PRIVILEGED JEWS

By Hannah Arendt

"Die namlich, welche zu gleicher Zeit Juden sein und Juden nicht sein wollen..."

H. E. G. Paulus, 1831.

The Moral of History

Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the rare genuine German democrats, who played a big part in the emancipation of Prussian Jewry in 1812 and a still bigger part in the intervention in behalf of the Jews at the Congress of Vienna, looked back in 1816 to the days of his public battle for Jewish rights and his many years of personal intercourse with Jews and said: "I love the Jew really only en masse; en détail I strictly avoid him."¹ This amazing and paradoxical utterance, standing as it does in extreme contrast to the personal history of Humboldt—he had many personal friends among Jews—is unique in the history of the arguments presented for Jewish emancipation. Since Lessing and Dohm in Prussia, since Mirabeau and the Abbé Grégoire in France, the advocates of the Jews always based their arguments on the "Jews en détail," on the notable exceptions among the Jewish people. Humboldt's humanism, in the best traditions of Jewish emancipation in France, aimed to liberate the people as a whole, without bestowing special privileges upon individuals. As such his viewpoint was appreciated very little by his contemporaries and it had still less influence on the later history of emancipated Jewry.

More in keeping with the sentiments of the time were the views of H. E. G. Paulus, a liberal Protestant theologian and contemporary of Humboldt. Paulus protested against the idea of emancipating the Jews as a group. Instead he urged that individuals be granted the rights of man.

¹ Wilhelm von Humboldt und Karoline von Humboldt in ihren Briefen (Berlin 1900) vol. v, p. 236.
according to their personal merits. A few decades later, Gabriel Riesser, the Jewish publicist, vented his irony upon the sort of official Jewish propaganda which based its appeal upon stories of "virtuous Jews" who saved Christians from drowning. The basic principle of granting special privileges to individuals and refusing civic rights to the Jewish people as a group had successfully asserted itself.

In the minds of the privileged Jews such measures taken by the state appeared to be the workings of a sort of heavenly tribunal, by whom the virtuous—who had more than a certain income—were rewarded with human rights, and the unworthy—living in mass concentration in the eastern provinces—were punished as pariahs. Since that time it has become a mark of assimilated Jews to be unable to distinguish between friend and enemy, between compliment and insult, and to feel flattered when an antisemite assures them that he does not mean them, that they are exceptions—exceptional Jews.

The events of recent years have proved that the "excepted Jew" is more the Jew than the exception; no Jew feels quite happy any more about being assured that he is an exception. The extraordinary catastrophe has converted once again all those who fancied themselves extraordinarily favored beings into quite ordinary mortals. Were history a closed book, sealed after each epoch, we would not be much interested in the story of the privileged Jews. The vitality of a nation, however, is measured in terms of the living remembrance of its history. We Jews are inclined to have an inverted historical perspective; the more distantly removed events are from the present, the more sharply, clearly and accurately they appear. Such an inversion of historical perspective means that in our political conscience we do not want to take the responsibility for the immediate past and that we, together with our historians, want to take refuge in periods of the past, which leave us secure in terms of political consequences.

Paulus, H. E. G., Beitraege von jiidischen und christlichen Gelehrten zur Verbesserung der Bekener jiidischen Glaubens (Frankfurt 1817). "The separation of the Jews will only be encouraged if the governments continue to treat them as a whole, in a bad or good sense. If however every one of them is given individual treatment, with justice for every one, according to his behavior, this separation will be dissolved through action." The attack is directed particularly against Humboldt, who defended the cause of the Jews at the Congress of Vienna. Humboldt's argument for the liberation of the Jews "en masse" and against a slow method of amelioration, is clearly outlined in his "Expert Opinion" of 1809: "A gradual abolition confirms the separation which it intends to destroy. In all points which are not abolished, it draws attention—by the very fact of the new liberty—to all still existing restrictions and thereby acts against itself." (Cited in: Freund, Ismar, Die Emanzipation der Juden in Preussen (Berlin 1912) vol. ii, p. 270.)

Riesser, Gabriel, Gesammelte Schriften (Leipzig 1867), vol. iv, p. 290.
Behind us lies a century of opportunist politics, a century in which an unusual concurrence of circumstances allowed our people to live from day to day. During the same period scholars and philologists have succeeded in estranging history from the people in the same manner as opportunist statesmen alienated them from politics. The sublime concept of human progress was robbed of its historic sense and perverted into a simple natural fact, according to which the son is always presented as better and wiser than his father, the grandson as more enlightened than his grandfather. Or, it was degraded to an economic law, according to which accumulated wealth of the forebears determines the well-being of the sons and grandsons, making each of them advance further in the unending career of the family. In the light of such developments, to forget has become a holy duty, inexperience a privilege and ignorance a guarantee of success.

Since the circumstances under which we live are created by man, the deceased force themselves upon us and upon the institutions that govern us and refuse to disappear into the darkness into which we try to plunge them. The more we try to forget the more their influence dominates us. The succession of generations may be a natural guarantee for the continuity of history but it is certainly not a guarantee of progress. Because we are the sons of our fathers and the grandsons of our grandfathers their misdeeds may persecute us into the third and fourth generations. Inactive ourselves, we cannot even enjoy their deeds for, like all human works, they have the fatal tendency to turn into dross, just as a room painted white always turns black if not repainted frequently.

History, in this sense, has its moral, and if our scholars, with their impartial objectivity, are unable to discover this moral in history, it means only that they are incapable of understanding the world we have created; just like the people who are unable to make use of the very institutions they have produced. History, unfortunately, does not know Hegel's "List der Vernunft"; rather does unreason begin to function automatically when reason has abdicated to it.

The automatism of events, reigning since the beginning of the nineteenth century in place of human reason, prepared with incomparable precision for the spiritual collapse of Europe before the bloody idol of race. It is no mere accident that the catastrophic defeats of the peoples of Europe began with the catastrophe of the Jewish people, a people in whose destiny all others thought they could remain uninterested because of the tenet that Jewish history obeys "exceptional laws." The defeat of the Jewish people started with the catastrophe of the German Jews, in
whom European Jews were not interested because they suddenly discovered that German Jews constituted an exception. The collapse of German Jewry began with its splitting up into innumerable factions, each of which believed that special privileges could protect human rights—e.g., the privilege of having been a veteran of World War I, the child of a war veteran, or if such privileges were not recognized any more, a crippled war veteran or the son of a father killed at the front. Jews "en masse" seemed to have disappeared from the earth, it was easy to dispose of Jews "en détail." The terrible and bloody annihilation of individual Jews was preceded by the bloodless destruction of the Jewish people.

The European background against which Jewish history appears is complicated and involved. Sometimes the Jewish thread is lost in the maze but most of the time it is easily recognizable. The general history of Europe, from the French Revolution to the beginning of World War I, may be described in its most tragic aspect as the slow but steady transformation of the citoyen of the French Revolution into the bourgeois of the pre-war period. The stages of the history of this period of nearly 150 years are manifold, and often present magnificent and very human aspects. The period of enrichissez-vous (get-rich-quick) was also that of the flowering of French painting; the period of German misery was also that of the great age of classic literature; and we cannot imagine the Victorian age without Dickens. At the end of the era, however, we are confronted by a strange de-humanized kind of humanity. The moral of the history of the nineteenth century is the fact that men who were not ready to assume a responsible role in public affairs in the end were turned into mere beasts who could be used for anything before being led to slaughter. Institutions, moreover, left to themselves without control and guidance by men, turned into monsters devouring nations and countries.

The Jewish phase of 19th century history reveals similar manifestations. While reading Heine and Börne, who just because as Jews they insisted on being considered men and thus were incorporated into the universal history of mankind, we forgot all about the tedious speeches of the representatives of the special group of privileged Jews in Prussia at the same time. In the country which made Disraeli its Prime Minister, the Jew Karl Marx wrote Das Kapital, a book which in its fanatical zeal for justice, carried on the Jewish tradition much more efficaciously than all the success of the "chosen man of the chosen race." Finally, who does not, in thinking of the great literary work of Marcel Proust and the powerful bill of indictment by Bernard Lazare, forget those French Jews who filled the aristo-

cratic salons of the Faubourg St. Germain and who, unconsciously following the unseemly example of their Prussian predecessors of the beginning of the nineteenth century, endeavored to be "Jews yet at the same time not Jews"?5

This ambiguity became decisive for the social behavior of the assimilated and emancipated Jewry in western Europe. They did not want and could not belong to the Jewish people any more, but they wanted and had to remain Jews — exceptions among the Jewish people. They wanted to and could play their part in non-Jewish society, but they did not desire to and could not disappear among the non-Jewish peoples. Thus they became exceptions in the non-Jewish world. They maintained they were able to be "men like others on the street but Jews at home."6 But they felt they were different from other men on the street as Jews, and different from other Jews at home in that they were superior to the masses of the Jewish people.

The Privileged of Wealth

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Jews succeeded, in exceptional cases, in escaping from the ghettos of western Europe. By the middle of the eighteenth century conditions had developed so that Jews with a lot of money and great ability were able to enter the paradise of rights and liberties, and Jews without money and business still continued to live in dire poverty and without civic rights. In Austria and in all the south German states — Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden — the Jews belonged to the court-household of the more or less enlightened despots of the times. They were usually called Hofjuden, but in Prussia they were characteristically named Generalprivilegierte Juden. This name was no exaggeration. The Hofjuden enjoyed all privileges, they could live wherever they liked, they could travel anywhere within the realm of their sovereigns, they could bear arms and demand the special protection of all local authorities. Their way of life was on a much higher level than that of the middle-class of the period. The Hofjuden possessed greater privileges than the majority of the population of their homelands, and it would be erroneous to believe that this state of things escaped the attention of

6 It is not without its irony that this excellent formula which may serve as a motto for western European assimilation as a whole, was propounded by a Russian Jew and first published in Hebrew. It comes from Judah Leib Gordon's Hebrew poem, Hakitzah ammi (1863).
7 Dohm, Christian Wilhelm, Denkwürdigkeiten meiner Zeit (Lemgo 1814-19), vol. iv, p. 487.
their contemporaries. Dohm, in his Denkwürdigkeiten, complains of the practice in force since the time of Frederick William I to grant those Jews who became rich "all sorts of favors and support" often "at the expense of and with the neglect of diligent and legal citizens."

The Jews of that time still lived for the most part in small villages. All these small Jewish communities of provincial Jews, peddlers, artisans and the like had their Hofjude as protector, who brought directly to the ruler all local grievances. The Jews were thus better protected than the surrounding non-Jewish population, who were left helpless to the exploitation of the feudal landowners. This right of entering petitions through the Hofjuden was such an enormous advantage for the local communities that they accepted for its sake all sorts of radical changes in the formerly democratic constitution of the communities and often accepted as formal heads of the community rich Jews who did not even live among them. The price which the Jewish people had to pay for the short-lived advantages which the Hofjuden brought to them during the first years of their miraculous rise was the domination of the community by the "notables," a condition which was already firmly established at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The Hofjuden were "exceptional Jews," because the princes made exceptions in their favor. Even if a prince was an enemy of the Jews, the disastrous condition of the state finances in the eighteenth century and the fact that the nobility was encumbered with debts forced him to suppress his inner feelings and to grant privileges to one or another Jew. It would be naive, however, to believe that one can make exceptions in laws without experiencing an exception in feelings. The cordial relations between Hofjuden and their principals proved that feelings toward them had changed. The "exceptional Jews," moreover, soon began to adapt themselves to the opinions of their rulers. In the Jewish communities, over which they reigned from afar, their exercise of power soon began to resemble, in its good and bad effects, the government of the absolute monarchs. There was one decisive difference however; they never once dreamed that they were installed "by the grace of God," but knew very well that they had ascended the throne by the grace of the princes and their own money.

The first Hofjude with monarchical aspirations among his own "nation" was a Jew of Prague, who was purveyor of supplies to the Elector Maurice of Saxony in the sixteenth century. He demanded that all rabbis and community-heads should be selected only from members of his
The practice to install Hofjuden as dictators in their communities became general in the eighteenth century. The Hofjuden, like all still unspoiled upstarts, showed themselves, in their relations with the princes, to be proud of their dark background of misery, misfortune and pariah-existence. Against that background their glory as exceptions shone more brilliantly. Later these Jewish notables took great care to see that this dark background of poverty, misery and scorn be continued. It is rather due to their efforts and not so much to those of the Prussian government that poor Jews of Posen in the first decades of the nineteenth century received citizenship rights only as exceptional cases. Similarly the emancipation of the Jews during the French Revolution took place against the remonstrances of the rich Jews of Bordeaux and Avignon, the “privileged Jews” of the French monarchy. The more the wealthy Jews moved away from Jewish morals and religious custom, the more orthodox they became for the people. Thus the Rothschilds in the 1820’s withdrew a large donation from their native community of Frankfurt, in order to counteract the influence of reformers who wanted Jewish children to receive general education and thus to create possibilities for advancement for the poorer classes. This “double dependence” of the poor Jews, dependence on “both the state and their wealthy brethren,” became more oppressive with the growing power of the privileged Jews. As their wealth increased, the Jewish bankers had greater need for the poverty of the Jewish masses as a protective argument. The poorer the masses became, the more secure the rich Jews felt and the brighter their glory shone.

The Hofjuden owed their rise from the ghetto not only to favorable circumstances but also to their personal merits, their selfearned wealth and their self-created social relations. They were particularly gifted, clever men, with a high degree of initiative. With their special privileges and their special position also came exceptional achievements. The privileges they received were a reward for past services and a prize for future and still greater efforts. The needs of the growing national states increased much more rapidly than the understanding on the part of the nations for the necessity of building up an efficient state machinery. The financial

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9 H. E. G. Paulus already made a very just remark: “The mighty ones (leading Jewry) endeavor only to get more influence for themselves, but would like to keep the others in their national isolation, pretending that this separation is part of their religion. Why? Because the others should depend on them even more and be put to the sole use of the powerful ones under the name “Unsere Leute.”
needs of the princes, influenced solely by political factors, created new fields of economic activity which, separated from the economic development of the countries, remained state monopolies. Jews penetrated into the economy of the state everywhere: in France as farmers of taxes, in Prussia as mint coiners or operators in the state works, in Bavaria as lessees of the royal salt mines, and everywhere as purveyors of military supplies.

It is a characteristic aspect of the rise of the Hoffjuden that it was due everywhere to political conditions and remained relatively independent of the economic developments of the time. States and princes did not pay any attention to the economic capacity of their privileged Jews and forced them into doing business on a basis of pure speculation. On the other hand, the Jews had little inclination to integrate themselves into the normal economic life of their home-countries. Jewish money played a role in the state factories of the mercantilist age inasmuch as Jews figured as the suppliers of credit to the state and to its business enterprises. However, the Jews hardly ever tried, even if offered opportunities, to enter into manufacturing and industries independent of the state.¹² The Jewish positions created by the Hoffjuden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remained decisive for Jewish economic life as late as the twentieth century. They remained outside the real capitalistic development and outsiders in the capitalistic bourgeoisie which developed within the national states but independent of the state machinery and often antagonistic to it. In contrast to the non-Jewish bourgeoisie they felt they were under the special protection of the state and that their business interests depended on the political interests of their sovereigns.

¹² Pribatsch, Felix, “Die Judenpolitik des fuerstlichen Absolutismus im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,” in Forschungen und Versuche zur Geschichte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, in honor of Dietrich Schaefer (1915). In this work, we find a typical example from the early eighteenth century: “When the manufactory of mirrors in Neuhaus, Lower Austria, which was subsidized by the administration, did not produce results, the Jew, Wertheimer, gave the Emperor the money to buy it. When asked to take over the manufactory, he refused, stating that his time is too much taken up with his financial transactions.”

Corresponding to this tradition, which kept the rich Jews from the real positions of power in capitalism, is the fact that the Paris Rothschilds in 1911 sold their share in the oil wells of Baku to the Royal Shell Group, after having figured for a while as the biggest petroleum tycoons at Rockefeller's side. (See Lewisohn, R., Wie sie gross und reich wurden [Berlin 1927].)

André Sayous' statement in his polemics against Sombart's identification of Jews and capitalist development, may be taken as a general rule: “The Rothschilds and other Israelites who were almost exclusively engaged in launching state loans and in the international movement of capital did not try at all . . . to create great industries.” “Les Juifs,” in Revue Economique Internationale (1922).
These Jews who were treated as exceptions and had made brilliant individual careers stood outside all social connections. They were separated from the ghettos and Jewish districts. At court, they were appreciated by the princes, but naturally despised by the court society. They had no business connections and no social relations with other circles of the non-Jewish population. Their economic rise remained independent of contemporary economic conditions and their social contacts remained outside the laws of society. Friendships between princes and Hofjuden were not at all rare but they never created a social atmosphere.

We know relatively little about the personalities of these early privileged Jews of wealth. The fact that the Hofjuden, until the end of the eighteenth century, used their power in favor of their communities leads to the deduction that they did not yet fear to be identified with ordinary Jews. The stubbornness with which they carried on the fight to have Eisenmenger's Entdecktes Judentum, that last compendium of medieval Jew-hatred, prohibited (1701), shows that they still felt that attacks on all Jews were also a direct threat to themselves. Their power was very great at the time and never became as great again in the coming century of emancipation. It is true that behind the credit of every prince stood the credit of his Hofjude (when the Vienna court-Jew Oppenheimer died in 1703, the credit of the Austrian state was seriously impaired),¹⁸ that no war could be carried on without Jewish purveyors (only Jews could buy victuals in entire provinces with the aid of Jewish peddlers) and the Jews had the largest part in the state monopolies, such as mints, lotteries, salt and tobacco-monopolies. All this, however, was not the true foundation of their power. The decisive factor was that they were completely isolated from the population and had to give no consideration to any of the important classes in the country. It was their social independence that gave them the feeling of an independent political factor.¹⁴

This feeling of power was enhanced by the distance which separated this little group of privileged Jews from the masses of the Jewish people, without any Jewish middle-class or larger strata of well-to-do Jews bridging the gap. They ruled as absolute princes among the people, but


¹⁸ Johann Jacob Schudt reports in his Juedische Merkwuerdigkeiten (Frankfurt a.M. 1715-1717) as follows: "A certain Jew . . . when a noble and cultured medical man reproached him gently that they (the Jews) were so proud, though they had no princes among them and no part in government . . . replied with insolence: We are no princes, yet we govern them." (Part iv, Annex p. 48.)
they still felt themselves to be \textit{primi inter pares}. They still were single individuals risen to great splendour; as yet they formed no caste within their people.

The class arrogance of the privileged Jews developed but slowly. It was held in bounds for a long time by the terrible loneliness in which these men were forced to live. In the capitals, in which they were not only allowed to live but obliged to dwell because of the proximity to the court, there were no Jewish communities. At that time, more than in later periods, there was no possibility of leaving Judaism and being absorbed in the non-Jewish surroundings. The whole existence of the \textit{Hofjude} depended upon his being a Jew and not a Christian, this fact giving him, e. g., the opportunity of disposing of international connections which at that time no Christian banker and no Christian agent could mobilize. The enlightened despots needed people who, on the one hand, could procure war-supplies over vast territories and, on the other hand, stood outside a society and a population that could not even imagine themselves taking part in operations like the granting of state credits.\textsuperscript{15}

Only a Jew could mobilize the Jewish peddlers all over the country, use them as business agents and through them buy up in a few weeks all the food-products in whole provinces. Very soon the most important favor a prince could confer upon "his Jew" was the right to employ other Jews as servants and agents. It is evident that the first \textit{Hofjuden} had no social ambition and no desire for social relations with non-Jews. This made it comparatively easy for them to endure the general hostility of the population. These conditions can be most clearly observed in the imperial cities, in which the Jews were not subject to the authority of the town councils but directly dependent on the Emperor. Here they remained quite unconcerned with the rising hostility of the commoners, their neighbors.\textsuperscript{16}

These Jews could have ever so much business relations with their prince; all that business did not bring them a step nearer to the strange

\textsuperscript{15} The Paris Rothschild is justified in writing in 1819: "Who buys state bonds in Germany? and who has tried to raise the quotation rate, if not our nation . . . ." (Cited in Corti, Egon Caesar, \textit{Der Aufstieg des Hauses Rothschild 1700-1830} (Leipzig 1927) p. 230.)

\textsuperscript{16} "(The Jews) seemed very little disturbed about the hostility of the administration of the imperial cities and of the middle-class towns men. Glueckel von Hameln thinks that the situation in Hamburg will always be like that, as long as the burghers will run the town. The Jews knew they were protected by the Emperor and the princes . . . . The towns men complained all the time about their insolent talk, that they felt they were just as independent as the imperial cities, that they did not care what the town-council decided . . . . and said that only the Emperor was their master and sovereign." (Priebatsch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 598-99.)
environment around them. Let us take Samson Wertheimer as an example. In the first three decades of the eighteenth century, Wertheimer lent to the Austrian state more than six million florins. He could be counted as a confidant of the court and had access to all the diplomats and distinguished noblemen of his time. Yet all this did not imply any social relations and he did not even think of being treated as an equal by the courtiers. He was much more proud of his dignity as “a privileged Rabbi of all Jewry,” and of his title of “Prince of the Holy Land.”17 Up to the middle of the eighteenth century the Hofjuden would have agreed with the saying of the Dutch Jew, reported by Schudt in his Merkwuerdigkeiten, viz.: “Neque in toto orbi alicui nationi inservimus.” Neither then nor later would they have understood fully the answer of the “learned Christian,” who replied: “But this means happiness only for a few persons. The people, considered as a corpo (sic!) is hunted everywhere, has no self-government, is subject to foreign rule, has no power and no dignity, and wanders all over the world, strangers everywhere.”18

The pride of those who, because of the privileges granted to them, were equal to the most highly privileged inhabitants of the states they served had a very real political and economic basis. Their privileges were based upon their Jewish connections and they had neither the ambition nor the possibility to assimilate to any class of non-Jewish society or to establish connections with such a class.19 Slowly the fact appeared that wealth and privilege had rendered them just as remote from their own people as from their non-Jewish surroundings. This isolation did not lead them any closer to their environment but to the establishment of more intimate connections between the families of the various Hofjuden who often lived far apart. The business relations and the international correspondence between the leading Hofjuden families were soon followed by intermarriage, resembling in all details the international marriage relations of the aristocracy. This culminated into a real caste system, unknown thus far to Jewish society. Non-Jewish circles noticed this establishment of a new caste all the more, as it took place at a time when the European castes began to disappear into newly developing classes. The Jewish people did not have any such classes; there were no peasants among them and they did not participate in the development of capitalism as em-

17 Stern, Selma, Jud Suess (Berlin 1929) p. 18-19.
19 It is reported that Frederick II. of Prussia, when hearing of a possible conversion of his Jews to Christianity, exclaimed: “I hope they are not possessed by the devil!” (See Kleines Jahrbuch des Nuetzlichen und Angenehmen fuer Israeliten, 1847.)
ployers or workers. In the nineteenth century, when the process of the establishment of classes in the non-Jewish world and the establishment of a caste in Jewry was nearly completed, the Jewish people as a whole came to be regarded as a caste, although only the former Hofjuden were a caste within the Jewish people. 20

The Privileged of Education

In order to protect themselves against too risky business operations and exorbitant demands from the princes, the Hofjuden began to allow more prosperous ghetto dwellers to participate in their state affairs. In this way they not only secured influence over the material welfare of wider groups of Jews but also drew them out of the narrow ghetto life and got them to become interested in the welfare of the states in which they resided. By force of circumstances the princes, in turn, also became interested in the well-being and rights of this group of Jews. The Hofjuden in this way helped to pave the way for Jewish emancipation in Europe. The edicts of emancipation later promulgated by the various European states were not intended to do more than to grant privileges to those Jews who, by their wealth and their business activities, already had come to be counted among the most trustworthy supporters of the national states, and who in Prussia had been called Schutzjuden.

From the somewhat larger strata of the well-to-do but not generally privileged Schutzjuden came a new type of excepted Jew — the Jew who was exceptional because of culture and education. Of this group Moses Mendelssohn became the prototype. In contrast to the exceptional Jews of wealth these Jews had very little influence upon the political development of the Jews of western Europe but they did play an important role in the discussion of the Jewish question. Whereas the court-Jews had proved to the state that Jews are useful, the first western-educated Jews convinced society that Jews are human beings. In contrast to the policy of the Hofjuden the educated Jews tried, from the very beginning, to receive recognition from the non-Jewish world. But just as the princes no longer considered their Hofjuden as Jews when they proved to be useful and, therefore, relieved them of disabilities in force against other Jews, so contemporary society admitted the educated Jews for the express reason that they no longer considered them to be Jews. “Who in the world,”

*Christian Friedrich Ruehs gives a characteristic definition of the whole Jewish people as a “caste of businessmen.” “Ueber die Anspreche der Juden an das deutsche Buergerrecht,” in Zeitschrift fuer die neueste Geschichte (1815).
wrote Herder, "when reading the philosophic works of Spinoza, Mendelssohn and Herz, would give any thought to the fact that they were written by Jews?"21

For the enlightened Berlin of Mendelssohn’s time as for the Berlin of Humboldt and Schleiermacher the Jews served as living proof that all men are human. That they could be friends with Markus Herz or with Mendelssohn was for them the salvation of the dignity of the human race. Jews were "new types of humanity" and, because they were scions of a despised and oppressed people, they were a purer and more exemplary model of humanity. Social relations with Jews not only exhibited freedom from prejudice (called "tolerance" in the eighteenth century) but served as an example of the possibility of intimacy with all species of humanity. Herder, a great friend of the Jews, first used the phrase of "a strange people of Asia, driven into our regions,"22 which was later misrepresented by antisemites. These humanists wantonly alienated themselves from neighbors of many thousand years standing, from one of the basic nations of European culture, because they were eager to stress the basic unity of humanity, and the more alien the origins of the Jewish people were made out to be the more effective would be the demonstration of this universal principle.

During a short period, which however proved very important for the history of Europeanized Jewry, Prussia’s enlightened intelligentsia—under the impression made by Lessing’s Nathan the Wise—arrived at the conclusion that the "new types of humanity," because they had become examples of humanity, must also as individuals be more intensely human. Mirabeau was strongly influenced by this tenet and powerfully proclaimed it—again with reference to Mendelssohn’s personality—in pre-revolutionary Paris. Herder once more may be considered the representative spokesman of this school of thought. He hoped that educated Jews would show a greater freedom from prejudice, because "the Jew is free of certain political judgments which it is very hard or impossible for us to abandon."23 Above all, protesting expressly against "concessions of new mercantile advantages," Herder proposed to the German Jews that education was their way out of Judaism and out of "the old and proud national prejudices . . . customs that do not belong to our age and constitutions." Through education they, more than any others, will become

22 Ibid., p. 68.
23 Ibid., p. 71.
“more purely humanized” and of great value for the “development of the sciences and the entire culture of mankind.”24

This kind of judgment concerning the exceptional Jews of education turned out to be disastrous for the normalization of the Jewish situation. The educated Jews, faced with the ludicrous demand to be not only exceptional Jews but also exceptional specimens of humanity, did their best to fulfill it. This does not, however, apply to Mendelssohn, who hardly knew Herder and the thoughts of the younger generation. Mendelssohn was revered because he really was an extraordinary and unique individual. His firm adherence to his Jewish religion made impossible for him that ultimate break with the masses of Jewry, which became a matter of course for his successors. He felt himself to be “a member of an oppressed people which must beg for the good-will and protection of the governing nation.”25 Mendelssohn always was aware of the fact that the extraordinary esteem given to his person only corresponded to the extraordinary contempt in which his people were held. In that he was not yet among the number of those who shared in this contempt, he, therefore, did not consider himself an exception.

The first European-educated Jews had this in common with the court-Jews: they owed their extraordinary career to themselves only and to their uncommon individual talents. The rewards for education, however, were quite different from those reaped by the wealthy.

In contrast to the privileged Jews of wealth, the educated Jews enjoyed no political privileges. Mendelssohn himself wrote ironically to Lavater that he, friend of all educated Germany, would be subject to the same tax levied upon an ox led to the market if he wanted to visit Lavater in Leipzig. On the other hand, the educated Jews, as soon as they appeared on the scene, were granted access to society, made friends and enjoyed special esteem in intellectual circles although the middle class of the time refused to enter into social contact with them. This was of very little importance to them and their social career, however, because in Prussia in particular, for the greater part of the nineteenth century, it was the nobility and not the bourgeois that decided social standards. It was because the bourgeois society in Prussia had no social standard and because the German intelligentsia, therefore, was socially homeless that Jews and Jewish salons could become the centers of German intellectual life.

A kind of social upheaval in Prussia seemed to act as a substitute for

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24 Ibid., p. 74-75.
the French political emancipation. While France was the land of political
glory, Prussia seemed on the way to become the land of social splendor.
At the turning point from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century "Jews
all over the world turned their eyes to the Jewish community in Berlin"
and not to Paris. Intellectual Berlin," where Mendelssohn established
close connections and exchanged letters with nearly all the famous men
of his time, was only a beginning. True, Jewish scholars in all periods of
European history since the time of Charlemagne had relations with their
Christian colleagues. The novel and surprising aspect of Mendelssohn,
however, was that this friendship was used for political purposes, as by
Dohm and Mirabeau, or as an example of true humanity, as by Lessing
and Herder. Mendelssohn himself never took any interest in the political
battles of his time, not even in the fight for Jewish emancipation. The
Prussia which his friend Lessing described as "Europe's most enslaved
land" was to Mendelssohn "a state in which one of the wisest princes who
ever ruled men has made the arts and sciences to flourish, has made na-
tional freedom of thought so general that its beneficent effects reach even
the lowliest inhabitants of his domain." A generation later, in the
Jewish salons where Mendelssohn's daughter Dorothea Schlegel, Hen-
riette Herz and Rahel Levin-Varnhagen reigned amidst a truly mixed
society, Jewish political interests had become completely extinguished.
Here the dominant view was that public discussion of the Jewish ques-
tion and, above all, those measures by the state which would liberate by
force the educated Jewish individuals together with the "backward" Jews
could only make their situation worse. When such emancipation seemed
to be on the verge of reality, after Napoleon's victory over Prussia and the
beginnings of Prussian reform, the number of Jewish conversions in-
creased rapidly. It looked as if the educated Jews of Prussia tried to
escape emancipation by baptism.

The first Jewish "salon" in Berlin was in the house of the physician
and philosopher, Markus Herz, a disciple of Kant, who held a series of
private lectures in his home in the 1780's. Markus Herz still belonged to

Priebschat, op. cit., p. 646.
In his preface to his translation of Menasseh Ben Israel, in Gesammelte Schriften
(Leipzig 1843-45) vol. iii.
Adam Mueller expressed the general opinion of the educated Jews of Berlin when he
wrote in 1815 to Metternich: "Every legal or political measure for the emancipation
of the Jews must necessarily lead to a deterioration of their civic and social situation." (See
his Ausgewählte Abhandlungen, ed. by J. Baxa, Jena 1921, p. 215.) A similar report is given
by Jost, op. cit., vol. x, p. 44 ff., when he writes about the "weak defense on the part of the
Jews" during the attacks at the time immediately after the Congress of Vienna.
the older generation of Mendelssohn and for him, as for Mendelssohn, contacts with non-Jews were less a social program than a simple and agreeable fact, a matter of personal friendship with learned men and disciples. His wife, however, very much younger than Herz, soon gathered around her a social circle of pupils. In Henriette Herz's salon too, the atmosphere of personal friendship still prevailed. She tried, however, to organize the friendships into the so-called "Tugendbund," which counted the brothers Humboldt, both Counts Dohna, and Schleiermacher among its members. In her hands, the purely personal and intimate social relations were transformed into a program. Assimilation had begun.

Ten years later nothing remained of the "Tugendbund." The enlightened nobles, the romantic intellectuals and the middle-class characters who formerly frequented Henriette Herz's house moved into the famous "attic" of Rahel Levin. Here a new element—the actors—soon joined them. In contrast to Henriette Herz's salon, Rahel's attic remained at the very fringe, sometimes even outside society and its conventions. While the glamor of Henriette came from her wide knowledge Rahel was proud of her "ignorance" and celebrated because of her native cleverness and social talent. Rahel's salon which, as she herself declared, foundered after the Prussian defeat of 1806 "like a ship containing the highest enjoyment of life," was a unique and original manifestation in the history of Jewish assimilation. In her circle each person really counted only for what he represented. Here judgment was based only on personality. Neither rank (although Louis Ferdinand was a Hohenzollern prince and Rahel's friend, von der Marwitz was a scion of one of the oldest aristocratic families), nor money (although Abraham Mendelssohn, son of Moses Mendelssohn and father of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was a rich banker), nor success in public life (although Friedrich Gentz was already a well-known political writer), nor even an exceptional literary career (Friedrich Schlegel, despite growing fame, was never very much liked) had any influence. Likewise Rahel's salon was not, like so many later Jewish salons, a mixed society only in name but in fact, Jewish with a few "exceptional non-Jews"; it was also, however, not non-Jewish with a few specially admitted Jews. It was naively undenominational and represented a short period of flowering of German-Jewish social relations which produced more mixed marriages than any subsequent period.

There was one remarkable point about these mixed marriages; they were nearly always concluded between Jewish women and German no-

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* Cited from the letter published by this author in Reklam-Almanach (1932).
blemen. Except for the case of Mendelssohn's daughter, Dorothea Veit, who left her Jewish husband and eloped with Friedrich Schlegel, there is hardly an instance of intermarriage with middle-class Germans. During a whole decade it looked as if the Jewish girls of Prussia would be snapped up and married by noblemen. What the Jewish women of the period thought was the beginning of a new "enlightened" era was in reality the end of the centuries-old economic relations between Jewish money-lenders and debt-burdened feudal nobility. It was the end. Wealthier Jews had withdrawn from the business of lending money to private persons among the nobility and the medium and small businessmen had their hands full with investments in the loans floated by the states at the time, so that they too had lost interest in personal loans. The endeavor to replace loans by dowries remained for some time the economic basis for the spiritual and social tolerance of the Prussian aristocracy. It is not unimportant to note, in this connection, that the policy of the Rothschilds to refuse to grant personal loans and to substitute "gifts" for such loans, is one which they have followed since the time of the Congress of Vienna, while their own family-law which permitted their girls to marry non-Jewish aristocrats but which kept the male line Jewish is of much more recent date.

While the period of intermarriages between Jews and aristocrats was a short one in Prussia, close relations between nobility and Jewry lasted in Austria until the end of the Hapsburg monarchy. In general, it may be said that the extraordinary aversion shown by the European nobility toward the bourgeoisie and its fear of the steadily growing political power of this class offered certain opportunities to the Jews. It certainly was more agreeable and less dangerous for an aristocrat to be helped by a Jewish banker's money than to accept as a father-in-law one of the big industrialists, who either wanted to get into parliament himself or whose sons were out for a political career. They were sure that no such ambitions reigned among the Jews.

It was a characteristic feature of the social idyll in Rahel Levin's attic that such social and economic interests were still completely hidden; her aristocratic friends were driven by a powerful yearning for individual emancipation, a feeling which had been present in a stronger measure only among the French nobility of the ancien régime. The peculiar intimacy, the atmosphere of real comprehension in friendship which connected the scions of noble families and the daughters of the Jewish middle-class were but indirectly due to the spread of ideas of the Enlightenment. The es-

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80 See Corti, op. cit., ch. iv.
sential thing was that the personal problems of these educated Jews were fundamentally identical with those of the young and intellectually starved aristocrats. Both wanted individual and not political emancipation; for both the greatest hindrance to such emancipation was their rigid family relationship according to which they were first of all links in the family structure and only secondarily independent individuals. Individual assimilation for the Jews and individual emancipation for the nobles meant escape from this family association and transformation into a person independent of family. What bound these individuals to each other was the purely personal; this period of high development of social life in Prussia was due to the total absence of political aims among the Jewish women and the noblemen. They were pre-occupied only with the development of their personality and their "education sentimentale."

Rahel's salon, its cultural atmosphere and its cult of Goethe continued to exercise for a long time a strong influence on the Jews and the middle class of Berlin. These exceptional Jews of education who always considered Germany their home, could well have said that they were Germans by the grace of Goethe. The ideas of culture expounded by Goethe, particularly in his *Wilhelm Meister*, became the spiritual element of German-Jewish assimilation. In *Wilhelm Meister* education is clearly tied up with social advancement and it actually reveals the transformation of the burgher into the nobleman. Through education these Jews became "personalities" and as such found open doors to society. Through culture, and not through political means like emancipation, did Jews seek to escape from the lowly status of their people.

The enthusiasm for culture of these first Jews to escape from the ghetto had much more in common with the great enthusiasm of the *Haskala* than with the educational philistinism of later decades which did so much to make the German Jews unpopular. What distinguished Rahel from all her female and male successors was the fact that she was a real "personality," an exceptionally courageous, clever and entirely natural human being. With her, the "individual way out," which later became a tradition and a tenet of the philistines of learning, was still a pure form of individual development. It turned out to be an ironical fact in her life, that the spiritual, social and psychological means with which

31 The history of the engagement of Rahel Levin to Count Finckenstein is an excellent instance of the homogeneousness of such personal problems. After a conflict which lasted several years, Rahel broke the engagement, because her noble fiancé finally returned to his family's lap.

she tried to escape from Judaism, became a Jewish tradition. But her personality was so much imbued with a great sense of honesty, that she, as the only one among the women of her age, could die in peace as a self-conscious Jewess and consoled by the knowledge that the young "rebel Heinrich Heine" would be her true heir.33

While the privileged Jews of wealth had to remain Jews by force of circumstances and acquired power as political representatives and rulers of the Jewish communities, the exceptional Jews of education, in their first and second generations, nearly all followed the way that led to baptism. Heine's celebrated saying that "baptism is the entrance ticket to European culture" does not properly apply to these converts, who were already steeped in European culture before they were baptized. The Jewish intelligentsia had no other choice if it wanted to escape from the traditional Jewish way of life. Another saying by Heine, not so well known, that he would never have become converted "if the law permitted one to steal silver spoons," is much nearer the truth. Just as Jewish businessmen were compelled to remain Jews in order to acquire more wealth so Jewish intellectuals had to abandon Judaism so as not to starve.34 The law which prohibited the stealing of silver spoons punished only the Jewish intellectuals with starvation; it took liberal care of the business interests of court-Jews and state-bankers.

Even though nearly all the educated Jews in Prussia followed the road to the baptismal font this fact did not make them cease to be Jews, neither in their own opinion nor in that of their environment. Many years after his baptism and after having changed his name, Boerne wrote: "Some reproach me with being a Jew, some praise me because of it, some pardon me for it, but all think of it."35 This forced conversion, by which they could not and did not want to lose their Jewishness, placed the Jewish in-

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33 Even Karl August Varnhagen, who was particularly careful in eliminating the Jewish question from his edition of Rahel's letters and diaries, published the following phrases: "What a story! . . . I, a refugee from Egypt and Palestine find here such help, love and care! With what sublime delight I think of this my origin and of the whole network of fate. . . . Such a long time in my life it was my greatest shame, my bitterest sorrow and misfortune to know that I was born a Jewess, now I would not miss this feeling for all the world. . . ." Rahele Ein Buch des Andenkens (1834) vol. I, p. 43.

34 Riesser, Gabriel, "Betrachtungen ueber die Verhaeltnisse der juedischen Untertanen der Preussischen Monarchie" (1834), in Gesammelte Schriften, vol. iii: "By far the largest part of those Jews, who in accordance with the law of 1812 . . . devoted themselves to science . . . have adopted Christianity. . . . Only a few were in such a situation that they could afford to serve science and art in independent leisure. . . . Hardly a tenth part of all scholars coming from Jewish families since 1812 could be saved for Judaism in this way."

35 Briefe aus Paris, 74th Letter, February 1832.
telligentsia in bitter opposition to a state of things which put a premium on lack of character and punished simple human dignity with starvation. The "new specimens of humanity" all became rebels. When the rich Jews not only recognized the very constitutions and states which humiliated and insulted them but also supported and financed the most reactionary tendencies of European politics (first, English intervention against Napoleon on the continent, then Metternich's combinations) this rebellion was carried over to the Jewish scene. When one reads Karl Marx's \textit{Zur Judenfrage}, a work which is historically false and in many points unjust, one should not forget that Marx's voice was that of the Jewish intelligentsia, full of hate against the machinations of the rich Jews who had sold universal human rights for the sake of the special privileges of their own class. This is a fact which Boerne, writing a few decades before Marx, expressed as follows: "Rothschild kissed the Pope's hand. . . . At last the order has come which God had planned originally when he created the world. A poor Christian kisses the Pope's feet, and a rich Jew kisses his hand. If Rothschild could have gotten his Roman loan at 60 per cent instead of 65, and could have sent the cardinal-chamberlain more than ten thousand ducats, they would have allowed him to embrace the Holy Father."\textsuperscript{36}

The contrast between rich Jews and educated Jews was only plainly visible in Germany. In Austria, a Jewish intelligentsia only appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and immediately felt the whole impact of antisemitic pressure. After World War I educated Jews in Austria became Social-Democrats, but before this they sought refuge in the protection of the Hapsburg monarchy. A significant exception to this rule was Karl Kraus, the last representative of a tradition created by Heine and Boerne. In France, where the emancipation decree survived all changes of regimes and where even the \textit{décret infâme} affected "only" poor Jews and not educated Jewish circles, there were individual Jewish intellectuals but not a Jewish intelligentsia as a new and socially recognized class. In all these countries there never existed the short period, so decisive for the history of German Jews, in which the very vanguard of society not only accepted Jews \textit{nolens volens}, but in a fit of strange enthusiasm wanted to assimilate them immediately. The well-known remark by Bismarck that he wanted to see "German stallions paired off with Jewish mares," is but the last and most vulgar expression of this readiness.

A little known fact, though very important for the history of German

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Op. Cit.}, 72nd Letter.
Jewry, is that assimilation as a program led much more often to baptism
than to mixed marriage. We know that there were families in Germany
who were baptized for generations and yet remained purely Jewish. 37
The converted Jew left his family only in very rare cases, still more rare
were instances of baptized Jews leaving their Jewish surroundings.
The Jewish family proved to be a more durable and conserving force
than the Jewish religion. This peculiar phenomenon is only partly due
to the Jewish will to live. Such a will for continued existence is active
in all nations and if it is frustrated politically and undesirable socially
it triumphs over any individual tendency on the part of individual mem-
bers of the nation. Equally important was the fact that Jews who were
baptized because they found it opportune, soon learned that society, inso-
far as it accepts Jews at all, wants to have Jews and not Christians. At
best, society desires "new specimens of humanity" and not silly mimicry.
Thus, a convinced humanist like Wilhelm von Humboldt arrived at his
above-mentioned remarks about "Jews en détail" only because he found
it insupportable to watch good old friends, like Rahel Levin, Henriette
Herz and the physician Koreff, trying to make a career by abandoning
Judaism. Both Humboldt and Schleiermacher became such zealous
protagonists of emancipation because they hoped that full and unmis-
takable equality would stop the mimicry and the parvenu aspirations of
the former pariahs. 38 This hope was not fulfilled because emancipation
did not liberate the existing Jewish people. Imitating the edicts of
toleration for the various Christian sects, the emancipators invented the
"believers in the Mosaic faith," in order to be able to confer upon them
human rights. Thus were created among the Jewish people a class of
men and women who gladly accepted such a designation, but the Jewish
people remained a nation of pariahs and continued to produce its par-
venus. Even Humboldt, in the last analysis, believed that assimilation
had to be, if not a condition, a necessary consequence of emancipation.
For him also, the political task presented only the aspects of a social
problem. It is one of the most unfortunate facts in the history of the

37 Unfortunately statistics cover up rather than reveal this fact. They describe as mixed
marriages all unions between converted and nonconverted Jewish partners.
38 Friedrich Schleiermacher protested as early as 1799 against "the practice adopted here-
tofore" and fears that "single individuals and whole families will more and more frequently
go this common way to Christianity. In all seriousness I consider this as the worst that
could ever happen." (See his "Briefe bei Gelegenheit der politisch-theologischen Aufgabe
Jewish people that only their enemies, but never their friends, could understand that the Jewish question is "a political problem."³⁹

Nothing could be more favorable for the development of privileged Jews both of wealth and of education than this social ("liberal") concept, which was dominant during the nineteenth century. The defenders of emancipation presented the problem as one of education, originally applying to Jews as well as non-Jews.⁴⁰ Deprived of its political significance, it was considered preparatory for assimilation. It was taken for granted that the vanguard in both camps would consist of particularly educated, tolerant, cultured people. This meant that the particularly tolerant and cultured non-Jews were to limit their social relations to the exceptional Jews of education. The demand for the abolition of prejudice soon became a very one-sided affair and only the Jews were called upon to become "educated."

The social paradise for Jews in Prussia—that brief period, when ancient Jew-hatred had really disappeared and modern antisemitism had not yet been born, came to a definitive end in the same year when Napoleon's décret infâme temporarily abolished political freedom for the Jews. The proclamation of human rights by the French Revolution would never have been a really revolutionary act if the wishes of the rich Jews of Bordeaux and Avignon had been fulfilled and the Ashkenazim, the poor Jews of Alsace, had been excluded. The décret infâme, referring to Alsatian Jews only, reestablished the old order by creating, on the one hand, privileged Jews and, on the other hand, a class which from that period to our own tragic times has come to be called "Ostjuden."

Prussia in the period of reforms, after it had lost Posen and the provinces with the largest number of Jews, could, without risk of complications, carry through the type of emancipation which would benefit the "loyal" wealthy elements without the inclusion of the masses of Jewish peddlers and artisans. Thus in 1808, the government of the enlightened despot, Frederick William III, promulgated immediately after the cession of Posen the Prussian municipal law, which gave civic

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³⁹ This expression was originally used by Herder in his Adrastea, (op. cit.), but only antisemites continued to use it in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁰ For instance in Wilhelm von Humboldt's "Expert Opinion . . . " (op. cit.) we find: "The state should not exactly teach respect for the Jews, but it should abolish an inhuman and prejudiced way of thinking, etc. . . . "
but not political rights to the former *Schutzjuden*. Four years later the same Prussian government, under the pressure of the liberal bureaucracy, had to grant a decree of emancipation. When Prussia, after the Congress of Vienna, regained Posen and with it the greatest part of its Jews, the government rescinded the emancipation decree and left only the municipal law in force. This provided civic, non-political rights for those Jews who were useful to the state.

During the period of temporary loss by Prussia of Posen, *Schutzjuden*, numbering about 20 percent of the Jewish population in Prussia, lost the broad background of poor, uneducated Jews against which these privileged Jews stood out so advantageously. The interest which the state evinced in the welfare of its remaining Jews showed clearly to society that the problem was not that of individual exceptions but rather of a collective group that was most intimately bound up with the interests of absolute monarchy.41 The vague foreboding which had been shown by the exceptional Jews of education in their protestations against state interference indeed proved justified; society drew apart from the individual Jews as soon as it noticed that they were members of an officially protected collective group. The state, often under the pretext of its "Christian character," supported, during the entire nineteenth century, the separation of Jews from the non-Jewish society around them.42 The administration carried out this aim by over-privileging the wealthy Jews and, after granting emancipation to the Jewish middle class, raising them into the ranks of the nobility, and by wilfully under-privileging

41 In 1803, the Prussian "Ausnahmekollektiv," that is the *Schutzjuden*, who lived in Prussia proper, amounted to only 19.3 percent of the total number of Jews, while 80.7 percent lived in the territories that were ceded by Prussia after 1808. In 1811, one year before the promulgation of the emancipation decree and after the loss of the provinces with the largest Jewish population, 89.4 percent of all Jews were *Schutzjuden* and only 10.58 percent "foreign Jews." At the same time, the proportion of Jews among the total population of Prussia was reduced from 2.3 percent to 0.72 percent, an even smaller percentage than of the *Schutzjuden* in the country's total population in 1803, viz. 0.94 percent. In 1816, after Prussia had partly recovered her old, formerly Polish, provinces, the percentage of former *Schutzjuden* registered at that time as "Preussische Staatsbuerger juedischen Glaubens" (Prussian citizens of Jewish faith) sank to 52.8 percent of the total Jewish population, while the percentage of Jews without citizen's rights amounted to 42.7 percent. The figures are taken from Heinrich Silbergleit's *Die Bevölkerungs- und Berufsverhältnisse der Juden in Deutschen Reich*, vol. i (Berlin 1950).

42 August Varnhagen reports a remark made by Frederick William IV. "The King was asked what he intended to do with the Jews? He replied: 'I wish them well in every respect, but I want them to feel that they are Jews.' These words provide a key to many things," *Tagebücher* (Leipzig 1861) vol. ii, p. 113.
the Jewish intelligentsia. Only a class of Jews completely dependent on the state, because it was ostracised by society, could be trusted by the government as completely loyal and ever ready for any service. Changes in the political ideas of the changing state administrations did not have any influence on the service given by these Jews. Like the bureaucracy, which usually survived all changes in administration, the rich Jews definitely were a part of the state machinery. The history of the house of Rothschild proves that Metternich was wrong when he said to the Austrian Rothschilds a few years before the Revolution of 1848: "If I go to the devil, you will go with me."48

The paradox of the history of the Jews in western Europe—and this can best be studied in the history of Germany—consisted of the fact that they always had to pay for social glory with political misery and for political success with social insult. Social assimilation in the sense of full recognition by non-Jewish society was granted to them only as long as they appeared distinctly as exceptions from the masses of Jews. When these dark masses of Jews disappeared for a few years, the exceptional Jews became once again simple Jews, not exceptions from, but representatives of the despised people. After the Prussian defeat in 1807 Berlin society left the Jewish salons with unmatched rapidity. In 1808 society turned to the houses of the titled bureaucracy and the upper middle classes. The Brentanos, the Arnims, Kleist, even the older generation of Schlegel and Gentz, all these became more or less antisemitic, and their contempt for the Jews was directed toward the Berlin Jews they knew and not against the unknown Jews of Posen. Since the time of political romanticism the educated circles of Germany did not show any too great discretion in handling the Jewish question. Their tact became so pitiful that it almost looked like an insult. No ever so large mass of Ostjuden, within or without the German borders, could again help the poor heap of assimilated Jews to the collective consciousness of being exceptions. Every one of them had henceforth to prove that although

48 Raphael Strauss in "The Jews in the Economic Evolution of Central Europe," in Jewish Social Studies, vol. iii (1941), makes a correct assertion, when he says: "Down to the complete political collapse of 1933, there was no period in Central European history in which the rulers did not support the Jews and protect them against the shortsighted pressure of special interests and nationalist prejudice." Whether this opposition against Jewish notables was shortsighted at all times is an open question. In any case it did not always stem from "nationalist prejudice" and was often vigorously supported by Jewish revolutionists.
he was a Jew, yet he was not a Jew. They were thus forced to betray not only sections of their "backward brethren" but their entire people as well as themselves.

This social transformation so unfavorable for the Jews was noted by contemporaries only in a few isolated cases and historians took almost no notice of it. The edict of 1812 and the frank pro-Jewish attitude of the state during the period of Prussian reforms subsequently caused the antisemitic feelings in society to be forgotten. At that time, however, state and society were very far from being identical and the absolute monarchy still remained absolutely separated from the people even when it carried through measures in behalf of the people, such as the emancipation of the Prussian serfs. The Prussian state which granted emancipation to the Jews had no class in the nation behind it in any respect, not to mention the pro-Jewish measures. In view of the situation social antisemitism remained politically of as little effect as the philo-semitism and assimilation tendencies of the preceding decade.

Modern social antisemitism is as old as assimilation. The discussion of the emancipation of the Jews and the assimilation of individual Jews to non-Jewish society was in full swing when Grattenauer's publication, Wider die Juden, appeared in 1802. It was cleverly written and intended not so much to impress the government as Berlin society. In this he was thoroughly successful. It is interesting to note in this pamphlet for the first time the expression "the Jew," that is to say "not the Jewish individual, but the Jew in general, the Jew everywhere and nowhere." This and similar phrases regarding the Jews as a "principle," recur as stereotypes during the entire course of the nineteenth century. In Grattenauer's pamphlet it is still an isolated attack. Grattenauer's phrase shows, however, that the antisemites sensed what the ideological protagonists of emancipation did not know and what educated Jews vaguely feared, namely that the coming emancipation, as conceived by

44 Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Grattenauer, as far back as 1791, wrote a pamphlet, Uber die physische und moralische Verfassung der heutigen Juden, in which he pointed out the growing influence of the Jews in Berlin. Although the pamphlet was reviewed in the Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek, vol. cxii (1792) 292-96, almost nobody ever read it.

45 Wider die Juden (2nd ed. 1803) Supplement III.

46 E.g. in the review of Ruehs' pamphlet (footnote 20) by Jacob Friedrich Fries in Heidelberger Jahrbuch (1816). Fries reproached Ruehs with "confounding the Jews with Jewry and with Judaism," adding, "we declare war not on our Jewish brothers, but on Jewry."
the state, was to be a reward for the individual services of the Hofjuden, tending to create a select collective group rewarded under protective measures by the state for its unconditional support. This ended the period when society considered only the individual Jew, and every Jew became once again a member of a collective which society viewed as part of the principle of domination of state machinery and which at times it resisted. Never again did society accept the Jews with free mind and pure heart.

In the pre-emancipation era in Berlin of the 1780's when Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice was produced, a little, charming prologue was presented, which explained to the public that Shylock the Jew should not be identified with the Jews in the audience and requested the Jews in the theatre not to take amiss the presentation of the character of Shylock. After emancipation, such a show of good will and courtesy can hardly be imagined. In the earlier period society still cherished the naive opinion that the Shylocks lived in Posen or faraway Poland. When this background had disappeared, society created something new, viz.: "the Jew in general." This Jew looked devilishly similar to Mr. Shylock.

The Personal Problem

In order to escape the pariah situation in society, emancipated Jewry had to differentiate itself from this "Jew in general," and this completely changed its character. It perverted their self-reliance and created a peculiar set of manners that soon came to be regarded as "typically Jewish." Jews ceased to appear to themselves and to their neighbors as men of a certain origin and certain religion. Instead, they became a group of people with certain attributes called Jewish. Judaism became Jewishness—a psychological quality—and the Jewish question became a personal problem.

In its tragic endeavor to differentiate itself from the specter of the "Jew in general," assimilated Jewry did indeed develop a Jewish type with a definite and fixed personality. This type had little in common with the picture of the Jew invented by Jewish apologetics and used to combat the caricature of the "Jew in general." The invented Jewish type was endowed with attributes that are the privilege of pariahs and which Jews really possessed: humanity, kindness, freedom from prejudice, rebellion against injustice. The type of "Jew in general" created by
antisemites was endowed by them with certain qualities which the *parvenu* must acquire if he wants to be successful and which Jewish *parvenus* really showed: inhumanity, greed, insolence, cringing servility and ambition. So long as defamed peoples and classes exist such attributes will be produced anew by every generation with incomparable monotony.

The problem which confronted every Jewish individual in every generation was the decision whether to remain a pariah or become a *parvenu*. Ever since the middle of the last century the foundation for the so-called complex spiritual and psychological state of mind of the average Jew is to be found in the regret of the pariah not to have succeeded in becoming a *parvenu* and the bad conscience of the *parvenu* who knew that he had betrayed his people, denied his origin and exchanged universal justice for personal privilege for himself. The character of generations of Jews has been influenced by the simple fact that every Jew belongs either to an over-privileged upper class or to an under-privileged mass and that the only way out of the dilemma was the questionable one of abandoning Judaism. In some cases under-privilege and over-privilege were intertwined strangely in one individual. A good instance of such an individual is the case of Salomon Maimon, the philosopher whom Kant esteemed more than all his pupils. Maimon was born in bitter poverty in a small Polish-Jewish town. He could never have made his career as an adventurer and a scholar had he not been a Jew and helped by Jews; but he died in the castle of a Prussian count without a penny in his pocket. If a Polish non-Jew could have succeeded at all in becoming a well-known commentator of Kant he would have died, not in the castle of a count but probably as a full professor with bourgeois status and leaving a small fortune. Salomon Maimon knew well that he was a pariah and Heinrich Heine would never have risen above the ranks of the mediocre talents which German Jewry produced by the dozens if he had not adhered from the very beginning to the "accident of his birth." "*Geldjuden,*" whom Heine and Boerne derided so bitterly, came to participate in high politics even though they secretly knew that as Jews they had no right to do so. The great rebels of the nineteenth century raised their voices on all the affairs of their time just because they were Jews and because they could produce the telling credentials of oppression.

The fate of the average Jew, however, was that of eternal lack of decision. Society, moreover, never compelled him definitely to make a
decision. The mass of assimilated Jews lived in a twilight of favor and misfortune, with a presentiment that both success and failure were inextricably connected with the fact that they were Jews. For them the Jewish question had lost all political importance, but it haunted their private lives and hence influenced all the more tyrannically their private decisions. It was by no means a simple task to behave in such a manner as not to resemble the image of the “Jew in general” pictured by society and yet remain a Jew. The average Jew, neither a parvenu nor a rebel, could only stress an empty sense of “being different,” which later was interpreted in many psychological variations as innate strangeness. The chief point in this unhappy self-analysis was the concept, which haunted the minds of assimilated Jewry, that one was as widely different from the “simple and naive Goy” as from the “backward East European Jew.”

The strangeness of the individual Jews of which they were so proud was nothing but the Jewish question projected into their individual psychological situation. It is hard to decide whether this psychological projection was of greater harm to a reasonable discussion and solution of the Jewish question or to the individual Jews themselves. A political task becomes only distorted if a spiritual and psychological solution is sought for, and the souls of men are strangely transformed when politics is converted into inner experience and the reality of public affairs into private emotion. If even today a Jew, when asked what he thinks he is and what he wants, answers with a description of his emotions and inward experiences, one should not forget that this political weakness has been the modus vivendi of generations and it does not disappear over night. After all when the world was in a somewhat peaceful state this attitude did not work out so badly. While sentiments are harmful in political life, where they choke the passions, they can be useful in individual life. At all times society has appreciated people who could express their emotions directly, such as the actor and the virtuoso. The assimilated Jews, half proud and half ashamed of their “Jewishness,” clearly were in this category.