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*Volk oder Religion? Die Entstehung moderner jüdischer Ethnizität in Frankreich und Deutschland 1782–18*

by Philip Lenhard (review)

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(Review)

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shaft, and glistening feathers—to a quill pen. This similarity, as well as the emphasis on reading and writing throughout *Der Zweikampf*, leads Honold to link the arrow to Gutenberg and the “Medienrevolution” that began in Straßburg (also the site where the arrow was crafted). While acknowledging that the story’s action precedes the printing press by fifty years, he argues that Kleist depicts the need for this invention, “indem er eine soziale Welt schildert, die ihres Schriftverkehrs nicht mehr Herr wird” (117). Honold then analyzes the “Schaufunktion” of the duel itself and shows how it reflects eighteenth-century theories of theatrical mimesis (121). Since the combatants both battle each other and attempt to satisfy a thrill-seeking audience, they—like stage actors—must attempt a balancing act between “Selbstbeherrschung und Selbstvergessenheit” (122). At thirty-two pages in length, Honold’s article over-stays its welcome a bit and pivots focus almost as often as *Der Zweikampf* itself, yet the arguments it contains are insightful and methodologically deft.

Drawing on Dan Zahavi’s work on subjectivity, Anthonya Visser illustrates the lack of “Selbstbezüglichkeit” of the characters in *Die heilige Cäcilie* (148). She shows that the characters function not as “Selbst,” but as “Agens” and that this leads to a high degree of performativity in the text. Georg Mein’s article, “So mögen sich Leoparden und Wölfe anhören lassen,” also examines the *Cäcilie* narrative. Via discussion of “Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft,” Mein finds that experience of the sublime through art does not lead to moral “Erhebung,” as Kant posited, but to “der Entmenschung hin zum Tier” (167). He then discusses how *Die heilige Cäcilie* plays out the relationship between “institutioneller Bindung und erhabener Erfahrung” (170). Hinrich C. Seeba traces occurrences of the word “Abgrund” through Kleist’s letters and literary works. He argues that Kleist’s turn toward creative writing enabled a “Balanceakt” (15) by providing—at least provisionally—a “literarischen Halt” in the face of philosophical and personal abysses (21).

The articles in this collection were evidently expanded since their initial presentation at the conference and all are very carefully wrought. While a few of the contributions reiterate findings of past decades, this volume contains serious, discerning analyses that merit scholarly attention.

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*Volk oder Religion? Die Entstehung moderner jüdischer Ethnizität in Frankreich und Deutschland 1782–1848.* By Philip Lenhard. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014. Pp. 448. Cloth \$79.99. ISBN 978-3525310250.

The continued relevance of the term “ethnicity” in the humanities—with all of its political implications—makes Philip Lenhard’s new book on conceptions of Jewish ethnicity in France and Germany from 1782 to 1848 a timely contribution. *Volk oder*

*Religion?* assiduously analyzes the various and often competing self-understandings of Jewish communities in the regions east and west of the Rhine, situating his analysis against the Enlightenment, romanticism, and the *Vormärz* period before 1848. Among the many accomplishments of the book is the way it disrupts teleological readings of Jewish modernity in the European context. Indeed, one of its polemical thrusts is its critique of recent historiographies that appear to be influenced by the political agenda of their authors. Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People* (2010), for example, regards the notion of a Jewish "Volk" as a late nineteenth-century invention that opposed Judaism's "original" self-definition as a religious community (21). That interpretation may accord with Sand's critique of contemporary Zionism, but it overlooks, for Lenhard, crucial facts. By holding a magnifying glass up to key moments and figures in French- and German-Jewish history, Lenhard shows how the story is, as usual, more complicated.

*Volk oder Religion?* is, above all, a work of intellectual history. Lenhard generally proceeds by initially giving brief introductions to rabbis, theologians, writers, or philosophers; and then by discussing central passages in their landmark works. Lenhard examines seventeenth- and eighteenth-century self-conceptions of Judaism alongside the developing shape of French and German antisemitism before and just after the French Revolution. The political emancipation of the Jews and the decline of the *ancien régime* opened up new questions about the role of Judaism within the budding nation-state: how and why, Lenhard asks, did more reform-minded Prussian Jews ultimately come to see themselves as "Prussian citizens of the Jewish faith" (113)? Lenhard disputes the premise that the belief in a unitary Jewish people with a common ethnic ancestry had been held for centuries. To demonstrate this claim, he offers a genealogical history of the cluster of terms under scrutiny—*Volk*, the Hebrew *am*, the Greek *ethnos*, and so on—thereby showing how the definition of "ethnicity" itself has been anything but uniform across time and space. Lenhard then shows how the Enlightenment-inspired movement to translate Judaism into a mere community of faith (*Glaubensgemeinschaft*) beyond notions of ancestry (*Abstammung*) encountered strong opposition; here the contributions of Jewish philosophes of the Enlightenment (*maskilim*), specifically Moses Mendelssohn's notion of a "priestly nation" (125), are central, as is the more radical thought of David Friedländer.

Lenhard also looks at representatives of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism such as Israel Deutsch, Samson Rafael Hirsch, and Simon Bloch. He shows how romantic conceptions of an original Judaism were often summoned as a way to both reassert a more authentic vision of Judaism and to guard against the perceived negative influences of modernity on the various Jewish communities these figures represented. Lenhard concludes that, in virtually all of these models, some notion of Jewish ethnicity played an important role. During the years prior to the failed revolutions of 1848, philosophers G.W.F. Hegel and Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon

had a profound influence on a number of Jewish thinkers. Lenhard devotes special attention to the ways in which the dialectic between the particular and the universal was being negotiated in the writings of many Jewish Hegelians, primarily among those affiliated with the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden such as Eduard Gans and Moses Moser but also in the work of the revolutionary Moses Hess. Lenhard emphasizes how many of these Jewish Hegelians deployed the biological metaphors common in Hegel's work in order to describe different ways in which Judaism could be conceived as a living member of an organic whole—namely, the state. Saint-Simon's system, Lenhard contends, also proved amenable to some German- and French-Jewish intellectuals bent on legitimizing a role for Judaism in modernity.

Lenhard's book is comprehensive and at times polemical, showing how, for example, certain Jewish intellectuals were swept up in the fervor of mid-nineteenth-century nationalism, employing similar racialized metaphors to describe Judaism as their German and French counterparts. In this sense, Lenhard implicitly disrupts scholarly narratives about the simple failure of the Enlightenment project to properly integrate the perpetually excluded. One critique that might be leveled against the text applies to the methodology of many works of intellectual history: to what extent was the thought of these intellectuals received by, or truly representative of, the communities they claimed to represent? This is, to be sure, a concession that Lenhard himself makes at the outset. Yet one wonders what a similar study would yield regarding notions of religion and ethnicity if the body of evidence under investigation contained letters and diaries of more typical French and German Jews or more literary works—Heinrich Heine being the only major literary figure in the study—and certainly if the sources studied included some women. The German component conspicuously outweighs the French component in the book, but this may have to do with the sheer number or availability of the types of sources Lenhard examines.

Lenhard's book raises more questions than it answers, but this is meant as praise and not criticism. His ethnographic study will certainly be a valuable addition to the rich body of literature on German- and French-Jewish cultural and intellectual history. It should further benefit scholars of German, French, and Jewish studies as well as German idealism, identity studies, and European intellectual history broadly conceived.

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