

German Jewry Was Different

Review-Essay by ALFRED JOSPE

Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture. By PETER GAY. Oxford University Press. 289 pp. \$12.95.

PETER GAY'S LATEST VOLUME RE-ENFORCES one's sensitivity to a striking fact: the history and fate of German Jewry have stimulated the growth of a literature that differs markedly from that on Israel and Eastern Europe. For thirty years now, there has been a steady flow, sometimes amounting to a deluge, of books on and from Israel—from the self-appraisals of Weizmann and Ben-Gurion to those of Dayan and Golda Meir, from Abba Eban's *argumentum pro vita sua* to, among others, those of Walter Laqueur, Amos Oz, Avraham Yehoshua, Howard Sachar, Hillel Halkin, as well as Saul Bellow's report on his trip *To Jerusalem and Back*, reporting, questioning, defining, interpreting—verbalizing the agonies and hopes, the seemingly irreconcilable conflicts and the creative tensions, the deadly dilemmas and the search for life-affirming options which constitute Israel's reality. Israel is holding our hopes and fears in bondage.

The world of Eastern Europe, too, had, and still has, its great and gifted literary spokesmen who have become the loving memorializers of that world—Agnon and Heschel, Maurice Samuel and Lucy Dawidowicz, Chaim Grade, Jacob Schatzky and others, evoking the misery and grandeur, the rebelliousness and the radiance, the physical hunger and the spiritual sustenance of a great civilization that was turned into ashes in the furnaces of the Holocaust.

The memory of German Jewry has generated a different kind of literature. Here, we have an immense and still steadily growing number of often superb scholarly studies covering every facet of the Jewish experience in Germany, especially since the Emancipation. One reason for this focus is historical. The intellectual history of the Jews in the nineteenth century was essentially about those in the German-speaking *Kulturkreis*. It was here that Jewish life and thought were first exposed to the full impact of the intellectual, social and political forces of modernity and their challenge to the religious foundations and social structure of the Jewish community. There is an understandable desire on the part of scholars, as well as of the remnants of German Jewry, to establish a permanent record of this explosively creative period of Jewish history, to examine its failures, and to assess its contributions to the whole of Jewish life. The

publications of the Leo Baeck Institute fulfill this function admirably.

But a second reason may well be, as the author of this work puts it, that these books are primarily “explorations in a region of our recent past of which we know much, and which is documented to an almost bewildering degree, but which we have mastered neither intellectually nor emotionally” (p. ix). Germany and the German-Jewish experience continue to generate efforts to comprehend what remains incomprehensible and to explain, if an explanation is possible, how and why what did happen could have happened.

Peter Gay, distinguished scholar in the intellectual and cultural history of the Emancipation and award-winning author of works on the Enlightenment and the Weimar culture, makes a remarkably lucid and provocative contribution to this quest in his new volume which brings together six previously published essays on a wide range of topics—on Freud, Brahms and the Jewish conductor Hermann Levi, on the encounter of German Jews with modernism in the Wilhelminian culture and on the nature of what has been called the Berlin Jewish spirit. Despite their thematic diversity, the essays are held together by the way in which they reflect two of the author’s central interests—German culture and the modernist movement—two phenomena which, as he argues, are united in a kind of tragic complementation in the German Jew who saw himself as a German but was not accepted as such, while, at the same time, serving as a “symbol, to himself, his admirers and detractors alike, for the profound, often traumatic changes that made Western culture what it is today” (p. vii).

The scope of knowledge with which Gay pursues his theme, his gift for formulation, and the sparkling grace of his style are impressive. He is particularly effective in exploding myths, demolishing stereotypes, and challenging widely-held presuppositions, not always stating new positions but always giving new and illuminating data. About Germany: There is not just one Germany; there always were several Germanies. The Germans were neither all villains nor all fools. There were many with decent and democratic impulses. Some Germans did not need forgiveness. The crimes of others can never be forgiven. About the alleged “unpolitical” German and the German burgher’s alleged diffidence about involvement in public life as unworthy of a truly educated human being: Notwithstanding the title of Thomas Mann’s *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, was this true? And, if so, was it a major factor favoring acquiescence to Nazism? Germans were, in fact, strenuously political throughout the 19th century. On German anti-Semitism: It was a cluster of behaviors (as has, of course, been pointed out by others before), and the sources of this infection varied as much as did the diagnoses and the prescriptions for its cure. For some, including the historian Treitschke, anti-Semitism was a response born out of frustration at the refusal of the Jews to give up their identity, while others rejected the Jews because of their strenuous efforts to aban-

don that identity. For the liberal politician Eduard Lasker it was an epidemic that would be overcome by "better sanitation," while Gay sees anti-Semitism partly as a protest against modernity—the Jew is viewed as personifying what is felt to be its evils: urbanization and its depersonalization, materialism, social rebelliousness, cultural nihilism.

Consequently, the widely supported thesis that German Jews were identified with modernism and were its chief exponents also stands in need of revision. Among the charges levelled most frequently against them in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that they were rootless and cleverly manipulative, and that they were undermining the traditional cultures of the societies in which they lived, thus paving the way for a decadent modernism deeply repugnant to the traditional German outlook upon life. But, as Gay points out (and demonstrates throughout the book), there was much about Jewish Germans that was not modern, just as there was much that was modern and was not Jewish. Nor were Jews as numerous and preponderant in the avant garde as has frequently been claimed. Their role as the disruptive "stranger" (to draw on the title of Georg Simmel's famous essay) was vastly overstated.

The nature of modernism is the first of several major themes that intersect in Gay's book. To see it merely as a repudiation of the normative forces of the past is a gross oversimplification, for the modernist, paradoxically, hated the modern world—he was anti-rational, rejected accepted pieties, and rebelled against "the role of the machine, the vulgarity of the bourgeois society, the pretensions of parvenues, the waning of community, the disenchantment of our culture with culture itself" (p. 22). But, as Gay points out, modernists also frequently were life-affirming, upheld the family and society, and retained a profound allegiance to bourgeois life patterns. While being intellectual revolutionaries or aestheticist rebels, they could, at the same time, be social conservatives who affirmed the conventions and moral values of the bourgeoisie from which they had sprung and in which their roots remained anchored.

This two-sidedness of modernism is worked out with particular sharpness in Gay's masterfully written and argued opening chapter on Sigmund Freud, the "Columbus of the mind." He draws a fascinating picture of Freud's home and office, of his partiality to the prehistoric and his profound interest in archaeology, of his unparalleled intellectual audacity and his driving desire to solve what he liked to call "the riddles of life." And, by pointing out the strong influence on Freud of German culture in general, as well as of the international positivist tradition, he also demolishes the myth that psycho-analysis was somehow the product of a particularly Viennese spirit. Gay's major point, however, is the amazing contrast between the radicalism of Freud's ideas and the conservatism of his social posture. In Gay's words, Freud was

an irreproachable bourgeois who fashioned for himself an unmistakable

bourgeois environment but who, at the same time, developed theories about human nature and human conduct as subversive as any set of ideas in history . . . He did all the things a good bourgeois is supposed to do. He worked hard, worried about money, loved his wife, fathered six children, played cards, attended lodge meetings, fixed a name plate, Prof. Dr. Freud, to his door, and went on vacations. (pp. 60 and 61–62).

Yet this bourgeois was a true revolutionary who dared to mention the unmentionable, offended the conventions and sensibilities of his age, refused to ignore what everyone else avoided, reached into the darkest recesses of human nature to uncover the hidden—yet was as appalled as were his contemporaries by his findings about infant sexuality and the sexual roots of neurosis. Hence our understanding of modernism requires substantial revision. Frequently defined as a celebration of unreason, as a rejection in anger, disgust or despair of the complacency and shallowness that are said to be the mark of the bourgeois society, modernism is not as dogmatically anti-rational as we are frequently asked to believe. Freud showed that it can have important rational components, and that “it was not only possible but necessary to be rational about irrationality”—his “most modern and most revolutionary act.”

One caveat should be registered here. In this sixty-three page essay, just two brief paragraphs on Viennese anti-Semitism deal with the question of Freud’s Jewishness. Gay mentions the details commonly considered most important—the hostility and resistance he encountered as a Jew; his refusal to deny or scuttle his Jewishness; his rejection of religion as an illusion akin to neurosis; his affirmation of his membership in the Jewish group. But this account seems strangely incomplete and does not touch on the possible effect of his ambivalent social and cultural location on his thinking and writing, the possible unresolved tension between his own rationality and the irrationalities in his own soul, the significance of his frequent use of the language and imagery of the Bible, his occasional self-identification with Biblical figures, his theory that hatred for Judaism is, at bottom, hatred for Christianity, and his strangely revealing statement which appears in the preface to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*, seeking to define his relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people:

No reader of this book will find it easy to put himself into the emotional position of the author who is ignorant of the language of Holy Writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers—as well as from every other religion—and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature. If the question were put to him: “Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?” He would reply: “a very great deal, and probably its very essence.” He could not now express that

essence clearly in words but some day, no doubt, it will become accessible to the scientific mind.¹

He could not define the nature of this relationship in terms intellectually satisfying to him, but the "essence" of which he speaks would appear to have been more than a sense of group belongingness in the face of rejection and hostility. An assessment of the ambivalences in Freud's Jewishness by a thinker of Gay's analytical gift, and his specific agreement, or disagreement, with the studies of Freud's Jewishness by Ernst Simon and Marthe Robert² might have been instructive.

Freud's life and experience illumine, however, not merely the problem of modernity but, also, the predicaments of the Jew in Germany. Culturally a member of the German *Kulturkreis* rather than a Viennese, and feeling rejected by Germany, Freud chose in 1926 to call himself a Jew rather than a German. The Jewish experience in Germany, primarily in the Wilhelminian era, is the second major theme that binds Gay's essays together.

There was hardly a generation of Jews in Germany after the Emancipation which did not have reason to question whether a German-Jewish symbiosis could ever be achieved and whether the dream—and occasional promise—of complete acceptance and equality would ever become reality. To be sure, the balance sheet often looked quite promising. By about 1850, within two generations after Moses Mendelssohn, a substantial segment of German Jewry had moved into the stratum of the German middle class. They were above average in education and wealth. The process continued in the Wilhelminian era when, as Gay points out, Jews became visible on the cultural scene in often striking numbers: as drama and art critics, as journalists, authors, editors and publishers. Their share, hence their visibility, in the public professions—medicine, dentistry, law—and in the garment industry was especially high. Albert Ballin was the driving spirit behind the growth of the German merchant marine, Emil Rathenau a pioneer in the electrical industry. And, of course, there were Jews in public life, especially after World War I—Walter Rathenau, in charge of the reconstruction of the German economy; Eduard Lasker, co-founder of the National-Liberal Party; Hugo Preuss, a member of the German cabinet, who drafted the constitution for the Weimar Republic.

Yet the symbiosis, though ardently desired by Germany's Jews, never succeeded. Even in the best years of the Weimar Republic, probably the

1. Quoted by Ernst Simon, "Sigmund Freud, the Jew," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* II, (London: 1957), p. 290. Gay mentions that he is acquainted with Simon's study (p. 77n). The statement by Freud was originally written in German, in a letter dated December, 1930. It was translated and used as the introduction to the Hebrew edition which appeared in Jerusalem, 1938–1939.

2. Marthe Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity*, transl. Ralph Mannheim, (Garden City, N.Y.: 1976).

best years of the German-Jewish experience as a whole, the Jew did not cease to be an obsessive problem for many Germans. Regardless of his contributions to literature, music and art, his scientific achievements, his role in Germany's economic development, the Jew was rejected. He was an outsider, the unwelcome stranger, the adversary who promoted the modernist decay that threatened the cultural and social equilibrium. It did not matter, Gay argues forcefully, that there was no peculiarly Jewish element in modernism, as some observers thought to have detected; that the charge of presumed Jewish proclivity for experimentation in the arts and innovation in literature was largely a myth; and that, while "there were German Jews in the avant garde of high culture, they were in the rear garde and center as well." Nor did it matter that Jews, from the man in the street to the Jewish thinker, defined themselves as being Jewish by religion alone and as Germans in every other respect. It was precisely this self-definition which Germans found indigestible. The Jew was an unassimilable element that neither could, nor should, be absorbed.

This rejection permeated Germany's cultural, social and political structures. Politicians, writers, intellectuals—inside the universities and outside—refused to accept the Jew as co-citizen. Neither his patriotism nor his education, nor the way he wrote or spoke German and publicly declared his German loyalty and commitment qualified him for acceptance. Government officials, the civil service and, especially, the army refused either to accept Jews into their ranks or to promote them, though there were notable exceptions; and they considered this not a breach of the constitutional rights of the Jews but a justified and justifiable denial of public rights, because the Jews refused to keep their part of the contract—and their part was to stop being Jews, however little their Jewish identity might mean to them.

Gay documents his analysis with quotations that strikingly illustrate the irrationality of the rationalizations of this rejection. A letter by Theodor Fontane (1819–1898), novelist, critic and poet, to the pedagogue and philosopher, Friedrich Paulsen, illustrates the tone and level of the arguments that were used:

Down to 1848 or perhaps 1870, we were dominated by the ideas of the previous century; we had quite sincerely fallen in love with human rights and revelled in ideas of emancipation, which we had not yet had time and opportunity to test. This "testing" is of recent date and has turned out most unfavorably for the Jews. They are irritants everywhere. . . . they mess up everything, obstruct the contemplation of every problem for its own sake. Even the most optimistic had to convince themselves that baptismal water is not enough. Despite all its gifts, it is a horrible people—a people afflicted from its very origin with a kind of conceited vulgarity which the Aryan world cannot get along with (p. 112).

If Fontane found Jewish conduct offensive and unacceptable to

Aryan sensibilities, different rationales were sought and found by others. Heinrich von Treitschke, a leading historian around the turn of the century, felt that the alien, oriental religion of the Jew reduced his capacity to become German and, therefore, advised the Jew to behave in a "less Jewish way"—a prescription topped by Gerhard Kittel (not mentioned by Gay), the son of a distinguished Biblical scholar and himself a specialist in New Testament research, who, in 1933, sent Martin Buber a copy of his just published treatise, *The Jewish Question*, in which he advocated the legal imposition of an alien status on Jews, with the argument that this would "give a Christian meaning to the [Nazi] struggle against Judaism," while the Jews, on their part, should accept this willingly as "God's just dispensation."³

The rationales may have differed; the aims were identical. To be sure, not all Germans felt or spoke that way. There were other voices. But this was the dominant public tone, and it was rarely contradicted or publicly challenged by non-Jews.

Germany's Jews responded to their condition in a multiplicity of ways—the third major theme emerging from Gay's analysis. Fundamental to their responses was the fact that German Jews "thought, felt and acted like Germans." However, Gay makes it quite clear that their stance was usually not "an effort at disguise, a craven self-denial," but a feeling of at-homeness in a "civilization that had produced cosmopolitans like Schiller and Kant, ornaments to modern humanism like Goethe." Hence, some Jews responded to being affronted less as Jews than as Germans—they felt the "Jewish question" was primarily a German question which had to be solved by Jews and gentiles together. Others responded differently: they intermarried or repudiated their Jewishness directly, quite often in the hope that they, themselves, or at least their children would thus gain entry into the coveted stratum of German society. (Gay points out that the exodus through conversion, though substantial, was not massive—a total of about 22,000 in the 19th century.) Nor was mimicry an assurance of success, as is shown, for instance, by the pathetic case of Georg Simmel, well-known philosopher and sociologist, who, born a Protestant to previously converted parents, was attacked and rejected for being a Jew and became a victim of academic discrimination. Interestingly enough, his writings reflect a good deal of preoccupation with the theme of "the stranger," the marginal, alienated man who is both at home and ill at ease in his community.

Others, personally untouched by prejudice and hostility or impervious to their bite, were able to ignore their existence, as did, for example, Aby Warburg, gifted art historian and creator of the famous Warburg Library, the son of a pious Jewish banker in Hamburg who, though he

3. Cf. F.E. Talmadge, *Disputation and Dialogue*, (New York: 1975), pp. 49f. and Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors*, (New York: 1946), p. 41.

moved away completely from the Jewish world of his family in order to study antiquity and its survival in the Renaissance, yet saw the Jew as partner in the battle for *Bildung*, reason, enlightenment.

Still others retained their identification with the Jewish world but, at the same time, had a passionate love affair with German culture and proclaimed the legitimacy of the co-existence of the two worlds, or even envisaged the possibility of their fusion. Outstanding examples of this stance were Else Lasker-Schueler, renowned poetess, who showed a passionate identification with both her Jewish origins and the German culture in which she grew up and, while considering herself a German writer, also felt that she was somehow animated by a primordial Hebraic vision which she expressed in the language of the Bible;⁴ and the philosopher, Hermann Cohen, the founder of the Neo-Kantian school of thought and one of the few Jews who broke through the barriers of academic discrimination. He saw a profound affinity between Germanism and Judaism,⁵ felt that the ethos of the German state was in complete harmony with that of Judaism, and sought to establish the Jewish claim to full citizenship in the modern state by attempting to demonstrate that the eternal verities of Judaism and the philosophical truths as defined by Kant and German humanism were not merely compatible but identical.⁶

The poetess' strongly emotional and the philosopher's intellectualized and idealized responses were, of course, highly individualistic and not paradigmatic of more wide-spread responses to the German refusal to accept a collective Jewish presence. Far more frequent were the pathological responses that reflect the self-questioning and self-doubts of the rejected, the self-torture and even the self-rejection among German Jews who felt with every fiber of their being that they were Germans yet were unable, as a group and often even as individuals, to break through the barriers erected against their acceptance.

Jakob Wassermann expressed the torture of this tension not only in several novels but, especially, in his famous short autobiography, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (1921, quoted at length by Gay):

Sacrifice is not enough. Wooing is misinterpreted. Mediation meets coldness, if not scorn. Apostasy is, for the self-respecting, out of question on principle. Secret assimilation bears fruit only for those who are suited for

4. Gay feels that the Jewish component in her writings is mainly thematic, located in the choice of subject matter. But there may well have been a special relationship to the Bible and what Robert Alter calls "a special realignment of her identities," generated by the ever-present tensions between her German and Jewish identities. Cf. Robert Alter, "Modernism, the Germans & the Jews," *Commentary*, (March 1978): 66-67.

5. Gay translates Cohen's terms *Deutschtum* and *Judentum* as "Germanness" and "Jewishness." While the alliteration is appealing, *Judentum* must be rendered here as "Judaism." Jewishness, with its ethnic and possibly secular-cultural connotations, is exactly the opposite of what Cohen means.

6. Cf. *Reason and Hope: Selections from the Jewish Writings of Hermann Cohen*, transl., ed. and with an introduction by Eva Jospe, (New York: 1971), pp. 18 and 175 f.

assimilation, which is to say, the weakest individuals. Persisting in old ways means torpor. What remains? Self-destruction? A life in twilight, anxiety and misery. . . . It is better not to think about it (p. 150).

He did, of course, think about it, without finding a way of either separating or harmonizing the two dimensions of his identity. Others thought that they could find a way by adopting, consciously or subconsciously, the stereotypes and arguments of the aggressor. They tried to "prove" their loyalty and patriotism by pointing out the number of German Jews who had given their lives in World War I and other wars. Some cringed at what they considered "Jewish" conduct or the display of Jewishness in public places, and counselled restraint and less visibility. Some manifested an "embarrassed derision" toward the rapidly increasing number of *Ostjuden*, refugees from pogroms and poverty (who, in 1925, constituted 25.4% of the Jewish population of Berlin), trying to show that German Jews were different; and there even was a temptation to accept a role-definition as second-class citizens, as when, for instance, no less a person than Ludwig Hollaender, a spokesman and director of the *Centralverein*, in a discussion of the position of the German Jews, is reported to have said: "*Stiefkinder müssen artig sein*"—step-children must be well-behaved.

The most disturbing and destructive pathological response to the German-Jewish dilemma was, however, Jewish self-hatred, defined by Gay as "the frantic urge to escape the burdens of one's Jewishness not merely by renouncing but by denouncing Judaism." The figure whom he discusses at length as a paradigm of self-hatred among Jews is Hermann Levi, a Jew who was among the most accomplished conductors in the German imperial era. His formative and decisive musical experience was his relationship to Richard Wagner, to whom he was bound in servile obsequiousness and self-abasement. He took every kind of abuse and humiliation from the Bayreuth establishment in order to be close to the viciously anti-Semitic Wagner; and, having become the most talented expositor of Wagner's works, he let himself be persuaded, despite the humiliations to which he had been subjected, to conduct the premiere of Wagner's most "Christian" opera, *Parsifal*. Interestingly enough, as Gay points out, Levi, though hungry for acceptance, resisted Wagner's pressure to convert. But his unmatched mastery of the Wagnerian repertoire and its acknowledgment by Wagner gave him the compensatory inner stability and external recognition that he craved.

This summary cannot do justice to the richness of detail and argument which Gay presents. However, the book also shows, once again, that there is a certain hazard in the publication of a collection of essays written at different times and for different occasions. They may be revealing not only in what they contain but in what they omit by their occasionalism. In

his discussion of Jewish aspects and issues, Gay deals primarily with the psycho- and socio-pathological responses of Jews to their condition and experiences in Germany. These are important, not only for an understanding of the German-Jewish era in Jewish life, but of Jewish pathology wherever it exists—including the United States—and not only in the past but in the present as well. But he says only half of what has to be said. His focus disregards the fact that the German-Jewish community possessed an extra-ordinary amount of Jewish creativity. I do not mean to say or imply that German Jews were all fine human beings, great scholars, superb intellects, or deeply committed Jews. Many were; many others were not. The whole range of attitudes described by Gay did, of course, exist, and he is quite right when he declares with a measure of asperity that “there is a historical and sociological study that desperately needs to be undertaken: that of stupid Jews.” But no matter how brilliantly the story is told, it is poorly told if it disregards the fact that the century before Hitler was a unique chapter in Jewish history—a period of incredible vitality, creativity and intellectual ferment in German-Jewish life. In this brief span, German-speaking Jewry became the seed-bed of the most significant movements affirming the viability and continuing validity of Jewish life in the face of the tensions and challenges involved in the Jewish encounter with the cultural, social forces of modernity—Neo-Orthodoxy, which is still being nourished by the spirit of Frankfurt in its efforts to harmonize strict adherence to Jewish tradition with modern culture; Reform Judaism, which cannot be understood without its German roots; Conservative Judaism, which received its formative impulses from the men at the Breslau Seminary; Zionism, which, more than Gay is prepared to concede, was not just a peripheral phenomenon in Germany but an authentic response to the inner and outer dislocations produced by the Jewish condition; and, above all, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the scholarly study of Judaism as a legitimate academic discipline. No history of the Jewish intellectual effort can ignore the products of this *Wissenschaft* which, in the words of Salman Rubaschoff (latter known as Zalman Shazar), “is the most important gift which German Judaism has made to the whole of Jewry.”⁷ Notwithstanding an identification with Germany that was often as passionate as it was uncritical, there was a strong and equally passionate identification with Judaism, which a balanced assessment must not bypass.

Nor can the fact be ignored that most German Jews not only did not desert but, on the contrary, developed vigorous strategies and action programs to counter prejudice. They banded together in defense agencies, most prominent among them the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger juedischen Glaubens* (Central Organization of German Citizens of the

7. S. Rubaschoff, *Der jüdische Wille*, I, (Berlin: 1918), p. 32, as quoted by Kurt Wilhelm, *Wissenschaft des Judentums im deutschen Sprachbereich*, (Tübingen: 1967), I, p. 58.

Jewish Faith), founded in 1893 to "unite German citizens of the Jewish faith for the defense of their political and social equality and to strengthen their undeviating loyalty to Germany." With the hindsight of more than ⁸⁰ years, one may smile about this formulation and its motivations. But they did their work with a measure of success. They refused to rely on a strategy of silence or concealment. They served notice that they were prepared to fight for their rights, and they did. They invoked the courts against anti-Semitic slander, openly fought anti-Semitic candidates during election campaigns, produced and distributed vast amount of material designed to create a better understanding of Jewish life and thought. Above all, they developed institutions and programs to nourish Jewish knowledge and self-understanding. They sought neither to hide nor to escape. They failed, not because they lacked courage or the perception of their condition, but because they were overwhelmed by forces which they, together with much of the world, were helpless to resist.

Consideration of these facets would have eliminated the onesidedness of Gay's approach. Nevertheless, in the area which he covers, Gay's impressive scholarship paints an immensely enlightening and provocative picture of the German spirit and of the complexities and predicaments of Jewish life in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most importantly, the implications of the German experience for us in the United States seem clear.