

Agents of Cultural Change: Jewish and other Responses to Modernity, ca. 1750–1900

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This conference sought to examine the role of religion and knowledge as well as education and emotion in times of social and cultural transformation and to trace the influence of and the interaction between different agents of cultural change. The not exclusive, but predominant vantage point was Jewish history and it drew significantly on the collaborative German-Israeli research project „Innovation through Tradition? Jewish Educational Media and Cultural Transformation in the Face of Modernity“.

The first of eight panels discussed the challenges to authority arising within and beyond the Jewish community in the eighteenth century, prompted by the emergence of secular thought and the reciprocal influences of religion and secularism. SHMUEL FEINER (Ramat Gan), challenged recent interpretations of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, as part of a „religious turn“. Feiner argued that this perspective underestimates the conflicts maskilim were confronted with while promoting the Jewish project of secularization. Between traditional elites and a new generation of Jewish intellectuals, and between Jewish religious and secular knowledge. DIRK SADOWSKI (Braunschweig) demonstrated how the first generation of maskilim challenged traditional authority through print culture in the first half of the eighteenth century. Printers like Israel bar Avraham in Jessnitz created a new text corpus that differs significantly from the established Ashkenazi literature and scrutinized traditional Jewish education and its focus on Talmud study. While the first two speakers concentrated on the Haskalah as a distinctly

Jewish movement embedded in Enlightenment thought, the third speaker, JONATHAN SHEEHAN (Berkeley), spoke about one of the quintessential projects of the European Enlightenment, Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. By analyzing its entry on God, Sheehan showed how the efforts to integrate theological concepts into a „reasoned dictionary“ with ambitions for systematic order and philosophical coherence made core Christian ideas vulnerable to „unexpected triangulations, relationships, and histories.“ The *Encyclopédie*'s article on God disaggregated the Christian God by situating him within new hierarchies of knowledge.

Drawing on the broader impact of the European and the Jewish Enlightenment, the second panel focused on the politics of knowing and knowledge formation since the late eighteenth century. BERNARD D. COOPERMAN (College Park) discussed the Italian reception of Nafthali Herz Wessely's *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Words of Peace and Truth, 1782–1785), the foundational text of maskilic educational reform. Wessely advocated here for the revision of the curriculum of Jewish education by re-defining the core body of Jewish knowledge and integrating non-Jewish, secular knowledge. Cooperman highlighted the predominantly positive responses to Wessely's ideas among Italian Jews who were far more open towards non-Jewish knowledge, local languages and literary traditions. This was based first on the presence of Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions that had mutually shaped one another and the economic elite that promoted this openness. KERSTIN VON DER KRONE (Washington) discussed the interplay of Jewish education, knowledge, and print culture in nineteenth-century Central Europe. While educators and religious leaders built upon the maskilic educational project they also had to respond to the changing conditions of Jewish education in the context of Emancipation. Part of this was a new kind of literature meant to serve a new kind of religious instruction in school and at home. Von der Krone explored the reach and usage of these texts by analyzing school reports and inventory lists, curricula, and recommendations for teachers and situated these writings within nineteenth-century Jewish book

culture. JEFF ZALAR (Cincinnati) discussed faith, reason, and practices of cultural negotiation in nineteenth-century Catholic Germany, pointing out that scholars often seemed almost perplexed that Catholics navigated the modern world and negotiated the impact of secular knowledge in a similar fashion as other religious groups did. However, by doing so, Zalar argued, they always seemed to be in an „in between-state“, defined by the „bipolar epistemic foundations of faith and reason“ through which knowledge gained authority in Catholicism.

The third panel on objects of translation, opened with ZOHAR SHAVIT's (Tel Aviv) presentation on maskilic translations and adaptations of non-Jewish texts for children and adolescents into Hebrew. Shavit argued that these texts as modes of „cultural translation“ promoted social and cultural change. They introduced new cultural and social ideas and norms into Judaism and showed a deep appreciation for the enlightened culture and the new ideas of *Bildung* and *Bürgerlichkeit* while equally drawing on Jewish literary traditions. BARRY STIEFEL (Charleston) offered another, rather exceptional example of cultural translation: bilingual Hebrew-German inscriptions on a half-timbered eighteenth-century barn in the small village of Rauschenberg in rural Hesse. The inscription told the story of the Katz family who once owned the barn. Given that Jews rarely owned residential property in eighteenth century rural Hesse, the inscription is not only a remarkable object, but according to Stiefel indicates a fundamental change. ALEXANDER DUBRAU (Tübingen) discussed nineteenth-century translations of rabbinic literature, situating them within a long history of translation as well as within nineteenth-century Jewish education and scholarship. A first category of translations served academically-oriented circles, and according to Dubrau stood for a secular endeavor that embraced the methods of modern philology and historical critical thought. A second category was „apologetic“ in nature aiming to refute prejudices about Judaism and the rabbinic tradition, especially the Talmud. These translations mostly aimed at a broader Jewish and non-Jewish readership while a third category

– Orthodox translations – mainly addressed a Jewish readership, although not necessarily an Orthodox one.

The fourth and fifth panel took a closer look on educational practices and institutions, beginning with the increasing role of higher education to train religious leader and educators. IRENE ZWIEP (Amsterdam) shed light on rabbinic education in the Netherlands and the efforts of Joseph Dünner, a graduate of the Breslau Jewish Theological seminary, the first modern rabbinical seminary in Germany. Dünner developed an ambitious curriculum for the Dutch rabbinical seminary that included Greek and Latin classics. However, Dünner's efforts to promote classical knowledge failed as it was at odds with the expectations and needs of the Dutch-Jewish community. DAVID KÄBISCH (Frankfurt am Main) examined the training of Protestant religious teachers based on a case study of the Catechetical Institute at the University of Jena. He put particular emphasis on a growing and rather pluralistic literature meant to teach Christian religion and to instruct the respective teachers. According to Käbisich, this new religious educational media should be understood as responses to and products of modernity rather than efforts of resistance.

TAL KOGMAN's (Tel Aviv) presentation shifted the focus towards children's education and discussed the teaching of Hebrew in eighteenth and nineteenth century Central Europe. By analyzing Jewish textbooks for Hebrew instruction, she showed the impact of the Haskalah and subsequent movements like *Hochmat Yisrael* (Wisdom of Israel) in Galicia and their efforts to preserve the Hebrew language while the usage of German became increasingly popular. Kogman highlighted that Jewish pedagogues developed new teaching materials that spoke to the children's abilities by integrating contemporary methods and thus fundamentally broke with the teaching methods that had shaped the *Heder*, the traditional framework of Jewish elementary education. DOROTHEA SALZER (Potsdam) explored the role of Jewish „Children's Bibles“ as means to teach children about emotions. Drawing on the first Jewish Children's Bible, Peter Beer's *Sefer Toledot Israel* published in 1796, Salzer highlighted its rational approach

towards the social, cultural and emotional education of children that aimed at building a new Jewish identity in the face of modernity. The Hebrew Bible became the foundation to teach a „bourgeois habitus“, ethical norms, reason and respectability.

The sixth and seventh panel explored the politics of emotion and gender in more detail. ASHER SALAH (Jerusalem) spoke about the desire of Italian Jews not to be perceived as the „other“ and the category of „shame“ around 1800 while challenging the German-centric history of Haskalah, emancipation and religious reform. Salah drew on two Italian intellectuals, Elia Morpurgo and Aron Fernandez, and their respective reform projects. Both embraced civic amelioration, emancipation and acculturation as necessary steps while characterizing the cultural and social conditions of the Jews in terms of a „dialectic of shame and guilt“, drawing on negative stereotypes about Jews prevalent in contemporary debates. ALEXANDRA ZIRKLE (Boston) explored how new concepts of romantic love and marriage influenced interpretations of the *Song of Songs*, drawing on Heinrich Graetz' translation and commentary. Graetz, a leading German-Jewish historian and scholar, presented the *Song of Songs* as an ideal of true and chaste love that stood in contrast to Hellenistic perceptions of love, which he equated with German-Christian romanticism. NISRINE RAHAL (Toronto) also examined the „ideal of love“ but focused on its appropriation for political or revolutionary ideas in Germany in the 1840s. Rahal concluded that activists „utilized“ the concept of love to challenge the power of church and state especially in the context of the education of children. Activists questioned the attitudes and actions of Protestant and Catholic authorities with respect to the violence children endured in public education while highlighting the indifference of the state and state officials towards poverty.

NATALIE NAIMARK-GOLDBERG (Ramat Gan) discussed perceptions of marriage in eighteenth and early nineteenth century maskilic texts. She showed how the traditional notion of arranged marriage as a means of social cohesion and economic stability became subject to change. Naimark drew on

correspondences, nuptials and poetic writings that emphasized the idea of romantic love and erotic satisfaction, adding an individual and emotional layer to Jewish perceptions of marriage. Second, maskilic texts display a critical reflection about Jewish marriage practices as such, including early marriage and in rare cases even the very concept of matrimony. CHRISTIAN BAILEY (Purchase) explored late nineteenth-century perceptions of one notion of love that has been equally central to both Judaism and Christian, namely that of neighborly-love (Leviticus 19:18). It became a crucial paradigm of Jewish and Christianity perceptions of oneself and the other and is related to other biblical concepts of love, that of God, the stranger and humanity. Against the background of *Kulturkampf* and antisemitism, BAILEY explored the conceptual history of neighborly-love in the Kaiserreich, highlighting how it became equally debated among Jewish and Christian intellectuals, philosophers and theologians, who were shaped by the idea of Protestant „inwardness“ and Jewish „universalism“.

The eighth panel introduced religion, *Bildung* and entertainment as means of respectability and sociability. SIMONE LÄSSIG (Washington) sketched the image of an epoch in transition from which a new Jewish middle class emerged, using the example of Louis Lesser. A young Jew from Dresden, he was eager for a new kind of knowledge, a *Bildung* beyond Judaism that became available through new opportunities of social and cultural encounters between Jews and non-Jews. ANDREAS L. FUCHS (Göttingen) explored the entanglement of aesthetic education, music and religiosity in nineteenth-century Reform Judaism through the introduction of a new kind of synagogue music. Fuchs highlighted the influence of Western models of music on the one hand and the efforts of composers like Salomon Sulzer on the other hand to situate their work within and legitimize it by Jewish tradition. PETER JELAVICH (Baltimore) described popular culture as a „major agent of cultural change“ in modern Jewish history in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Through mass entertainment such as vaudeville theater and film, German Jews established a cultural space that was

equally distant from religion and morality (*Sittlichkeit*) as it was from bourgeois culture (*Bildung*) while at the same time promoting cultural and social plurality, difference and diversity.

Overall, the eight panels reflected the wide range of topics the conference was able to address. They delivered an insightful discussion about the scope of cultural and social transformation since the late eighteenth century and the various strategies employed to navigate and negotiate change. While the first two panels focused on the religious and the secular, on authority and the politics of knowing in relation to old and new practices of knowledge production, the following panels primarily explored concrete products and producers, institutions and distributors of cultural change. Most significantly, several papers addressed the role of gender and/or introduced emotion as a valuable category. Finally, the last panel concentrated on practices and modes of respectability and sociability asking how they played out in a spatial and performative dimension.

Conference Overview:

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Simone Lässig (GHI) / Zohar Shavit (Tel Aviv University) / Kerstin von der Krone (GHI)

PANEL I: CHALLENGING AUTHORITY

Chair: Stefano Villani (University of Maryland)

SHMUEL FEINER (Bar Ilan University): The Haskalah Project of Secularization: Challenging 'The Religious Turn' (via video conference)

DIRK SADOWSKI (Georg Eckert Institute): Bibles, Catechisms, Commentaries – Pedagogical Aspects in the Work of an Early Modern Jewish Printer

JONATHAN SHEEHAN (University of California, Berkeley): God in the Encyclopedia: Reflections on Media and Theology

PANEL II: THE POLITICS OF KNOWING

Chair: MARY HELEN DUPREE (Georgetown University)

BERNARD D. COOPERMAN (University of Maryland): Inventing Traditional Authority:

Jewish Conceptions of Knowledge in Italy

KERSTIN VON DER KRONE (GHI): The Making of Jewish Religious Knowledge and Nineteenth-Century German-Jewish Book Culture

JEFF ZALAR (University of Cincinnati): Faith, Reason, and Cultural Negotiation in Catholic Germany, 1800–1914

PANEL III: OBJECTS OF TRANSLATION

Chair: CHRISTIANE BAUER (GHI/University of Cologne)

ZOHAR SHAVIT (Tel Aviv University): Texts for Children and Adolescents as Agents of Social and Cultural Change (via video conference)

3

BARRY STIEFEL (College of Charleston): A Message from the Past: The Transformation of German-Jewish Life in Late Eighteenth Century Rural Hesse

ALEXANDER DUBRAU (University of Tübingen): Education through Translation – Cultural Meanings of Jewish Translations of Rabbinic Literature into German in the Nineteenth Century

PANEL IV: TRAINING THE RABBI, THE CLERGY AND THE TEACHER

Chair: CLAUDIA ROESCH (GHI)

IRENE ZWIEP (University of Amsterdam): „Tell Me, O Muse, of the Man“: The Role of Classics in Rabbinic Education

DAVID KÄBISCH (Goethe University Frankfurt): The Professionalization of Protestant Clergy as Teachers of Religion in the 19th century: A response to modernity?

PANEL V: EDUCATING JEWISH CHILDREN

Chair: ANNE SCHENDERLEIN (GHI)

STEFAN EHRENPREIS (University of Innsbruck): Jewish Education and Late Eighteenth-Century Concepts of Cultural Exchange (via video conference, tbc)

TAL KOGMAN (Tel Aviv University): Hebrew Teaching in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries Textbooks for Jewish Children

DOROTHEA SALZER (University of Pots-

dam): Teaching Emotions with the Hebrew Bible

PANEL VI: GENDER & THE POLITICS OF EMOTION

Chair: GERALDINE GUDEFIN (Brandeis University)

ASHER SALAH (Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design/Hebrew University): Shameful Jews: Early Jewish Reform Programs in the Italian Territories under Habsburg Influence

ALEXANDRA ZIRKLE (Boston University): „On Intimate Love: The *Song of Songs* and Graetz’s Commentary on Jewish Sexuality“

NISRINE RAHAL (University of Toronto): A Revolution of Love: An Exploration on the Development of Love and Feminine Emotion as a mobilizing symbol during the Revolutionary 1840s

PANEL VII: LOVE & MARRIAGE

Chair: MARSHA L. ROZENBLIT (University of Maryland)

NATALIE NAIMARK-GOLDBERG (Bar-Ilan University): Traditional Discourse and Modern Perceptions of Marriage in Maskilic Texts from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

CHRISTOPHER BAILEY (Purchase College, State University of New York): On Loving Your Neighbor: Changing Jewish Conceptions of Love in Late Nineteenth Century Germany

PANEL VIII: SPACES OF RESPECTABILITY AND SOCIABILITY – RELIGION, BILDUNG, ENTERTAINMENT

Chair: MICHAEL BRENNER (American University/LMU Munich)

SIMONE LÄSSIG (GHI): Between Club and Temple: New Forms of Belonging, Sociability, and Knowledge after 1800

ANDREAS FUCHS (Göttingen University): „Das vorzüglichste ästhetische Bildungsmittel“ – Music and the Jewish Reform Movement after 1800

PETER JELAVICH (Johns Hopkins University): Forget „Bildung“ and „Kultur“: German Jews and Popular Entertainment

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