards political reaction which Wagner’s eventual identification with monarchism bespoke, he nevertheless continued to conceive of society and culture in legitimately revolutionary terms. In this sense, Wagner’s philosophy makes an interesting counterpart to that of one of his contemporaries, Karl Marx. However, unlike Marx’s vision of revolution through class consciousness and struggle, Wagner wholly rejected the reality of distinctions based upon class criteria; there was only one true Germany, the Germany of the Urvölker. Despairing of the fractured nature of modern German life, with its multiple antagonisms based upon economics and location, Wagner regarded his Gesamtkunstwerk as a powerful antidote, an experiential phenomenon which would precipitate a return to spiritual and national wholeness. Key to the spiritual reawakening of the Deutsches Völkstum was the recognition, by an alienated and atomized German society, of the degenerative power of the Jew. Indeed, the imputation of great power to such a spiritually bankrupt group, whether in the form of economics or politics, is a striking feature of Wagnerian thought.\textsuperscript{193} Nevertheless, Wagner was able to wield this charge as a sharp rhetorical weapon. In the same text, Das Judentum in der Musik (Judaism in Music), Wagner used the past tense when referring to Jewish power, wherein “the power, which we were lacking, belonged to the Jews…. (emphasis mine)”\textsuperscript{194} Quite likely this was an intentional flourish, meant to suggest the eschatological proximity of a new age, wherein the Jew within German art, politics, and society would be excised.

\textsuperscript{193} Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 70.

\textsuperscript{194} Mack, German Idealism and the Jew, 70.
Substantially more could be said on the complexities of Wagnerian thought, particularly as regards Jews and Judaism. However, in deference to space constraints, it behooves us to move on to a consideration of Gesamtkunstwerk in action.

In 1851, Wagner included a description of the Nibelung dwarf Mime in his verse draft of Der Junge Siegfried (Young Siegfried). The text below reproduces it only in part:

Mime, the Nibelung, is alone. He is small and bent, somewhat deformed and hobbling. His head is abnormally large, his face is a dark ashen colour [sic] and wrinkled, his eyes small and piercing, with red rims, his grey beard long and scrubby, his head bald and covered with a red cap….there must be nothing approaching caricature in all this….it is only in moments of extreme excitement that he becomes exteriorly ludicrous…. (italics in original). 195

Within this brief description, a description Adorno suggests Wagner later elided from the final text due to an all-too-prescient sense of unintended similarity between the artist and his creation, 196 we find cathected into one character virtually the entire gamut of traits Wagner imputed to the Jewish psyche and soma (Figure 1b). As Marc A. Weiner has stated in relation to this point, “[i]n his [Wagner’s] world, the Jew’s difference was discerned in his purportedly idiosyncratic corporeal signs (such as stature, voice, smell, hair, gait, gestures, sexuality, and physiognomy).” 197 The character of Mime, with all his readily apparent defects, again suggests the influence of J.J. Winckelmann, and an art-historical discourse which considered outward beauty as a self-reflexive sign of inward nobility. Winckelmann’s paradigmatic essay, Thoughts

196 Ibid.
197 Weiner, Richard Wagner, 8.
on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks (1755), with its conflation of aesthetics and nationality is a case in point (again, See Chapter One, Section Two for a fuller discussion of Winckelmann and his philosophy). Wagner’s literary works are themselves peppered with paens to Ancient Greece and its aesthetic genius, particularly in his text Oper und (Opera and Drama), published in 1851. Of equal importance, Wincklemann’s essay reflected the growing impact which Enlightenment era anthropological scholarship, with its suggestion of an axiomatic link between appearance and racial difference, had upon the nascent field of art-history. Not a value-neutral discourse, the erection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and physical taxonomies helped to clarify one’s own communal or national identity, an issue of acute concern for many late 18th/early 19th century German intellectuals.

As the 19th century progressed, the growing impact of anthropologically-grounded taxonomies upon German culture found expression across an increasingly broad spectrum. The influence which these developments had upon Wagner’s perception of Jews and Judaism was given voice in his book-length essay Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik (German Art and German Politics), published in 1867. Although ostensibly a continuation of the arguments posited in Das Judentum in der

Musik, with its focus upon the predatory nature of Jewish finance and its inimical impact upon German society, it nevertheless innovates by using anthropological (and implicitly zoological) terms in order to underscore its central contentions. For example, Wagner argued that the French arts, and the French theatre in particular, displayed an essentially “ape”-like (Affen) quality, signaling a reliance upon the imitation - “nachamenden” - of culturally-external forms.202 This Wagner attributed to the corrupting influence of the Jews.203 By contrast, true German art involved “reproducing” - “nachbildenden” - something which only a human was capable of.204 The distinction which Wagner drew in Das Judentum in der Musik between “Dichter” (“poet”) and “Denker” (“thinker”), wherein the former corresponded to the authentically spiritual artist, and the latter to the Jewish parvenu seeking to implicate himself within German society, was thus given a resonant corporeality in this later restatement of the binary opposition existing between German and Jew.205

In large measure, Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk strove to perform these differences through a combination of visual, auditory and physical signifiers.206 In referring to this nexus, Weiner calls the resulting formations “corporeal iconographies,” a term which concisely captures the sensual and bodily nature of Gesamtkunstwerken such as Das Ring or Parsifal.207 Indeed, Wagner’s self-directed admonition against caricature in relation to the character of Mime (see quoted except

204 Ibid.
205 Ibid., 71-72.
207 Weiner, Richard Wagner, 10.
above) bespoke of the seriousness with which he intended *Der Ring* to be received. By definition, caricature implies intentional distortion, and therefore a departure from what is actual or real. By contrast, Wagner sought to embody the “reality” of Jewish bodily difference by carefully enacting its perceived characteristics in a manner which was intended to avoid obvious farcicality.

Equally, notions of eternality were of crucial concern for Wagner. *Der Ring das Nibelungen* was intended to convey, through a combination of significations, the meta-historical nature of German ethno-national/racial identity. Wagner did this potently by literally “familiarizing” racial endogamy, focusing (for example) upon the fortunes of separated siblings. *Die Walküre*, the second of the four operas comprising *Der Ring*, opens with a moment of *völkisch* communion, as the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde recognize their own identity in the eyes of the other, providing a “metaphor for like kind recognizing its own hidden essence in the external signs of its similarity…”

Although not part of *Der Ring*, Wagner’s *Parsifal* engages in the same dynamic, whereby the eponymous protagonist is initially unaware of his own identity, whilst the audience, previously informed, must wait for the moment of self-recognition. In employing this technique, Wagner was allegorizing German societal degeneration, a degeneration directly resulting from a failure of self-recognition. For Wagner, contemporary German society was rapidly disintegrating due to an increasing failure amongst Germans to look beyond facile distinctions based upon class or political affiliations. Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* was intended to recondition its

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audiences, in order that they might duly recognize the mythically-predicated integrity of German identity. By placing the audience in a position of *a priori* knowledge, that is, structurally outside the *Musikdrama*, Wagner gifted his audience the agency of familial/racial recognition, and therefore of regeneration. Stated differently, participation in *Gesamtkunstwerk* in-corporated identity, as it:

metaphorically constitute[s] a body reflecting the bodily presence of those who view it, but the physicality of that metaphorical idea will be essential, for the difference between their bodies and those of the world it rejects [the world of the Jew] will be perceived as real…

Likewise, the audience is meant to recognize the Eternal Jew within the salacious and greedy Alberich, brother of Mime and coveter of those things which are neither his racial patrimony (the *Rheingold* and its maidens), nor his spiritual due. Like Mime, his fundamental materialism, iterated variously through the character traits of avarice, egoism and sexual rapacity, is written upon his very face, so ugly the Rhinemaidens fall to mocking him. However, like all members of his race (*Nibelung/Jew*), Alberich cannot recognize his own ugliness, precisely because he lacks the ability to truly “see.” Ironically, in true positivist fashion, Wagner believed that such ocular deficiencies corresponded to all aspects of the Jewish character. The external or physiological signs of degeneracy (e.g., macular disease) were mirrored in internal (spiritual) handicaps, such as moral emptiness or aesthetic dilettantism. In *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, Wagner expostulates on this point, positing that:

the sensory capacity for sight [*die sinnliche Anschauungsgabe*] belonging to the Jews was never such as to allow them to produce visual artists; their eyes are preoccupied with matters much more

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practical than beauty and the spiritual content of things in the phenomenal world...these artists [Jewish painters] are no different in attitude toward their visual art than modern Jewish composers are to music...(emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{210}

For Wagner, the term \textit{Anschauung} fulfilled a function similar to that which \textit{Einbildungskraft} did for Kant (see Chapter One, Section Two). More than merely denoting visual sense-perception, \textit{Anschauung} implied the demonstration of an intuitive or imaginative capacity. Like our earlier discussion of the term \textit{nachahmenden}, a lack of \textit{Anschauungsgabe} actually engendered a \textit{total} lack of original creative capabilities, such that the Jew could only imitate authentic art. In selecting the name “Mime,” Wagner surely intended to communicate the notion of Jewish mimesis in the most literal manner possible.\textsuperscript{211} Beyond merely reaffirming a sense of Jewish banality, this imputation of absolute unoriginality demonstrated that Jews could not partake in the \textit{Gesamtkunstwerk}. Taken one logical step further, the Jew therefore \textit{always} remained outside the \textit{Völksgemeinschaft} (the organically-generated, and therefore authentic, German polity). If, through error, he was admitted “inside” (emancipation), his unchecked presence would eventually destroy the German nation through a process of cultural and racial entropy.\textsuperscript{212}

\textbf{Degeneration/Regeneration}

\textsuperscript{211} Weiner, Richard Wagner, 277.
\textsuperscript{212} Mack, Michael. \textit{German Idealism and the Jew}, 69.
After his death in 1883, Wagner’s ideas continued to exert a powerful influence over the socio-cultural aesthetics of fin-de-siècle Europe. In part, this was undoubtedly a function of the continuing popularity of his operatic works. After all, in an era preceding the advent of the motion-picture\textsuperscript{213} or the sporting match\textsuperscript{214} as social events drawing large and diverse segments of the population, music and theatre productions continued to represent a primary loci of collective cultural experience. However, Wagner’s profound influence upon what we may loosely term the fin-de-siècle outlook extended far beyond a simple faddishness. George Bernard Shaw’s The Perfect Wagnerite, published some fifteen years after Wagner’s death, details the striking, and frequently contradictory, ways in which Wagnerism was embodied and enacted.\textsuperscript{215} The protean nature and continuing topicality of Wagnerian themes within fin-de-siècle Europe is illustrated by Shaw’s own brand of Wagnerism. An Irish dramatist, literary critic, and Socialist spokesperson tremendously famous in his own right, Shaw regarded Der Ring as a telling metaphor for modern life:

…with all its gods and giants and dwarfs, its water-maidens and Valkyries, its wishing-cap, magic ring, enchanted sword, and miraculous treasure, is a drama of today…[i]t could not have been written before the second half of the nineteenth century, because it deals with events which were only then consummating themselves….(emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{216}

\textsuperscript{213} Bardische, Maurice and Robert Brasillach. The History of Motion Pictures. Trans. Iris Barry. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1938.)
\textsuperscript{214} Jacob Borut. “Jews in German Sports during the Weimar Republic,” in Emancipation Through Muscles. Brenner, Michael and Gideon Reuveni, Eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.)
\textsuperscript{215} Shaw, George Bernard. The Perfect Wagnerite: A Commentary on “The Ring of the Niblungs” (London: Grant Richards, 1898.) 1, 2, 5-10.
Shaw then offered a partial listing of the varieties of Wagnerism which he had encountered: wealthy sycophants and social *parvenus*, aesthetic progressives who accepted Wagner’s tremendous impact upon the structure and nature of operatic works, without necessarily accepting his socio-political outlook; “fanatical” Wagnerites who accepted his life, work, and philosophy whole-cloth.\textsuperscript{217} Of this last group, Shaw was particularly critical, commenting that “to be devoted to Wagner merely as a dog is devoted to his master…reverencing his superiority without understanding it, is no true Wagnerism….”\textsuperscript{218} In leveling this criticism, Shaw was revealing the extent to which Wagnerism was a relative term, existing in multiple incarnations along of spectrum which included individuals maintaining highly divergent, and often antithetical, socio-political and ideological alignments.

Developing his artistic voice within the culturally fertile environment of *fin-de-siècle Mitteleuropa*, E.M. Lilien was ideally placed to absorb these multiple “Wagnerisms”.

E. M. Lilien was a Galician-born Jew who came to Zionism via the path of *fin-de-siècle* thought and art. Spending the final years of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century immersed in the vibrant artistic environments of *Secessionsstil* Vienna and *Jugendstil* Berlin, Lilien embraced the *art nouveau* vocabulary as his own.\textsuperscript{219} Prior to his move westward, Lilien received formal art training at Lemberg’s *Realschule*, and the Cracow Art Academy under the well-known realist painter Jan Matejko (who, incidentally, trained another

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{217} Sutton, Emma. *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism*, 2.
\textsuperscript{218} Sutton, Aubrey Beardsley, 2.
\end{footnotes}
famous Jewish artist and *Landsmann*, Mauryco Gottlieb).\textsuperscript{220} However, biographical evidence suggests that Lilien’s earlier apprenticeship as a sign-maker was as important for his later development than any formal schooling he may have subsequently received.\textsuperscript{221} After brief sabbaticals in both Vienna and Munich, both of which came before his twenty-fifth year, Lilien settled in Berlin in 1899.\textsuperscript{222} Once there, Lilien quickly became acquainted with the avant-garde *Die Kommenden*, a loose-knit group of artists and literati which counted Stefan Zweig as one its most prominent members.\textsuperscript{223} Berlin was at this time on the cutting edge of Central European culture, and it appears more than likely that Lilien developed his taste for *art nouveau* aesthetics and revolutionary politics during this time. As Michael Stanislawski has stated in this regard, “there is a parallel between Lilien’s glide from Galician poverty to Socialism, cosmopolitanism, decadence, and then to Jewish nationalism and the ideological and personal trajectories of other famous Zionists...most notably Theodor Herzl.”\textsuperscript{224} Anticipating later developments, Lilien had already regularly published his art in the Socialist *Süddeutsche Postillon* during his days in Munich.\textsuperscript{225} Soon after coming to Berlin, he began work for the cultural magazine *Die Jugend*.\textsuperscript{226} Nevertheless, until his embracement of Zionism, it seems that Lilien remained open to the welter of intersecting aesthetic, literary, and political forces working upon Berlin’s

\textsuperscript{220} Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 102.  
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 151.  
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{225} Schmidt, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress*, 152.  
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
avant-garde. 227

However paradoxical, it is therefore somewhat less surprising that Lilien’s first major series of (published) illustrations on specifically Jewish themes came with the publication of Juda (1900), a series of “profoundly philosemitic” poems written by Börries, Freiherr von Münchhausen. Münchhausen was scion to an aristocratic family, literary dilettante and Die Kommen den fixture, and a future National Socialist. 228 While the ultimate aim of Münchhausen’s folio of verses has been disputed, 229 its glorification of a mythologized Jewish past which was sensual, physical, and vital provided the soon-to-be Zionist with the perfect platform for displaying his talents. The published version of Juda made Lilien a household name almost overnight amongst acculturated German-speaking Jews, both those whom had already embraced Zionism (like Martin Buber), and those who wanted nothing to do with it. 230 Juda itself is loaded with ideational complexities, and deserves scrutiny. Despite its subject matter, it was not necessarily intended exclusively, or even predominantly, for a Jewish audience. Nevertheless, its publication marked a definitive juncture in Lilien’s artist career. His sudden fame amongst an ever-widening German-speaking Jewish public seems to have led Lilien to a crystallization of purpose; from this point onwards, he created art almost exclusively for, and about, Jews. Lilien’s meticulous black-and-white illustrations lent themselves to mass reproduction and distribution, a fact that deserves

227 Schmidt, The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 152.
228 Ibid., 98.
229 Stanislawski suggestion that Münchhausen’s paean to Biblical Jewish life represented a veiled call for Jewish emigration out of Germany is plausible given his eventual turn to National Socialism. -A.S.
230 Schmidt, The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 158.
emphasis when considering Lilien’s overall impact upon the aesthetic sensibilities and socio-political outlook of fin-de-siècle European Jewry.\textsuperscript{231}

*DAS SEHNSUCHTLIED* (*The Longing Song*, Figure 2b), one of the plates from *Juda*, is a resonant cathexis of fin-de-siècle aesthetic themes. The sculpted Grecian forms of this Adam and Eve clasp one-another in a lushly-adorned Eden; the young tree transecting their embrace is almost certainly meant to represent both procreative success. The Hellenic flavor of this illustration, with its focus upon the idealized human form, faithfully corresponds to the deep impact of neo-classicism upon the aesthetics of *art nouveau*. The emphasis upon curvilinear forms, also a stock-in-trade of *art nouveau* art, reinforces the basic organismism communicated by the piece. However, one may also read this piece as a reference to *völkisch* notions of the *Ursprung*, the primordial source from which a truly “original” people emanates. Like Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Lilien’s *Das Sehnsuchtlied* implies a rejection a current: socio-cultural models in preference for a renewal of authentic spirituality through a return to mythic origins. Girding the sense of national epigenesis communicated by this piece, Eve’s fluid tresses gently embrace Adam’s priapus, signaling either (feminine) submission, or perhaps a life-affirming *power* native to the female sex. The peacock’s rich plumage, running in line with Eve’s hair, symbolically reinforce notions of fertility. However, what is most striking about this plate is its complete effacement of Jewish particulars. Of course, the act of visually depicting this most Jewish of stories was, in itself, arguably without precedent. Nevertheless, these figures appear thoroughly

\textsuperscript{231} Schmidt, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress*, 153.
Hellenic and/or Aryan, a fact which both suggests the absorption of anti-Semitic stereotypes, and its subversion (or inversion) towards establishing a wholly new, or perhaps regenerated, Jewish visual aesthetic. The frisson inherent in this, and many other illustrations done for Juda, such as Rahab von Jericho (Figure 3b), did not go unremarked upon by a variety of early Zionist activists, some of whom imagined themselves art-critics. Martin Buber rationalized Lilien’s work thusly:

The sincere understanding of ‘the other’ [von Münchhausen] helped the Jew [Lilien] to formulate ever more clearly the idea of his people’s suffering and hope. The German, who merely wanted to produce a cycle of biblical poems, happily received the news of a self-redemption of this people which he considered dead and whose sons he perceived as degenerate....(emphasis mine)\(^{232}\)

One would be hard-pressed to overemphasize the convoluted reasoning in this review, its apologetic tenor, or its implicit confirmation of a fin-de-siècle German anti-Semitism which increasingly conceived of the Jew and the German in discrete terms. Perhaps Buber the Zionist meant to accentuate this discreteness, but his comments just as plausibly reflect the persistently, and problematically, fractured nature of 19th century German-Jewish identity. How exactly did Lilien’s “sincere understanding” of von Münchhausen’s “otherness” help him to formulate the “idea” of Jewish “hope”? How can one “sincerely” understand something so alien and separate in nature?

Theodor Zlocisti, the physician, gymnast and Zionist activist who most likely played a leading role in Lilien’s own turn to Zionism,\(^{233}\) was more practical (and Wagnerian) in

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\(^{232}\) Schmidt, The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 159.

\(^{233}\) Ibid., 151.
his assessment of *Juda*:

He [Münchhausen] relishes the mastery of the old Nibelungen meter. There is also something of the elan, the energy, and the defiance of the old Nibelungen in him...[H]is world is the world of heroes with the ringing slogans of the nobleman, straightforward desires and emotions...of majestic greatness...*Münchhausen does not know the suffering*....(emphasis mine)\(^234\)

In fact, Zlocisti’s description of Münchhausen’s poetry could serve equally well as a reading of Lilien’s *Rahab von Jericho*. In fact, *Rahab von Jericho*, with its knightly air, could plausibly be a depiction of *Siegfried* with his fearsome sword *Nothung*. Arguably, Buber’s and Zlocisti’s comments spoke to the radical departure in tenor and substance from contemporaneous *self*-visualizations of Jewish life. Apart from its explicitly Biblical theme, the erstwhile lack of anything identifiably “Jewish” within *Das Sehnsuchtlied* was such that, in writing about it in 1906, the Jewish (and Zionist) art-historian M.S. Levussove attempted to attach some Jewish meaning to it:

In the drawing of the female, with her sensuous wealth of hair, Lilien showed a full appreciation of the physical type; yet, the *peculiarly Jewish* side of his art is shown in this, that despite the pose, subject, and treatment, he does not, like the other artists of the Secession, leave, as the abiding result of the picture, an impression *alone of fleshliness*....(emphasis mine)\(^235\)

However, despite the confusing nature of *Juda*, its popularity amongst Central European Jews suggests that its depiction of “muscular Jews” from antiquity must have transmitted a sense of Jewish pride to the owner of a copy. Perhaps it functioned

\(^{234}\) Ibid., 16
as a striking departure from other contemporaneous images of Jewish existence, such as Leopold Pilichowski’s drawing entitled the *The Tired Ones* (Figure 4b). Of course, Pilichowski’s piece was far from exclusively representative of European Jewish self-visualization during this period; the work of Isidor Kaufmann is a case in point.\(^{236}\) However, *Das Sehnsuchtlid*, *Rahab von Jericho*, and the other plates in *Juda* clearly provided a powerful visual counterpoint to the many anti-Semitic caricatures featured in popular *fin-de-siècle* German-language magazines, such as Vienna’s *Kikeriki* (Figure 5b). This is not to say that Lilien’s artwork did not feature bedraggled and tired Jews, suffering under the weight of an epochal oppression. Lilien’s *ouvre* was in fact tremendously varied, crossing the *art nouveau* spectrum from the sacral to the highly erotic. However, when Lilien *did* feature bearded Jews experiencing *Judenschmerz*,\(^{237}\) such as in *Der Judische Mai* (*The Jewish May*, 1903) (Figure 6b), a palpable sense of mythic redemption and primordial nationhood is almost always present. Again, it would be biographically insupportable to attribute any explicit Wagnerism to Lilien, in the same way one can with Aubrey Beardsley, for example.\(^{238}\) It is rather a question of the larger aesthetic environment in which Lilien lived and worked. The cumulative impact of Wagnerism upon *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics was such that, Hans Hofstätter, a well-known art and social critic from the 20\(^{th}\) century, considered *art nouveau* to be “the last European movement in search of the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’,” a “counterweight to oppose the soulless mechanization and

\(^{237}\) Ibid., 223-236.
industrialization which, from the middle of the 19th century onwards, has started to dominate the entire world.\footnote{Schmidt, \textit{The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress}, 153.}

Chronologically, \textit{Das Sehnsuchtlied}, and the other illustrations created for \textit{Juda}, pre-dated Lilien’s explicitly Zionist artwork. Although biographical data is sparse, it appears that Lilien first embraced Zionism in 1900, at about the same time as \textit{Juda} went into publication.\footnote{Stanislawski, \textit{Zionism and the Fin de Siècle}, 107.} While his illustrations for \textit{Juda} imply a self-conscious shift in emphasis to things Jewish, and specifically nationalist in the Zionist sense, a careful examination of certain illustrations done subsequent to Lilien’s turn to Zionism suggest that Lilien was also capable of offering an unfiltered recapitulation of Wagnerian anti-Semitism. Lilien’s \textit{An der Nähmaschine (At the Sewing Machine - Figure 7b)}, one of a series of illustrations accompanying the publication of Berthold Feiwel’s translation of Morris Rosenfeld’s \textit{Lieder des Ghetto (Songs of the Ghetto)} in 1902 or 1903,\footnote{Brüger, Lothar, \textit{E. M. Lilien} (Berlin: Verlag Benjamin Harz, 1922.) 121.} offers a depiction of Jewish depravity astonishing in its detail. On one level, the illustration can be read from the perspective of Rosenfeld’s commitment to (an anti-Zionist) Socialism; Lilien’s own identification with Leftist politics most probably continued after his turn to Zionism.\footnote{Stanislawski, \textit{Zionism and the Fin de Siècle}, 104.} Lilien’s straightforward depiction of a sweatshop worker in traditional \textit{Ostjude}n garb is jarringly punctuated by the corpulent, hermaphroditic frame of the vampire whose wings morbidly fill the picture plane. Clearly intended as a visceral indictment of capitalist exploitation, the bejeweled sweatshop owner is depicted literally consuming the lifeblood of his worker through a

nargila. In reference to this illustration, Milly Heyd has argued that Lilien was inspired by Aubrey Beardsley’s *Ali Baba* (Figure 8b). Whether or not such is in fact the case (Beardsley’s *Ali Baba* predated *An der Nähmaschine* by roughly five years), the nexus in iconographic elements is nevertheless fascinating, particularly if one considers Beardsley’s explicit, but generally subversive, Wagnerism. More importantly, Lilien’s depiction of a “clearly depraved, degraded, freakish, bloodsucking Jewish boss” resonates with anti-Semitic topoi: the Jew as a parasitic, perverse, sexually rapacious yet androgynous sub-human creature. To be fair, such topoi were clearly not limited to Wagnerism. By the fin-de-siècle, European anti-Semitism had progressed beyond Wagner’s eminently aestheticized version of Jew hatred. Nonetheless, the implication of base materialism, greed, and socio-political parasitism to this vampire Jew thunders with the sort of 19th century German philosophical anti-Judaism with which much of this chapter has been concerned. Certainly, *Das Lieder des Ghetto* was intended for a Jewish audience; this, however, only reinforces the question of inversion versus absorption.

As hinted at above, one examination for Lilien’s iconographic choices relates to the perception, prevalent amongst late 19th century Germans and German-Jews alike, of a fundamental Jewish aniconism. Chapter One dealt with the theme of Jewish aniconism in some depth, and demonstrated the critical role which it played in reifying notions of an insuperable difference between German and Jew. The successive

244 Sutton, Aubrey Beardsley. Chapter 1.
absorption of this idea by leading figures within the German-Jewish community reflects the extent to which attempts were made to view this perceived deficiency in a positive light. Nevertheless, the claim that visual representation constitutes a window into the collective soul (and body) of the cultural community which renders it, a claim appearing again and again in German art-historical writings from J. J. Wincklemann to Richard Wagner and Karl Schnasse, and again in the *fin-de-siècle* work of Josef Strzygowski,²⁴⁷ axiomatically denies even the possibility of an authentic national status to Jews. The very legitimacy which was given to this claim by both non-Jews and Jews, despite the rich world of Jewish sacral art which had continued to exist in Europe and elsewhere for centuries, resulted in the perception amongst early Zionists that a veritable *tabula rasa* existed. Integral nationhood thus absolutely required the creation of an authentically Jewish art, where “none” had existed before. The call for an aesthetic revolution also jived well with the overall world-historical tenor of early Zionism. Indeed, many early Zionist ideologues recapitulated Wagner’s fundamental rejection of 19th century *Bürgerlich* mores and modes, in preference for a collective, mythopoetic past which was at once radically forward-looking. Martin Buber, Lilien’s champion within Zionist movement, revealed both his qualified acceptance of Jewish aniconism, and the Wagnerian themes of race, blood and soil. In editing the 1903 anthology *Juedischer Kunstler (Jewish Art)*, Buber echoed Wagner in accepting the premise of Jewish racial characteristics, and its impact upon Jewish aniconism.

However, the racial predilection for non-visuality, that is, the status of the Jew as an

“Ohrenmensch” (a “person-of-the-ears”), was not “final and irreversible, but rather the product of... climatic conditions, the economic and social structure of the community,” and so on. We will here this refrain again when we consider the German-Jewish gymnastics movement in the next chapter. Thus, previous debilitating did not prevent present and future regeneration. Echoing the redemptive tenor of Wagner’s völkisch nationalism, Buber’s called for a mythic re-grounding of collective Jewish consciousness, one which would surmount all the cumulative depredations of historical contingency. This mythic re-grounding found its visual voice in Lilien’s Zionist iconography.

In Die Erschaffung des Menschen (The Creation of Man, Figure 9b), created (ironically) for the same collection of poems as An der Nähmaschine, Lilien particularized the Zionist implications of his art. His use of a frieze-like format recapitulated a compositional technique frequently employed by Secessionstil artists such as Gustav Klimt, and again locates his art firmly within the neo-classical tradition, as filtered through Jugendstil sensibilities. Similarly, the winged figures featured in the plate are eminently pagan, suggesting (amongst other things) the myth of Icarus and Daedalus. In fact, were it not for the unmistakable profile of Theodor Herzl atop a feathered, nude and highly-muscled physique, this work might be taken as an illustration for Wagner’s Götterdämmerung. Nevertheless, this single artistic decision entirely transforms the work’s basic meaning. Herzl, with lyre in hand, strides

249 Ibid.
confidently upon the mythical soil of a newly redefined Jewish national home, his Almeiland. Virtually every element of Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk is present here: a fertile and verdant land supporting (Jewish) ethno-national generation and regeneration, peripatetic motion resonant with action, masculine vitality, and a potent sexuality sublimated in the service of higher aims. Finally, we can even “hear” music—a melody heralding redemption, and recognition of the integral nature of Jewish nationhood. Of course, elements of this work may legitimately be read in a contrary fashion. Most notably, the pre-pubescent, androgynous youth in the foreground seems strangely lost amongst the giants who tower over him; one might even interpret this as a veiled suggestion to pederasty. However, seen as a “total” work of art, one may equally argue that Lilien’s use of decadent imagery was in fact intended to represent the very youthfulness and vitality of the Zionist project.

The paganism suggested by Lilien’s near-deification of the human form placed his art, and by extension, the Zionist movement itself, in a rather complicated position. Viewed from broader vistas, Wagner’s consistent references to the profoundly Christian nature of his art and philosophy likewise strikes a similarly dissonant chord, considering the pre-Christian mythos underpinning Der Ring. However, Wagner never had to contend with claims of Christian aniconism, and in fact benefited from a long tradition of symbiosis between Christian and pre-Christian German cultural elements (see Chapter One for the discussion of German Pietism). In some sense, Lilien’s unorthodox conflation of secular, Jewish and pagan iconography reflected the

251 Mack, German Idealism and the Jew. 70.
internal divisions informing early Zionist identity (or more accurately, identities).

Already by the first years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Zionism was undergoing a painful adolescence. Most famously, there was the split which developed between the highly secular and eminently European wing of “political” Zionists, under the leadership of Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, and the “Democratic F[r]action” of “cultural” Zionists, led by Ahad Ha’am and Martin Buber, to which Lilien belonged.\textsuperscript{252}

Interestingly enough, despite Herzl’s vision of a thoroughly secularized new Jewish society in Palestine, he and his faction actively courted the Orthodox Zionists in an attempt to reinforce their political position, and outflank Ha’am and his confederates. The history of these and later developments is well known, and does not merit restatement here. Nevertheless, Lilien’s reaction to these developments is of some note, as it arguably informed the substance and symbolism of some of his later Zionist works, including \textit{Mose zebricht die Tafeln} (\textit{Moses Breaks the Tablets} - Figure 10b).

Speaking at the Fifth Zionist Congress of 1901, the first Congress at which his artwork was displayed, Lilien, despite belonging to the F[r]action, attempted to strike a note of conciliation amongst the antagonists, stating that:

\begin{quote}
When I hear discussions about culture and religion, it always reminds me of the following scene: two good friends meet in a dark alley, and begin to fight, not recognizing one another. They fight so long, until they gasp in pain, and then they recognize one another and go home together...I understand very well the mistrust of our conservative [Orthodox Zionists] friends regarding culture. I am not surprised by it, since the form of culture which Judaism encountered before the rise of Zionism was a foreign, not a Jewish culture...But today things are different...Culture will make us into complete Jews, will enrich our
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{252} Stanislawski, Zionism and the Fin de Siècle, 108.
Jewishness…Judaism has nothing to fear from culture, quite the contrary…..(emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{253}

Lilien executed \textit{Mose zebricht die Tafeln} in 1914, arguably at the height of his creative powers, and most certainly at the peak of his renown. This image is of particular significance, and can be read as Lilien’s attempt to combine, and ultimately resolve, the diverse and often contradictory elements informing his art, and Zionism itself. Within this work, we are made witness to the \textit{Ur}-event informing traditional Jewish identity. That Lilien chose to depict Moses as Herzl should not, at this point, come as a surprise. Neither should the raw physicality displayed by the modern prophet of Jewish nationhood. In fact, Lilien’s iconographic choices seem largely consistent with many previous works. Rather, it is his choice of specific \textit{moment} which is the most striking. Why would Lilien, champion of a highly sensual, and eminently \textit{visual}, mode of Jewish self-definition, chose to depict Moses’ violent rejection of a much earlier expression of Jewish visuality? Clearly, Lilien sought to emphasize the prophetic role which the late Herzl had played in Jewish national regeneration. Was Lilien’s choice an ironic inversion of the Biblical proscription on graven images and the like? Or did he simply seek to communicate the crucial nearness of a new phase in collective Jewish fortune? As Lilien wrote very little about his own work, we cannot know precisely what he meant by this illustration. Most likely, his choice of Assyrian-style clothing and \textit{accoutrement} suggest a conscious effort to lend the “historical” aspect of this work some Near Eastern authenticity. Seen from today’s perspective,

Lilien’s choice reveals an absorption of Orientalist iconography. In fact, his choice is noteworthy, considering the regular conflation of Jew and Oriental within fin de siècle European culture. 254 Like Die Erschaffung des Menschen, this image may be read as Lilien’s version of a Jewish Gesamtkunstwerk. If one accepts this premise, we might further say that it depicts such a Gesamtkunstwerk at the moment of its fulfillment.

Recalling Heinrich Heine’s assertion that “unlike the Egyptians, he [Moses] did not fashion his works from baked bricks and granite. [h]e built human pyramids [Menschenpyramiden],” this illustration envisions Zionism as a truly transformative movement encompassing all aspects of Jewish life. 255 Perhaps Lilien aimed to transcend the limits of Jugendstil iconography by referencing Moses, Mount Sinai and the Torah, answering the contemporaneous claim that “the style of a Jewish national artist could ‘understandably’ not be Jewish….” 256 If Lilien did in fact recognize the near-impossibility in developing a thoroughly “Jewish” iconographic style (an issue directly informing the fortunes of the first Bezalel Academy of Arts and Crafts in Palestine), it seems quite plausible that he would have responded by privileging content over form as a means towards imbuing the new Jewish art with positive meaning and some sense of definitional clarity.

In the final analysis, the Zionist art of E.M. Lilien reflected, however unconsciously, the tremendous influence which Wagnerian notions of aesthetics in the service of nation-building continued to exert during the closing years of the 19th

254 Olin, Margaret. The Nation without Art, 7.
century. Lilien’s illustrations consistently harken to the theme of a primordial and trans-historical Jewish integrity. Within this iconographic world, the duly revitalized, and mythically-grounded Jewish body would enact a reconstitution of the Jewish body-politic. As we shall see in our next and final chapter, the German-Jewish gymnastics movement similarly enacted a Gesamtkunstwerk of sorts, performing the aesthetics of Jewish national regeneration through athletics and display.
Chapter 3

The more talk there is of Jewish gymnastics associations and Jewish gymnastics, the more people become aware they exist. Even polemics in the press are not to be avoided; they furnish us with the opportunity to answer and usually have the effect of an advertisement - with no need to pay.…”  

- Julius Berger, German-Jewish gymnast, 1905.

They wept, wept authentic tears at the spectacle of young Jewish physical beauty and physical strength, offered them so directly amidst the excitement of the congress…”  

- Max Zirker, co-founder of the Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba, Berlin, 1903  

I want to have a word with the despisers of the body. Not that I want them to learn and to teach anew, but only to say goodbye to their own bodies - and thus become silent…But he who is awakened and knowing says: body am I entirely, and nothing else, and soul is only a word for something about the body…There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom…”  


This chapter is concerned with the emergence and growth of the Jewish gymnastics movement in Germany during the closing years of the 19th century. As the above quotations suggest, our examination intends to achieve more than simply a rote recapitulation of the central material features of this movement. Rather, we seek to locate the Jewish gymnastics movement in relation to the fin-de-siècle notion of the explicitly heterosexual, regenerated male body, particularly as this idea was

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258 Ibid.
understood within German society. In tandem with textual analysis, exploration of this theme will be conducted through an examination of period photography and illustration, as visual media of this sort was important in reifying the aesthetics of national membership, specifically in relation to notions health, race and sexuality.

Examples of graphic art and photography from this period depicting bodies provide object evidence of the hardening of gendered stereotypes vis-à-vis both the ideal Germanic male and his deficient antipode, the Jewish male (Figures 1c and 2c). Informed by the rapid growth of the research sciences during the second half of the 19th century, a biologically-predicated charge of Jewish sexual difference vis-à-vis the racially “pure” German became a prominent leitmotif within the emerging discourse of German anti-Semitism. Lisa Tickner, in her essay “Men’s Work? Masculinity and Modernism,” borrows Norman Bryson’s formulation of “positional difference” in order to articulate her theory regarding gender construction and its functions within a social order, stating that gender is “among other things, a semiotic category.…”

Although Tickner’s essay is specifically concerned with class and gender differences in Victorian England, her concept of “positional difference” may legitimately be applied to our subject-matter. In our first chapter, we examined the role which Kantian and Hegelian interpretations of Judaism and Jewish existence played in encoding Jewish difference. However, such coding was only obliquely concerned with physicality, and did not posit visual criteria as a means for determining binary distinctions. Nevertheless, a dialectical perception of German versus Jew, one

\[260\] Ibid.
increasingly reinforced through visual signifiers, did develop within Germany during
the second half of the 19th century. Based upon the supposedly infallible findings of
modern biological research, the popular discourse upon the Jewish body within fin-de-
siècle Germany can therefore be viewed as a logical development of certain German
Idealist themes. Using Tickner’s language, the Jewish male “position” became one of
corporeal discreteness encoded through a dialectical system of ocular semiosis. Stated
somewhat more plainly, the individuated visual signs of Jewish physical idiosyncrasy
demonstrated, for the properly cognizant person, an immutable and biologically-bound
collective degeneracy. Recognition of Jewish racial inferiority was therefore
definitional, inasmuch as it supplied a necessary antithesis to the genetically sound
German body. The conglomerate of healthy German bodies defined the larger
Gemeinschaft (“organic community”), which ultimately constituted the German state.

Within this matrix of mutually-excluding juxtapositions, the Aryan body
appeared physically fit, whilst the Jewish body was regularly depicted as weak and
malformed or, alternately, grossly overfed (Figure 3c). Equally, the ideal German body
displayed an inherent symmetry of features genetically unavailable to the Jew. Perhaps
most significantly, this binary code was intrinsically holistic: the Aryan body self-
reflexively demonstrated its “noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur” and “inward
nobility.” 261 Just as German Idealism considered political identity to be coterminous
with moral and spiritual characteristics, fin-de-siècle German anti-Semitism

\[\text{261} \quad \text{Johann Joachim Winckelmann. “Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the}
\text{Greeks” (1755), trans. H.B. Nisbet, cited in German aesthetic and literary criticism: Winckelmann,}
\text{Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe. Ed. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University}
\text{Press, 1985.) 42, 35.}\]
pathologized ethics, such that the biologically-degenerate Jew was equivalently compromised. The scientizing of sexuality demonstrated the same pattern. Racial health, recapitulated in the individual male Aryan body, signified the willful sublimation of heterosexual desires in the service of the Deutsches Völkstum. By contrast, the male Jewish body revealed a pathological predisposition towards anti-social behavior, including a variety of sexual aberrations (e.g., homosexuality, pedophilia, onanism, etc.). In addition, the conflation of pathology with sexuality and morals produced a discourse in which the Jewish male was at once trans-gendered (androgynous or feminized), sexually rapacious, and biologically-prone to viral infections such as syphilis. Such inimical threats to the character and physical integrity of German society clearly required, according to this logic, stringent measures guaranteeing the containment or excision of the diseased and diseasing element. Thinking back to Chapter Two, one may recognize the consistency which this line of thought maintains with Wagner’s contentions in Das Judentum en der Musik (1850). The German-Jewish gymnastics movement, emerging within this socio-cultural matrix, was self-consciously intended as a reproof to these claims. It utilized the dynamics of visualized performance and display as its primary means.

Any substantive analysis of the Jewish gymnastics movement in the German-speaking lands, and its institutionalization in the Jüdische Turnerschaft, in turn requires an overview of the earlier emergence of the German gymnastics movement.

From its beginnings in 1811, through its growth and incorporation into the *Deutsche Turnerschaft* (1868), the German gymnastics movement consistently propagated a distinctly Prussian version of German nationalism. The section of this chapter entitled “Gymnastics as Nationalism, Gender as Demonstration,” will consider the history and impact of the German gymnastics movement, as well as the ideology of its founder, Friedrich “Turnvater” Jahn, in greater detail. At this initial stage of our analysis, we need only understand that the *Jüdische Turnerschaft* intentionally emulated Jahn’s overt politicization of athletics. However, unlike its German counterpart, the *Jüdische Turnerschaft* was fated to split its constituents along two antipodal socio-political alignments: Zionism and German nationalism.

As paradoxical as it might seem, recent scholarship has suggested the intimate relationship which late-century *völkisch* German nationalism bore to early Zionism. However, space constraints will not allow a detailed recapitulation of its various iterations. Rather, one brief example will suffice to punctuate the point. In *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), Jacques Kornberg argues that Herzl’s road to Zionism ultimately followed the path of German nationalism. Widely regarded by scholars as an archetypal representative of Central European cosmopolitanism, Kornberg complicates this reading of Herzl somewhat, by pointing to his membership within the radically nationalist, Pan-German fraternity *Albia* during his university years.²⁶⁴ Kornberg’s analysis is nuanced, pointing to Herzl’s consistent commitment to the tenets of political Liberalism and Viennese

fin-de-siècle socio-cultural attitudes. However, Kornberg is persuasive in demonstrating the Germanic flavor of Herzl’s Austrian loyalties, such that Herzl admitted his preference for German cultural models, over and against those of Hapsburgian Austria.\textsuperscript{265} Nevertheless, the emergence of race-based anti-Semitism within Albia signaled the beginning of a pattern of exclusion, consistently frustrating Herzl’s desire to be included within the Deutsches Völkstum. Finally, Herzl recast his nationalist aspirations in the form of Zionism.\textsuperscript{266} Supporting Kornberg’s thesis, one finds a similar dynamic at work within the Jüdische Turnerschaft; many of its early practitioners regarded their membership as a means of demonstrating German nationalist fervor through physical reconstitution.

The ideological and practical connections between the various turnverein (gymnastics clubs), which coalesced into the Jüdische Turnerschaft in August of 1903,\textsuperscript{267} and early Zionist initiatives have been the subject of considerable research, and for good reason. Most scholars engaged in the examination of Zionism qua Zionism, or the related field of fin-de-siècle European Jewish identity, inevitably consider Max Nordau’s 1898 speech at the Second Zionist Congress, where he called for the creation of a “Müskeljudentum” (“Jewry of Muscle”).\textsuperscript{268} For Nordau, the Müskeljude represented a new type of male Jew, one whose physical regeneration would precipitate the moral and spiritual rebirth of a Jewish national consciousness; such a collective consciousness would, in turn, precipitate the Zionist goal of Jewish

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., 43-46.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 51-53.
\textsuperscript{267} Wildmann, “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,” 27.
political independence. However, the extent to which Nordau’s vision was a causal factor in the emergence of fin-de-siècle German-Jewish athletic initiatives has been somewhat overdetermined by recent scholarship. Rather, Nordau’s speech had come on the heels of an already nascent Jewish Körperkultur movement in Germany. Partly informed by the growing popularity of Jewish student fraternities (Burschenschaften) promoting a positive collective identity, young German-Jewish males engaged in a variety of physically-demanding and implicitly militaristic activities, such as fencing, hiking, wrestling and the like (Figure 4c - Reuveni p. 55). Furthermore, Jewish athletic initiatives reflected the overall popularity of Lebensreform movements within fin-de-siècle German society, particularly amongst the Bildungsbürgertum. Jewish physicality was thus both a separate and constituent part of larger sub-culture which focused upon the reconstituted body as the site of socio-political regeneration. Perhaps most poignantly, the expansion of Jewish athletic societies, whether in the form of Burschenschaften, Wandervögelen (scouts), or gymnastics, was the direct result of exclusion. By the last decades of the 19th century, Jewish exclusionary measures within these and other popular German organizations had become the rule, rather than the exception.

Earlier, we focused upon the role which 19th century aesthetic formulations played in informing German cultural perceptions of Jews and Judaism. As stated

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272 Ibid.
previously, this chapter aims to chart the impact which the discourses of biology and medicine had upon this perception, and how the *Jüdische Turnerschaft* represented a response to these discourses. In large measure, *fin-de-siècle Körperkultur* reflected a larger cultural reevaluation of German Enlightenment thought, with its emphasis upon rationality and the “virtues of the mind.”²⁷³ Chapters One and Two demonstrated how German Idealism and early Romanticism both foreshadowed and informed aspects of this shift in perception. By the dawning of the 20th century, the body had asserted its pre-eminence as a locus of moral, intellectual, and socio-political meaning. Those that celebrated physicality concomitantly engaged in the definitive gendering of the mind/body dichotomy. According to this outlook, Germany’s vital, primal and intuitively understood nationhood was engaged in a struggle to overcome the hyper-intellectualized, passive and enervating elements within its midst. Although German *fin-de-siècle* cultural xenophobia was certainly not limited to Jews, Jews nonetheless became its most significant targets.

Thus, the nascent Jewish gymnastics movement, officially incorporated in Berlin on October 22, 1898 as the *Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba*, represented the self-conscious attempt to disprove, through a process of *Verwirklichung* (active realization via praxis), perceptions of Jewish degeneracy. Concomitantly, Jewish gymnasts sought to disprove claims which regarded Jews as the principal agents of the averred-to biological disintegration (*Zersetung*) of German society and culture. The process of Jewish *Verwirklichung* also represented a rejection of the stigma of hyper-

intellectualism mentioned above, whether epitomized by the "Talmudjüudentum" of the pious, 274 (Figure 5c) or embodied in the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Luftmensch (literally "air person"), a cultural parvenu engaged in nothing legitimate or socially beneficial (Figure 6c). 275 Further, the fact that these initiatives relied in great measure upon the explicit display of the regenerated Jewish body suggests the degree to which German-speaking Jews, Zionist or otherwise, were in a process of internalizing the fundamental premises of current medical theories. Equally, the turn to non-discursive modes of expression also suggests the extent to which fin de siècle European culture was entering an increasingly visual era. Indeed, the categorization of bodies according to scientifically-grounded, visually demonstrable physical characteristics became a primary means of collective identity formation. 276 Using Griselda Pollock’s application of Foucauldian concepts to late 19th century visual culture, the “formation” of the individual human body as the object of a classificatory vision represented a paradigmatic moment within fin-de-siècle Europe, such that ethno-national identity became ascertainable simply through directing a trained eye at the “object” under categorical scrutiny. 277 In late 19th century Germany, the dialectical nature of such categorization, with bodies divided according to discrete formations such as healthy versus sickly, sane versus insane, stable versus unstable, and heterosexual versus homosexual, became a powerful tool for determining societal inclusion, or exclusion.

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277 Ibid., 6, 7.
Germanness and Jewishness in 19th Century Germany

In an essay entitled “Müskeljuden und Nervenjuden” (1909), published in the Jüdische Turn-Zeitung (the official periodical of the Jüdische Turnerschaft), author and physician Moritz Jastrowitz endeavored to demonstrate the biologically non-degenerative core of the German-Jewish (male) body. As the title of his essay suggests, Jastrowitz distinguished between what he perceived to be the environmental factors informing the historical deterioration of the Jewish physical vitality, and the distinct possibility of Jewish bodily regeneration. In concluding his essay, Jastrowitz argued:

If the latter [degenerative phenomena], with their disagreeable impression, vanish in a happier generation, then in and for itself, the purely Semitic type that remains can by no means have an unpleasant effect on the expert as well as every educated person who has ceased hating anything foreign. In its own way, this type is as beautiful and noble as the Germanic blond type, so beloved by Jewish women in the rich Western ghettos of our big cities…(emphasis mine)  

In arguing for a necessary distinction between the immutable anthropological body, and a mutable historical body affected by environmental contingency, Jastrowitz demonstrated the degree to which cultural and socio-political issues within fin-de-siècle German society were defined in scientific terms. Further, his categorical descriptions of Jewish and German ontology (the “purely Semitic type” versus the “Germanic blond type”) clearly reveals an absorption and recapitulation of regnant racial taxonomies. Initially identified, and identifying with, the tenets of Liberalism and

278 Wildmann, “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,” 28.
279 Ibid.
social reform, scientists and anthropologists active in post-unification Germany increasingly applied Darwinian notions to the discourses of fixed racial and pathological differentiation.\textsuperscript{280} Scholars commonly identify this cross-pollination of social and scientific discourses as resulting in the formation of Social Darwinism.\textsuperscript{281} However, Michael Stanislawski acutely points out that definitional vagueness, and significant differences in socio-political ideology amongst the many 19\textsuperscript{th} century European and American figures identified as Social Darwinists, has inevitably led to much misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{282} Nonetheless, in late 19\textsuperscript{th} century Germany, the application of specifically Darwinian models and methodologies to social and political questions was particularly pronounced, such that we may with confidence use this term. In 1863, the renowned German zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) explicitly argued for the application of Darwinist theories to the social sciences.\textsuperscript{283} By the 1880s, German research scientists had garnered a worldwide reputation as leaders in the fields of biology and medicine. Throughout German society, these scientists were increasingly regarded as “high priests of nature, able to determine guidelines for a humane society” by applying the topoi of evolution and natural selection to issues ranging from alcoholism to mental health to procreative practices.\textsuperscript{284} Significantly, German unification increased the conflation of nationalist and scientific discourses, whereby “[n]ationalist ideology permeated biology with terms such as ‘the cell state’ and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{280} Weindling, Paul. Health, race and German politics between national unification and Nazism. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.) Chapter 1.
\item \textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 27-36.
\item \textsuperscript{282} Stanislawski, Michael. Zionism and the Fin de Siècle. 22-24.
\item \textsuperscript{283} Weindling, Health, race and German politics. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 40-49.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
‘organic integration’; discussions of the mechanisms of evolutionary adaptation were related to the founding of Reich institutions...."285

As Paul Weindling has pointed out, prior to German unification, the first generation of German doctors and anthropologists working within a Darwinist framework generally rejected the racialist socio-political theories propounded by popular cultural figures such as the Alsatian diplomat Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882).286 In large measure, this was due to the overwhelmingly Bürgerlich composition of the medical and scientific professions. In general, this highly educated, haute-bourgeoisie element was committed to a blend of liberal-democratic values and a belief in the role of science as a mitigating factor vis-à-vis social ills, such as poverty and disease.287 However, the tremendous socio-economic changes accompanying post-unification industrialization increasingly came to be felt in all sectors of German society. An exponential growth in population (from 10,059,000 to 64,926,000 between 1871 and 1910), and its preponderance in urban centers (from roughly 12.5 per cent in towns of 20,000 or more in 1871 to roughly 35 per cent in 1910), was accompanied by a growing sense of disillusionment amongst the liberal-minded within the Second Reich. Punctuated by the economic downturn of the mid 1870s and Bismark’s anti-Socialist legislation of 1878, many sectors of German society began to turn to alternative social and political models. In this context, Lenman, Osborne and Sagarra have noted: “[m]any of the groups which emerged during this period, often forming their own communities, rejecting the Gesellschaft of modern urban life in

285 Weindling, Health, race and German politics, 36.
286 Ibid., 48.
287 Ibid., 8.
favour [sic] of the *Gemeinschaft* of agrarian society, saw themselves as seeking a ‘third way’ between socialism and capitalism…” As Germany entered the 1880s, an increasingly pervasive sense of cultural *malaise* emerged. Within this climate of crisis, the institutions of German science and medicine took a distinctly illiberal turn.Outside of academia, the 1880s and 1890s witnessed the efflorescence of various grass-roots movements, known collectively as *Lebensreform*, or “life reform,” initiatives. Focusing upon the individual body as the location within which societal degeneration could be reversed, the sub-culture of *Lebensreform* reflected the growing impact of holistic and quasi-scientific ideologies within popular culture. The aggressive campaign pursued by medical professionals against lay practitioners of homeopathic and “nature” therapies during the 1870s and 1880s speaks to the role played by populist associations which synthesized holistic remedies (e.g., vegetarianism, abstinence, nudism) with officially recognized practices such as magnetotherapy, chiromancy and phrenology. Thus, Louis Kuhne, champion of “hydrotherapy,” and Richard Ungewitter, who popularized vegetarianism through his nudist “*Treibund für aufsteigendes Leben*” (League of the Faithful for Rising Life), both belonged to the “German League of Associations for Health Care and Therapy without Drugs” (est. 1888), a nationwide umbrella organization which boasted a membership roster of

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289 Ibid.
291 Weindling, *Health, race and German Politics*, 21, 22.
nearly 150,000 individuals by the eve of World War I.\textsuperscript{293} That the majority of Ungewitter’s and Kuhne’s acolytes and followers were drawn from the ranks of the Bildüngsburgertum, and that both Ungewitter and Kuhne were vocal in their anti-Semitism, suggests the complicated nexus of societal, economic and ideological forces which identified improved physicality with xenophobic nationalism. Within this matrix, the Jew came to represent both the source and the symbol of those societal forces threatening the sanctity of middle-class mores and modes, this despite the fact that the vast majority of German-Jews considered themselves members of the Bildungsbürgertum.\textsuperscript{294} However, Bürgerlich values no longer corresponded simply to economic or educational criteria. By the fin-de-siècle, visual typologies demonstrating racial differences were part of mainstream German culture, including that of the middle classes.\textsuperscript{295}

Of particular importance was the abiding notion, \textit{a là} Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869), of the reflexive nature of appearance in relation to ontology.\textsuperscript{296} As Michael Hau argues in \textit{The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), such attitudes were common within life reform circles, to the extent that aesthetic intuition was considered a legitimate means for identifying racial differences (Figure 7c).\textsuperscript{297} Increasingly, even if the German-Jew averred to his membership within the ranks of the Bildüngsburgertum, his appearance denied its very possibility (Figure 8c). A case in point is demonstrated in the writings

\textsuperscript{293} Weindling, \textit{Health, race and German politics}, 21.
\textsuperscript{294} Hau, Michael. \textit{The Cult Of Health And Beauty in Germany}, Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{295} Weindling, \textit{Health, race and German politics}, 52-59.
\textsuperscript{296} Hau, Michael. \textit{The Cult Of Health And Beauty in Germany}, 34.
\textsuperscript{297} Ibid., 84.
of another popular life-reformer, the gynecologist Carl Heinrich Stratz. In arguing that
the visual apprehension of the beauty inherent in the physical characteristics of certain
races constituted a type of intuitive, regulative knowledge guiding procreative
activities, Stratz did not explicitly focus upon the Jewish body and its attributes.
Indeed, evidence suggests that he largely rejected the virulent anti-Semitism
propagated by thinkers such as Gobineau or Houston Stewart Chamberlain.298
However, he still accepted “popular, pathological, and aesthetic stereotypes about
Jews,” presumably because, in large measure, these stereotypes had become common
currency within Wilhemine Germany. Ultimately, the popularity of Lebensreform
initiatives eventually resulted in their growing legitimization through official channels
by politicians and Reichsministers, further demonstrating the progressive effacement
of liberal values within German society as a whole.299

The socio-political implications inherent in the disintegration of liberalism
found their corollary in the growing split amongst: biological anthropologist. Prominent
figures such as Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902) continued to argue for the biological
unity, and basic equality, of mankind. By contrast, the 1890s witnessed the emergence
of biologists such as Alfred Ploetz who, influenced by Ernst Haeckel’s theories
regarding the hierarchical nature of both natural and “social” organisms, and the
processes of “competitive selection” which existed within all spheres of existence,
averred to an immutable hierarchy of racial differentiation, and its attendant

298 Hau, Michael, The Cult Of Health And Beauty in Germany, 84, 85.
299 Weindling, Health, race and German politics, 22.
implications for the German nation.\textsuperscript{300} The field within which scientific, socio-cultural and political discourses intersected in Wilhemine Germany during the last decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century is a highly complex one, and admits of no easy or brief description. However, the fundamental point to be garnered here is that the discourse of race, as a taxonomic principle framing scientific research, had by the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century become the guiding lodestar of the biological and medical sciences in Germany.\textsuperscript{301} This growing perception of racial differentiation as an \textit{empirically demonstrable} function of human existence containing normative implications was a development which bolstered \textit{völkisch} claims of national difference based upon immutable characteristics (see Chapter One). Prior to this point, membership within German society, or the possibility of its eventual realization, had in theory existed for those Jews who were German by provenance, citizenship, culture and language. As Paul Weindling has succinctly stated in this regard, “[b]y the [late] 1870s...humanitarian impulses gave way to a programme for the identification of the pathologically incurable and socially deviant.”\textsuperscript{302}

The appearance of anti-Semitism as a socio-political construct predicated upon biological foundations, and demonstrable through disciplines as variegated as anatomy and ethnographic survey, represented the emergence of a distinct paradigm in how membership within the nation and the \textit{Kulturkampf} would be perceived.\textsuperscript{303} Ironically, the tremendous strides in modern scientific research and experimentation were initially

\textsuperscript{300} Weindling, \textit{Health, race and German politics}, 49, 64-90.
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid., 36, 49.
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid., 57, 58.
the product of liberal-minded individuals, many of whom were German-Jews.

Nevertheless, their achievements provided their professional successors with the basic methodological tools necessary for grounding the growing marginalization of German-Jews upon a purportedly solid “empirical” foundation.

The degree to which Moritz Jastrowitz and other German-Jews involved with the Jewish gymnastics movement had internalized certain aspects of modern eugenic theory and its subsequent ideational products, such as Rassenhygiene (“race hygiene”), is demonstrated by the particular terms used to describe those Jews whose appearance and behavior were considered inimical to the healthy reconstitution of a physically invigorated Judentum. In part, these terms reflected the abiding xenophobia and ambivalence which German-Jews felt towards their eastern “brethren,” an ambivalence only heightened by increasing immigration westward into the German-speaking lands. In part, the criticisms embedded in the terms used were directed closer to home. Thus, the term “Talmudjudentum,” mentioned earlier, became a catch-all phrase used to categorize the “feeble Jeschivebocher [Yeshiva student],” physically, and therefore morally, enervated by centuries spent in the confines of the shtetl, engaged in little else other than his “Luftgeschäfte” (“unproductive business”). On the other hand, numerous articles published in the Jüdische Turn-Zeitung and related documents, such as the 1909 Festschrift issued in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Jüdische Turnverein Bar Kochba in Berlin, averred to the preponderance of harmful psychological disorders displayed by the politically

304 Weindling, Health, race and German politics. 76-90
emancipated, urban-dwelling modern Jew of Germany.\textsuperscript{306} An essay written for the
\textit{Festschrift} by the Hamburg physician and \textit{Bar Kochba} gymnast Max Besser entitled
\textit{“The Influence of the Economic Position of the German Jews on their Physical
Constitution”} highlighted the perceived prevalence of certain physical characteristics
which revealed degenerative tendencies. Within his analysis, Besser used the terms
\textit{Völker} (primordial peoples) and \textit{Stämme} (communities of descent) to delineate
between racial difference and historical variance.\textsuperscript{307} He regarded the perceived physical
degeneration of Germany’s Jews as a contingent process, fundamentally unrelated to
the organically-sound nature of the primordial Jewish body.\textsuperscript{308} In this formulation, the
German-Jewish \textit{Stämme}, with its physically deleterious urban lifestyle, nonetheless
conceals a healthy core (the Jewish \textit{Völker}).\textsuperscript{309} In the same publication, the Mannheim
doctor Julius Moses coined the term \textit{“Gehirnjudentum”} (\textit{“Brain Judaism”})\textsuperscript{310} as a
conceptual umbrella under which all German Jews suffering from \textit{“nervous afflictions”}
were categorized. According to Dr. Moses, the poor physical state of German Jewry
was thus principally a medical condition, treatable and \textit{reversible} by restoring \textit{“the
elasticity lost to the Jewish body - to make it fresh and vigorous, agile and
strong...”}\textsuperscript{311} (Figures 9c and 10c)

Implicit but unmentioned within these discussions of the anthropologically
sound Jewish body, and its resurgence through athletics, was the crucial function

\textsuperscript{306} Wildmann, \textit{“Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,”} 27-28.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{310} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid.
played by performance. From the beginning, the public exposition of group floor
exercises and static self-presentation (rank-and-file movements akin to military drills)
were central components of turner initiatives. Its intimate connection to the discourses
of German nationalism, gender and sexuality, and the role of physical display as a
semiotic system signaling loyalty to the Deutsches Völkstum, form the subject matter
of the next section of this chapter.

Gymnastics as Nationalism, Gender as Demonstration

As mentioned earlier, the role of the Deutsche Turnerschaft as an institution
dedicated to the propagation of German nationalist ideals, and as a training-ground for
the individual German body working towards these ideals, provided an obvious
template for the Jewish gymnastics movement. However, in self-consciously adopting
and adapting this template for specifically “Jewish” ends, the founders of the Jüdische
Turnerschaft were nonetheless entering potentially dangerous ideological territory.
This, because Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), inventor of modern gymnastics,
author, and celebrated military hero, from the very first supported a form of German
nationalism which explicitly precluded the very possibility of Jewish participation or
presence. Jahn’s early embrace of Prussian patriotism was undoubtedly a function
of the novum in nationalist conceptualization which arose as a result of the French
Revolution. However, Jahn expounded upon a nationalism produced through the
“mystical force of the Völkstum,” an organic entity which constituted the core aspect
of German identity. Within this formulation, notions of radical individualism or rational
autonomy had little currency.\textsuperscript{312} Jahn was giving early voice to a brand of nationalism which, despite his abiding belief in the institutional aspects of democratic representation (he was to spend a brief time in jail following the failure of the 1848 uprisings), clearly alluded to membership based upon collective, non-rational, and autochthonous grounds.\textsuperscript{313}

Although the discourses of racial difference vis-à-vis the German and the Jew were still in their infancy when Jahn published his major work, \textit{Deutsches Völkestum} (1810), his appeal to the liberating power of a communal identity, predicated upon the eternal exclusivity of the \textit{Volk}, prefigured the anti-Semitic writings of popular German thinkers as diverse as Paul Anton de Lagarde (1827-1891), Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904), Julius Langbehn (1851-1906), and Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927).\textsuperscript{314} Within the pages of the \textit{Deutsches Völkestum}, Jahn declared that “[a] state without folk is nothing, a soulless artifice; a folk without state is nothing, a bodiless, airy phantom, like the Gypsies and the Jews….”\textsuperscript{315} The reference to corporeality (or, alternatively, its lack) is certainly not incidental. For Jahn, the body, both in its individual \textit{and} its corporate iterations, constituted the critical loci of national existence. Prior to his propagation of a more inclusive version of pan-German nationalism, Jahn’s Prussian chauvinism was such that he could state unabashedly:

The uneducated peasant in the German states of the Prussian Reich

\textsuperscript{313} Rolland Ray Lutz. “‘Father’ Jahn and his Teacher-Revolutionaries from the German Student Movement,” in \textit{The Journal of Modern History}, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun., 1976.) 1.
\textsuperscript{315} Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism,” 427.
shows always his pride in his fatherland. A fight starts quickly at the
country fairs in the frontier towns when the superiority of the Prussians
is not recognized...Often did I hear it said at such occasions: one
Prussian defeats three Saxons, Hannoverians, Mecklenburgians or
Swedes...(emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{316}

Prussian superiority was thus communicated through the very act of appearing
and being seen. The Prussians (and eventually, the rest of the Deutsches Völkstum)
could scarcely help displaying their inherent corporeal purity, since “strangers stared at
them admiringly, as if they were beings of a higher kind [da sie von Fremden als
Menschen höherer Art angestaunt werden] (emphasis mine).”\textsuperscript{317}

In establishing the first gymnastics club (1810) and training grounds, or
Turnplatz (1811), Jahn sought to actuate the regeneration of the Deutsches Völkstum
by introducing gymnastic exercise as a form of paramilitary training intended to imbue
his disciples with the physical, moral and spiritual virtues deemed indispensable for an
authentic national existence.\textsuperscript{318} Turnkunst (gymnastics) was, from the start, directly
linked to the discourse of the explicitly heterosexual male body operating in the service
of nationalist aims. Paraphrasing Jahn, George L. Mosse has stated in this regard that
“[German] men must belong to one fatherland even as they belonged to one
household, and have one true love in their lives…”\textsuperscript{319} Membership within a turnverein
was not, however, intended as a substitute for marriage, family and subsequent
propagation. Nevertheless, Jahn’s movement clearly demonstrated the shifting nature
in perceptions regarding normative masculinity and sexuality, as the age of the nation-

\textsuperscript{316} Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism.” 420.
\textsuperscript{317} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 423.
\textsuperscript{319} Mosse, George L. Nationalism and Sexuality. (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985.) 78.
state commenced. Jahn’s popular Prussian contemporary, general Carl von Clausewitz, hinted at the fundamental concordance of militarism and masculinity, wherein the male sex drive is sublimated and channeled into its martial iteration. Clausewitz described the ideal combat unit as “strenthen[ing] its physical powers like the muscles of an athlete *by practicing deprivation and exertion*…(emphasis mine).” However, as Mosse has argued, this “rediscovery” of the human body, culminating in the various *Lebensreform* and *Wandervögel* organizations of the late 19th century, also suggests the role which masculinity played in sublimating the homoerotism inherent in *exclusively male* athletic collectives, whether one speaks of the *Deutsches Turnerschaft*, or subsequent expressions of German *Körperkultur*.

Returning to theme of hetero-normativeness mentioned earlier, the increasing fixity of gender roles and sexual identity eventually resulted in the pathologizing of homosexuality. As a discrete definitional concept, homosexuality no longer corresponded simply to sexual practice. Rather, the homosexual came to represent a societal element easily recognizable through pathognomonic, forensic, and physiognomonic markers (such as effeminacy, nervous afflictions, etc.). The logical conclusion suggested by this formulation is simply that the ideal male German body, whether that of the tightly-uniformed *turnkünstler*, or the wholly unclad “life reformer” displaying his ideal physique (Figure 11c), was immune to both homosexuality, and the degenerative effects of a “homosexualized” (read: “Jew-ified”)

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society, precisely because his *appearance* served to demonstrate his native
heterosexuality.

In *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) Daniel Boyarin argues that late 19th century European perceptions and projections of a biological predilection towards homosexuality amongst Jewish men was partly informed by an historical European-Jewish (*Ashkenazi*) discourse which essentially valorized non-physicality, as well as a certain degree of male androgyny.\(^{323}\) According to this reading, the European-Jewish male was therefore ideally positioned to remain outside a discourse of solidifying hetero-normative standards, and the radical proscription of male same-sex interactions in the service of the *Deutsches Völkstum*.\(^{324}\) While aspects of Boyarin’s methodology are questionable, his suggestion that pre-existing internal (Jewish) cultural dynamics left 19th century German-Jewish males in a particularly vulnerable position is certainly plausible. Due to the gradual shifting of focus from an Enlightenment emphasis upon individualism, and the inviolable autonomy of interpersonal relationships, to a more *collective* form of group camaraderie, intimate male friendships based upon mutual respect, admiration, and even professions of love (embodied, for example, in the late 18th/early 19th century German *Freundschaftsbund*) were no longer considered hetero-normative.\(^{325}\) If we keep Boyarin’s interpretation in mind, the implications of this shift in German societal mores for the German-Jew


\(^{324}\) Ibid., 14.

\(^{325}\) Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 68, 69.
seeking acceptance was undoubtedly significant. Specifically, the concept of acculturation and moral self-perfection through Bildung, as well the formation of relationships which extolled rationality as a means of superseding religious differences, could no longer provide the German-Jew with sufficient cultural agency.\footnote{Mosse, George L. German Jews Beyond Judaism. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1983.) 6, 7.} In contrast to the age of the Aufklärung, late-19th century German society increasingly regarded the pursuit of Bildung as insufficient justification for the socio-cultural integration of Germany’s Jews. Rather, historical developments such as industrialization, urbanization and national unification all contributed to progressively more rigid interpretations of masculinity and heterosexuality as crucial indicators of socio-political fitness.

Along with his other biological deficiencies, the fin-de-siècle German-Jewish male was unfit for societal inclusion due to his tendency towards “queerness,” a state easily recognizable through various physical and behavioral markers.\footnote{Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct, 229.} Thus, one particularly resonant charge popular within fin-de-siècle German and Austro-Hungarian society was that of Jewish male menstruation.\footnote{Ibid., 210.} Another sign of male Jewish “queerness” was his physiological predisposition towards hysteria, a condition which the nascent German field of psychiatry also identified as pre-eminently feminine.\footnote{Gilman, Sander. The Jew’s Body. (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1991) 63.} Along with charges of outright homosexuality, made famous by Otto Weininger’s Sex and Character (1903), the fin-de-siècle Jewish male became the principal target in an intersecting field of scientifically-predicated discourses which
sought to identify those elements which perverted the clear delimitation of gender and sexual roles. Weininger was both a baptized Jew and a repressed homosexual; Sigmund Freud, another famous Viennese born to acculturating Austrian-Jews, maintained a similar (if not equally extreme) ambivalence towards his Jewish identity and its implications for his masculinity. In both cases, one senses the absorption of this pathologized understanding of male Jewish sexuality, and the existential problems which it posed. In Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), David A. Brenner reinforces this point by demonstrating the degree to which the editorial board of the eponymous publication, in wide circulation between 1901 and 1923, similarly promoted a revised formulation of overt masculinity intrinsically tied to German patriotism. Most notably, the periodical published numerous literary contributions lampooning the enervating and feminizing aspects of shtetl life in the East. Ost und West was engaged in an admittedly complex task, aiming at a unification of the two “camps” of European Jewry under the banner of Gesamtjudentum (“Pan-Jewishness”), and pursuing these ends primarily through efforts directed at dispelling the pejorative cultural stereotypes each held regarding the other. However, Figure 12c clearly demonstrates that Ost und West was equally aware of the connection between images portraying a regenerated Jewish masculinity, and the fight for a collective socio-

332 Ibid., 56, 124-126.
political integrity. \footnote{Brenner, \textit{Marketing Identities}, 15, 16.}

The explicitly heterosexual male body thus enacted a trans-valuation of procreative impulses as a means to achieving a greater existence within the \textit{Deutsches Völkstum}.\footnote{Ibid., Chapter 4.} The degree to which Jahn considered \textit{Turnkunst} to be a \textit{de facto} form of paramilitary training in the service of a future \textit{Völkstaat} is attested to by the central role that the famed \textit{Lützow freicorps}, embodiment of guerilla resistance to Napoleon’s armies in which Jahn served, played in the formation of the first \textit{turnverein}.\footnote{Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism,” 422.} The tight-fitting uniforms which Jahn designed for his pupils, as well as his preference for executing drills and exercises in open-air and public spaces, further punctuated the intentionally visual aspect of \textit{Turnkunst} as an expression of \textit{Deutschtum}. As Jahn himself declared in this respect: “[t]he soul of the gymnastic association (\textit{Turnwesen}) is the life of the people itself (\textit{das Volksleben}), and this thrives only in the open, in light and air….”\footnote{Ibid., 424.} Along with the uniforms, drills and displays, all intended to communicate a potently masculinized message to those paying attention, Jahn’s followers intentionally used coarse, idiomatic expressions and gestures meant to convey a rejection of things foreign, thus further reinforcing their status as a vanguard for the \textit{Deutsches Völkstum}.\footnote{Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism.” 424}

The extent to which the forty-eight men involved in the founding of the \textit{Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba Berlin} understood the dynamics of display as a potential medium for communicating a re-physicalized Jewish identity is clear from the
numerous subsequent allusions made by members. In considering the impression made by the static self-presentation of one-hundred and thirty German and Austrian gymnasts at the Third Jewish Gymnasts’ Convention (Vienna, 1907), the author of an article entitled “Verbandschauturnen” (Jüdische Turn-Zeitung, no. 6 [1907]) worded it thusly:

Within the totality, the eye grasps the individual gymnast, evaluates the projecting rows with pleasure, eagerly seeks the befriended gymnast-countryman, and rests with inner warmth on the mighty image that, in its entirety, has now fundamentally unfolded with historical effect [sic] (emphasis mine).  

Daniel Wildmann avers to the metonymic aspect embedded within these public displays; the synchronized movements of individual bodies represented a “visual appendage of a Jewish collective body…” What that “collective body” was intended to be, relative to the socio-political self-identification of German-speaking Jewish gymnasts, forms the subject matter of the next and final section of this chapter. Just as the image of the de-masculinized Jew was becoming just that, a concept communicated through increasingly non-textual channels, so too mutatis mutandis, the Jewish gymnastics movement utilized visuality as its principal means of reproof (Figures 13c and 14c). Much recent scholarship within the field of visual culture has suggested that self-display, whether in the form of photographs or live performance, implies a level of socio-political agency. Griselda Pollock summarizes this point in relation to the functions of visual culture: “[s]ubjectivity is indissoluble from the

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339 Ibid., 32.
representation/figuration of the body...[this] figuration is written onto our bodies, which are then disciplined to perform historically, culturally, and socially specific regimes of sexual difference.\textsuperscript{341}

Seen in this light, the prevalence of public display, and the use of photographs exhibiting the explicitly hetero-normative bodies of German-Jewish gymnasts, was eminently intentional. Indeed, most issues of the \textit{Jüdische Turn-Zeitung} featured numerous images demonstrating the regenerative capacities of the male Jewish body (See Figures 9c, 10c, 13c, and 14c). In staging, taking and disseminating these photographic images of Jewish physical vitality, the Jewish gymnastics movement was thus inverting, and redirecting, a potent tool widely used by German cultural imperialists as diverse as music composers and colonial ethnographic researchers.\textsuperscript{342} As the quote of Julius Berger which opens the introduction to this paper suggests, the \textit{Jüdische Turnerschaft} likewise understood the power of the reproduced image in propagating a wholly new iteration of Jewish physicality, one which, like the volkisch elements within German society, spoke in the “language of the body.”\textsuperscript{343} As we shall see, the rapid proliferation of clubs across Germany and Austria belonging to the \textit{Jüdische Turnerschaft} (eighty-nine by the year 1914) did little to affect an improvement in the social perception and standing of German-Jews. Rather, success highlighted the growing frisson, both internally and externally, which resulted from a

\textsuperscript{343} Wildmann, “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Germany,” 31.
widening perception of divided cultural, political and national loyalties.344

German Nationalism and Zionism within the German-Jewish Gymnastics League

As stated earlier, the most striking example of the ideational nexus which occurred between the Jewish gymnastics movement and Zionism is represented by Max Nordau’s Münstjudentum. Its “unveiling” at the Second Zionist Congress (1898) makes it a striking piece of early Zionist rhetoric which has been returned to again and again by scholars interested in determining its subsequent impact upon modern Jewish and Israeli identity, particularly regarding perceptions of masculinity. That Nordau issued a fuller description of his vision for Jewish bodily regeneration within the pages of the Jüdische Turn-Zeitung (JTZ, 1900, no. 2:10), and chose the pre-Exilic figure of Bar Kochba as a central leitmotif was of course intentional. Although the Jüdische Turnerschaft as a whole refrained from officially endorsing Zionism until after the end of World War One, the Jüdische Turn-Zeitung, as the official organ of the Bar Kochba Berlin turnverein, increasingly used its status and popularity as a bully-pulpit for Zionist propaganda.345 In many ways, the Jewish gymnastics movement represented an ideal organizational vehicle for propagating the aims of Zionism. Like the example

344 Wildmann, “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Germany,” 27.
of the chalutz (pioneer) who, in setting off for Palestine in order to refashion himself as a farmer engaged in a “conquest of labor,” thus actualizing a Shilat ha-Galut (“negation of the Exile”), the Jewish turnkünstler was engaged in a similar endeavor. In this instance, the “negation” being enacted represented a rejection of the historical forces which had conspired to enervate the Jewish body, and the “return” represented the restoration of the anthropologically/biologically vigorous core which the gymnast sought. Further, just as the term Entartung (“degeneration”), so widely in use within the German-speaking world of the late 19th century, carried with it a sense of movement away from an ideal and natural (e.g. racial) form, so regeneration would constitute a bodily return to “form”. That an intentional display of this rejuvenation could (and would) be acted out on Palestinian soil seems, in hindsight, predictable. Thus, by August 1914, the second of two major trips by Jüdische Turnerschaft members to Palestine had been realized. The exhibition of gymnastics skills to the struggling aliya then resident in the land was clearly intended to bolster the morale of those who were actualizing Zionism’s ultimate goal. Jüdische Turn-Zeitung board-member Henry Unna summarized the implicit function of Turnkunst as (among other things) a preparatory endeavor for eventual Aliya by declaring:

Gymnast brothers!...Palestine no longer lies in fog-land, in a mythic-obscure aulam habo [world to come]...Palestine is no longer the land of the gray past...for us it is the land of a present and future that wish to be tied to a beautiful past...            

348 Wildmann. “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,” 35, 36.
349 Wildmann. “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,” 36.
The implicitly nationalist *raison* embedded within gymnastics, *a la* "Turnvater" Jahn, informed the rapid intellectual and practical symbiosis which developed between numerous *turnverein* belonging to the *Jüdische Turnerschaft* and official Zionist apparatus. Without question, Nordau's concept of the *Müskelfudentum* functioned as the mediating ideational construct wedding the two endeavors. As Daniel Wildmann has noted in this regard, "[i]f...the gymnasts...were to be understood as 'muscle Jews,' this understanding was the result of an intellectual process, the conversion of specific bourgeois values into national Jewish values..."350 Similarly, in referring to Nordau's *Müskelfudentum* as "one of German Zionism's most famous, most fraught, and most challenging concepts," Todd Samuel Presner does not question the practical applications of the concept (e.g. Jewish gymnastics), or its consonance with the nationalist ethos and goals of Zionism. Rather, he sheds light upon the complex and arguably contradictory nature which it bore to the still resonant topoi of *Bürgerlich* values and cosmopolitanism amongst German-speaking Jews. The *völkisch* language which Nordau used to describe the *Müskelfudentum* in his June 1903 keynote speech to the *Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba Berlin* is jarring, when one considers his vociferous defense of rationalism, scientism, liberal cosmopolitanism found within the pages of *Entartung (Degeneration)*. If, according to Nordau, *Bürgerlich* mores and sensibilities played a central role in stemming the tide of ethical and aesthetic disintegration, how did the re-sexualized, "weapons-happy" ("waffenfrohen") Jew fit

350 Ibid., 35.
in to this scheme? In attempting to explain what appears to be a cognitive and philosophical about-face tout court, Michael Stanislawski suggests that Nordau’s adherence to the tenets of Social Darwinism effectively allowed for the conflation of liberal-bourgeois values and the undeniable Romanticism and anti-rationalism inherent within his call for “deep-chested, tightly muscled, courageous men” and “a battle-hardened and bellicose Jewry.”

According to Stanislawski, works such as The Conventional Lies of Our Civilization (1883), and the above-mentioned Degeneration (1892) reveal the clearly Positivist and strains in Nordau’s outlook, such that Nordau perceived socio-cultural decay in pathognomonic terms. Like many of his contemporaries, Nordau considered socio-cultural degeneration as symptomatic of a general societal failure to recognize the diseased elements within its midst. For Nordau, one manifestation of this societal sickness was an increasing failure to make normative distinctions, such as good versus evil, sane versus insane, or masculine versus feminine. Like many fin-de-siècle anti-Semites, Nordau also identified “sexual perversion,” and the dissolution of clearly delineated gender roles which contributed to it, as part and parcel of the overall problem.

Seen through this prism, the call for a Müskeljudentum represented both Nordau’s diagnosis of, and prescription for, the socio-cultural (and therefore

352 Ibid., 92.
355 Ibid., 413-415.
pathological) maladies from which European Jewry suffered. Arguably, Nordau considered the emergence of a biologically-predicated anti-Semitism as yet one more ineluctable by-product of the forces of degeneracy. Nevertheless, Nordau’s “prescription” partook of the same semantic and ideational elements informing völkisch thought from Friedrich Ludwig Jahn to contemporary German cultural critics such as Julius Langbehn. In doing so, Nordau was revealing, perhaps not entirely consciously, the degree to which anti-rationalism underpinned the implicitly mythical and meta-historic belief in a primordial Jewish body, and its regenerative capacities as a metonym for Jewish national reconstitution. That the discourses of degeneration and regeneration, as utilized by Nordau, also corresponded to the regnant scientific taxonomies of the day, only further underscores the extent to which German science, German nationalism, German-Jewish identity, and early Zionism were linked. Still, one must question Nordau’s philosophical consistency when one considers passages from a later piece of literature - Der Sinn der Geschichte (1909) - in which he fails to mention Zionism (or the regenerated Jewish body), but rather engages in a scathing critique of nationalism qua nationalism, stating that “the notion of a special national individuality...is...one of the facile generalizations that lie at the root of so many prejudices...[t]he idea of a ‘collective organism is a mystical delusion’ - there is no such thing as an ‘organic nation’...” In highlighting this excerpt from a latter work, Stanislawski suggests that Nordau was never able to fully assimilate or accept the anti-rationalism embedded within late-19th century German nationalist ideology.

357 Stanislawski, Zionism and the Fin de Siècle, 32, 33.
In contradistinction to Stanislawski’s skepticism, Todd Samuel Presner has argued that Nordau’s *Muskeljudentum* represented a logical outcome within 19th century Jewish thought. Suggesting that the discourses of race and blood, a rejection of miscegenation and a belief in the “the fertility and indestructibility of the Jewish tribe,” elements which appear within Moses Hess’ proto-Zionist *Rom und Jerusalem* (1862), signaled a specifically Jewish turn to German *völkisch* models, Presner locates Nordau’s formulation firmly within the larger development of German *Körperkultur* and *Lebensreform* movements.358 Like Stanislawski, Presner argues that Nordau’s commitment to Social Darwinism permitted a synthesizing of diverse and seemingly paradoxical ideational strands in order to apply the framework of
“regeneration/degeneration” (Presner’s formulation) to individual and collective European Jewish existence.359 As such, the *Muskeljudentum* was intended to represent the apogee of a meta-historical regeneration, the physical vanguard who, through the exercise of “*mannzucht*” (“manly discipline”) would engage in the restoration of Jewish cultural integrity, whilst nonetheless retaining the classic humanist outlook represented by figures such as Göethe, Schiller and Heinrich Heine.360 Unlike Stanislawski, Presner seems to suggest that the multiple paradoxes inherent within late 19th century German socio-cultural and political thought provided enough conceptual room to allow for the synthesis of discourses. Thus, the regenerated male Jewish body could represent, at one and the same time, a return to the mythic source of Jewish national integrity, *and* a further cultural and intellectual refinement of the inner Jewish

359 Ibid, Chapter 2.
360 Ibid., 61.
character (Figure 15c). Interestingly, Herzl’s utopian Zionist novel *Albineuland* offers a strikingly similar combination of *fin-de-siècle* themes.

In self-consciously engaging in the construction of a Zionist identity through the practice of *Turnkunst*, many *verein* not only adopted the visual symbols of the nascent Zionist movement, such as the *Magen David*, they also insisted upon the exclusive use of Hebrew as the language of instruction and command. Again, one senses the influence of “Turnvater” Jahn and his insistence upon the use of an idiomatic (and intentionally vulgar) German purged of its French accretions. However, the members of the *Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba Berlin* also regularly engaged in a practice which lends credence to Presner’s claims regarding the philosophical complexity inherent in this expression of Jewish *Körperkultur*: quoting Heinrich Heine. These Jewish gymnasts frequently recited Heine’s poetry and the numerous vituperative quips which he had specifically (and ironically) directed at Jahn during his lifetime. According to Michael Berkowitz, “the Jewish gymnast’s symbiosis of *Deutschtum, Judentum*, and liberalism, mixing exercises with Heine’s jabs at the vaingloriousness of German nationalism, was a critical transmitter of Zionist culture….” Perhaps it was this elasticity, this capacity to include those cultural and aesthetic elements central to the 19th century Jewish *Bürgerliche* ethos, which enabled Zionism to achieve the successes which it did amongst the gymnasts. The gymnastics exposition which was staged during the Eleventh Zionist Congress of 1913 in Vienna

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362 Kohn, The Mind of Germany, 86.
364 Ibid.
included over 2,000 gymnasts and 25,000 spectators; it likely represented the single largest (non-religious) gathering of Jews in pre-War Western/Central Europe.\textsuperscript{365} However, not every German-Jewish gymnast or \textit{turnverein} active during this period was willing to embrace Zionism. For many, the \textit{Jüdische Turnerschaft} represented a means of endowing their Jewish identity with a positive valence, whilst nonetheless allowing them to retain their thoroughgoing commitment to the German state and its goals. As \textit{Jüdische Turnerschaft} official Max Zirker stated in this regard, “faithfulness to the state and faithfulness to the \textit{Stamm} [sic] stand in no contradiction….”\textsuperscript{366} How so? That is, one is immediately forced to ask the basic question as to how German-Jewish gymnasts articulated, to \textit{themselves}, and to German society at large, a resolution of these two seemingly conflicting affiliations. Once again, semantics suggests an answer.

The foundational charter of the \textit{Jüdische Turnerschaft}, issued in 1903, defined its constituents as belonging to a Jewish “\textit{Stammsgemeinschaft}” (“community of descent”).\textsuperscript{367} In doing so, the \textit{Turnerschaft} adopted a definitional construct that provided for a more substantive definition of German-Jewish cultural values than “\textit{Glaubensgemeinschaft}” (“community of faith”). For decades, the term \textit{Glaubensgemeinschaft} directly informed 19\textsuperscript{th} century German \textit{maskilic} identity.\textsuperscript{368} However, as the 19\textsuperscript{th} century progressed, this term arguably spoke as much to a perceived lacunae vis-à-vis Jewish self-identity, as it did to political emancipation and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{365} Berkowitz, \textit{Zionist Culture}, 109.
\textsuperscript{366} Wildmann, “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany.” 33.
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{368} Baader, Benjamin Maria. \textit{Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany}, 1800-1870. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.) 8.
\end{flushright}
civic inclusion.\textsuperscript{369} Ironically, the gradual, uneven and piecemeal inclusion of Jews into the political and social life of the German states prior to unification precipitated a slow but steady decline in Jewish ritual observance. Previously \textit{the} central mechanism for reaffirming and reifying communal Jewish identity, the \textit{Glaubensgemeinschaft} could no longer speak as effectively to a German-Jewish populace divided by recent reinterpretations of religious practice,\textsuperscript{370} or to a Jewish identity redefined through other frameworks, such as historicism. In adopting the term \textit{“Stammsgemeinschaft,”} the Jüdische Turnerschaft was arguably shedding the problematic status of a conceptual anachronism, in favor of one which, by using the anthropological language of the age, implied the organic authenticity of a continuing Jewish identity. Although still a separate community within the larger \textit{Deutschesgemeinschaft}, the regenerated Jewish body of the gymnast offered proof of collective fitness of the Jüdischesgemeinschaft, thus signaling its readiness to contribute to the larger reclamation of German society.

Just as an implicit militarism lay at the very heart of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn’s initiatives, so too many Jüdische Turnerschaft disciples regarded gymnastics as a possible route to greater access within the Imperial German army.\textsuperscript{371} However, until the outbreak of World War One, it was virtually impossible for a Jewish enlistee to earn officer status, this despite the regular and conspicuous service of Jewish soldiers in both German and Austrian uniforms throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{372} In the age of the nation-state, pursuit of a career in uniform represented a pre-eminent mode of

\textsuperscript{369} Wildmann, \textit{“Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,”} 32.
\textsuperscript{370} Baader, \textit{Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture}, Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{371} Reuveni, \textit{“Sports and the Militarization of Jewish Society,”} 47-49.
\textsuperscript{372} Wildmann, \textit{“Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,”} 33.
demonstrating patriotism and socio-political worth. By the end of the 19th century, the averred-to biological deficiencies of the Jewish male functioned as an empirical rationale for continuing a tradition of exclusion from the officer corps, whether one speaks of Imperial Germany, Hapsburg Austria or the Third Republic in France.

In *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) Sander Gilman focuses upon the role which a pathologized perception of Jewish pedial difference played in the continued marginalization of German-speaking Jews in 19th century Europe (Figure 17, Gilman 41). Tracing this particular discourse back to an Austrian military study conducted by Joseph Rohrer in 1804, in which the “weak feet” of the Jewish foot-soldier functions as a metonym describing an overall unsuitability for military service,373 Gilman argues that, ultimately, “[t]he [Jewish] foot became the hallmark of difference, of the Jewish body being separate from the real ‘body politic’ (emphasis mine).”374 Coming full circle in our own analysis, in a 1908 issue of the *Jüdische Turn-Zeitung*, the Berlin physician and Jewish gymnast Moritz Jastrowitz similarly considered the issue of congenital pedial malfunction. As in his subsequent essay “*Müskeljuden und Nervenjuden,*” (1909), we find Jastrowitz both legitimating and inverting the biological rationales underpinning claims of Jewish physical deficiency. First, he accepted the empirical demonstrability of impaired motility amongst Jewish males. But, as with his future discussion of nervous disorders, he argued that “flat feet,” and other hereditary conditions, were largely the product of historical and

374 Ibid., 44.
environmental factors.\textsuperscript{375} Unsurprisingly, Jastrowitz cited the deleterious effects of an urban, hyper-intellectualized and materialistic lifestyle upon the Jewish body (including the foot). Utilizing the rationale of \textit{mens sana in corpore sano}, Jastrowitz implied that an amelioration of Jewish nervous disorders would occur through the application of physical fitness measures.\textsuperscript{376} In other words, through the collective discipline offered by gymnastics, the German-Jew would thus be able to demonstrate his native military capacities. Just such an argument was in fact forwarded by Richard Blum, an early leader of the \textit{Jüdischer Turnverein Bar Kochba Berlin}, in an article entitled (suitably) \textquotedblright \textit{Disziplin} \textnormal{(}JTZ, 1900, no. 2.\textnormal{)}. George L. Mosse tersely sums up this point by stating that \textquoteleft in its [gymnastics'] quiet strength and self-control this idea of masculinity was ready-made for the kind of discipline the military needed…\textquoteright\textsuperscript{377} (JTZ images)

Ultimately, the experience of the First World War acted to radicalize the connections between sports and militarism in Europe. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, the Jewish gymnastics movement was largely unsuccessful, arguably both before and after the War, in either facilitating greater German-Jewish access to military posts, or substantively improving the position of Jews within German society as a whole. This, despite the massive enlistment of \textit{Jüdische Turnerschaft} members upon Imperial Germany’s entry into the war.\textsuperscript{378} It is little wonder then, that the inherent logic of tying gymnastics to the larger mission of Zionism began to win out

\textsuperscript{375} Gilman, \textit{The Jew’s Body}, 53, 54.
\textsuperscript{376} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{378} Wildmann, \textquoteleft Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,\textquoteright 37.
amongst the rank-and-file of the *Jüdische Turnerschaft*. Equally, one may interpret the growing success of Zionism amongst the gymnasts as reflective of the movement’s failure to repair German-Jewish identity through athletics. The dawning of the 20th century brought only an increase in antisemitic rhetoric and sentiment in Europe; *Zionism* offered a powerful alternative in the form of a regenerated and *integral* national identity. In the years following the cessation of hostilities, the *Turnerschaft* essentially disintegrated, with most of its constituent *turnverein* being incorporated, following its establishment in 1921, into the officially *Zionist Maccabi Welterband*.379

For the unrealized hopes of those German-Jewish gymnasts seeking acceptance and identity within the *Deutsches Völkstum*, a passage from Heinrich Heine’s poem “*Still is die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen*” seems apropos:

Oh pale, worn shadow, oh phantom double,

    Why ape my bitter, love-sick tears,

    That drove me here to an endless trouble,

    Many a night in the vanished years…..

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379 Wildmann. “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,” 37.
Concluding Remarks

Put in perspective, the failure of the German-Jewish gymnastics movement to definitively resolve and repair the fractured nature of German-Jewish identity during the 19th century becomes part of a larger pattern. This thesis has attempted to offer a fresh perspective on the nature of German-Jewish identity as it entered a period during which a concurrent redefinition of German identity was taking place. Many aspects of this topic have remained unexplored due to space constraints, lack of time, and my limited command of the German language. However, it is hoped that this work has offered a cogent picture of the principal philosophical and aesthetic forces which contributed to the persistent marginalization of Germany's Jews during the 19th century, and the Jewish responses which they engendered.
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Source: www.chgs.umn.edu/./otherness/images.

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H. Glicenstein, Bar Kochba, 1902.
Source: Die Jüdische Turn-Zeitung, Vol. 8, no. 3.
Courtesy of Brandeis University.
Glossary of Foreign-Language Terms

**Anschauung:** (Ger.) A term coined during the mid-19th century, *anschauung* implies immediate intuitive perception of sense data, visual, auditory or other, without the mediation of the rational faculties.

**Aufhebung:** (Ger.) Most commonly translated into English as “sublation”; Hegel coined this term in order to express his concept of dialectical nullification, as the term *Aufhebung* has the somewhat contradictory implication of both cancelling and preserving a concept or state of being by/within another concept or state of being.

**Aufklärung:** (Ger.) Generally understood as the name most frequently used to define the German Enlightenment, which extended from the last decades of the 17th century up through the first decade of the 19th century. Like its English and French counterparts, this period in German intellectual and socio-cultural development was marked by an emphasis upon rational inquiry and speculative thought.

**Biedermeier:** (Ger.) An early 19th century term having a wide applicability across the fields of art, literature, architecture and more, *Biedermeier* suggests a petite-bourgeois domesticity at once quaint, private, and consciously non-political.

**Bildung:** (Ger.) A difficult term to adequately translate into English, *Bildung* refers to the German Enlightenment concept of inward cultural self-perfection through education. Such self-perfection is meant to encompass all aspects of individual development, including intellectual erudition, moral and spiritual maturity, as well as aesthetic sophistication. For late 18th/early 19th century German-speaking Jews, *Bildung* became arguably the guiding concept in their efforts at acculturation and greater socio-cultural acceptance within German society as a whole.

**Bildungsbürgertum:** (Ger.) Generally translated into English as “educated middle-class,” the term *Bildungsbürgertum* is most frequently used to describe the burgeoning bourgeois element which arose in 19th century Germany as a result of increasing industrialization and urbanization. Although educated professionals, such as civil servants, doctors, lawyers, and academics were heavily represented within the *Bildungsbürgertum*, one can also include artisans, merchants, and other semi-educated elements within the ranks of this “class”.

**Bürgerlich:** (Ger.) For our purposes, this term is interchangeable with “bourgeois”.

**Doppelgänger:** (Ger.) Coined in the late 18th century, this term literally means “double-goer”. It is used to describe any double or look-alike of a person. It also has the connotation of a shadowy double, someone who is perceptible only peripherally, rather
than directly as would be obtained in a mirror.

**Einbildungskraft:** (Ger.) A term first used by Kant, and then subsequently by Fichte, *Einbildungskraft* refers to the imaginative faculty responsible for organizing sense data given through intuition, rather than intellection or reflection. For Kant, *Einbildungskraft* plays a crucial function in the formation of rational schemata, despite the fact that he regards imagination as a fundamentally non-rational faculty. Indeed, in *Aesthetics and subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: 2003), Andrew Bowie suggests that Kant was never able to satisfactorily explain whether *Einbildungskraft* functions as a constitutive, or merely a reflective faculty, an issue which drives to the very heart of Kant’s notion of apperception and subjective identity.

**fin-de-siècle:** (Fr.) Literally meaning “end-of-the-century,” the term *fin-de-siècle* most frequently refers to the complex and contradictory cultural climate present in much of continental Europe during the last decade of the 19th century, and the first decade of the 20th century. Punctuated by a dynamic combination of anxiety and hope, decadence and renewal, *fin-de-siècle* Europe witnessed the efflorescence of dynamic aesthetic movements such as *art nouveau* and Symbolism. For an in-depth account of the Central European *fin-de-siècle*, refer to Carl E. Schorske’s *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: 1980).

**Freundschaftsbünde:** (Ger.) The term used to describe the “friendship clubs” which emerged during the German Enlightenment. Usually composed of academics, artists and intellectuals, these groups emphasized the formation of intimate male relationships based around the pursuit of Bildung through the dynamics of shared intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic pursuits.

**Geist:** (Ger.) A central concept within Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of the Spirit*) published in 1807, this term is famously difficult to adequately translate into English. Meaning both mind (thought) and spirit (soul), *Geist* can also imply purposeful motivation on the part of an individual or collective entity.

**Gemeinschaft:** (Ger.) First used by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887, *Gemeinschaft* refers to a community established upon common kinship (such as ethnicity or religion), common socio-cultural mores, and a sense of shared purpose or will. Tönnies offered the concept of *Gemeinschaft* as a counterpart to *Gesellschaft* (see below).

**Gesamtkunstwerk:** (Ger.) A term and concept created by the composer Richard Wagner, *Gesamtkunstwerk* is most frequently translated as the “Total Work of Art”. As Chapter Two of this thesis explains, Wagner envisioned his *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a comprehensive combination of musical, visual, performative and literary elements within one aesthetic creation. For Wagner, the ultimate purpose of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was socio-cultural transformation; through the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Wagner believed he could precipitate a revolution in modern German identity, whereby all “true” Germans, regardless of class or profession, would become aware of the primordial, and thus “authentic” nature of
German people-hood.

**Gesellschaft:** (Ger.) 19th century sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies conceptual counterpart to *Gemeinschaft* (see above), *Gesellschaft* refers to a civil society based upon little more than the collective self-interest of its constituent members. Possessing distinctly economic overtones, the *Gesellschaft* is marked by the absence of primary relationships, such as one finds within a family or close-knit community defined through a shared sense of ethical, spiritual and/or cultural identities.

**Haskalah:** (Heb.) Derived from the Hebrew word "חכמת" ("sekhel"), meaning intellect. *Haskalah* refers to the European Jewish Enlightenment movement of the late 18th and 19th centuries. Centered for the most part within the German-speaking world, members of the *Haskalah*, known as the *maskilim*, advocated the progressive acculturation, integration, and civic amelioration of European Jewry through a combination of increased secular studies, and a new engagement with Jewish history and culture. These initiatives were based upon Enlightenment notions of basic human equality, and the use of rationality as a means towards collective socio-political progress.

**Hochaufklärung:** (Ger.) Generally understood as the last stage of the German Enlightenment, the *Hochaufklärung* is generally understood as extending from the mid-18th century until at least Kant’s “critical” philosophical turn during the 1770s and 1780s. Punctuated by the emergence of *Popularphilosophie* and its emphasis upon philosophy’s obligation towards actively engaging in socio-cultural progress, the *Hochaufklärung* was dominated by the writings of the pre-“critical” Kant, Moses Mendelssohn, Friedrich Nicolai, G. E. Lessing, and Thomas Abbt, among others.

**Judenfrage:** (Ger.) Translated into English as the “Jewish question,” the *Judenfrage* refers to the general European discussion regarding the social, economic and legal status of Europe’s Jews which arose both directly before and after the French Revolution. The *Judenfrage* continued to be a topic of widespread consideration until the implementation of the Final Solution by Hitler and his cohorts.

**Körperkultur:** (Ger.) Literally translating as “body culture” in English, late 19th century German *Körperkultur* was a broad-based movement defined by a renewed focus on the human body as a primary site of meaning relative to socio-cultural, political and national identity.

**Kultur:** (Ger.) Although corresponding to the English word “culture,” the German term *Kultur* also refers to the late 19th century, post-unification drive to subordinate individual interests and pursuits to social initiatives designed to strengthen the state.

**Kulturkampf:** (Ger.) Literally translating to “culture struggle” in English, this term refers specifically to Otto von Bismark’s post-unification anti-Catholic policies. However, *Kulturkampf* can also refer to the wider struggle for a secularized, centralized “Prusso-centric” Germany, such as existed during the Wilhemine period (1890-1914).
Maskil/Maskilim: (Heb.) Member or members of the “Haskalah” (see above).

Mitteleuropa: (Ger.) More than merely a geographical term, Mitteleuropa refers to the specific cultural traditions found within those countries and areas of Central Europe which have traditionally straddled the social and political boundaries of Western and Eastern Europe.

Naturphilosophie: (Ger.) An important intellectual current in the development of German Idealism, naturphilosophie can be understood as the attempt to comprehend existence in its totality, such that the former philosophical divisions between subject and object, or mind and body (for example) are effaced in preference for the notion of a fundamental unity within diversity. Early proponents included J. G. Fichte, F. W. J. (von) Schelling and Hegel.

Parvenu: (Fr.) A pejorative term made popular during the 19th century, parvenu refers to an individual who has experienced a sudden and/or rapid improvement in economic standing without the concurrent development of appropriate social grace or sophistication.

Sittlich/Sittlichkeit: (Ger.) The former usually translates to “moral” or “respectable” in English. In 18th and 19th century Germany, the pursuit of sittlich values was considered part of the acculturation process engaged in through Bildung (see above). The latter term was first used in print by Hegel in his 1820 tract Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Elements of the Philosophy of Right). Hegel uses it to denote an “ethical” life, one guided a nexus of family values, civic responsibility, and commitment to the state.

Ur: (Ger.) A prefix originally derived from the Old High German ir meaning “thoroughly”. Its usage increased during the 19th century, and was employed by influential German thinkers such as Fichte and Wagner to imply an autochthonous legitimacy derived from mythic sources. Was commonly used in regard to issues like nationhood and ethnicity (Urvölk and Ursprung), language (Urmuttersprache), and geographical location (Ursitzen).

Völk/Völkisch: (Ger.) The former term corresponds to the English “folk,” and carries with it the romantic connotations of timelessness and spiritual authenticity. The latter term is the adjectival form of Völk, and is generally used in relation to the growth of Romantic German nationalism during the 19th century (e.g., “völkisch nationalism”).

Zeitgeist: (Ger.) This term translates literally to “spirit of the time (e.g., age),” and refers to the main cultural, intellectual, artistic and political forces at work during a given period in a particular environment or location.
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