

5 Jewish Questions and Jewish Worldviews

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Why study worldviews? What does the concept add that is not covered by kindred concepts such as civilization, paradigm, ideology, and discourse? Each incorporates the values, knowledge, practices, and identities that bind the members of a community and organize social relations; shape meanings; craft narratives of the past, present, and future; define and justify ethical action; and establish the background conditions that form habit and the subconscious. You say civilization, I say worldview. Following the observations of Stephen Kalberg and others, my view is that worldviews do something these others do not: blend the worldly and the heavenly.¹ They are tantamount to an “ethical universe” that links the here-and-now to the transcendent, and the practical and metaphysical.² In line with Katzenstein’s discussion in Chapter 1, they consider how a community addresses the “ultimate” questions of meaning, purpose, suffering, and injustice.³ What is the place of the community in the cosmos and the relationship to the universal? What is the relationship to outsiders? What duties and obligations does it have to them? How do they cope with suffering and evil? How is suffering related to salvation and redemption? To the extent that worldviews address these fundamental questions that often can strike terror and panic in the hearts and minds of humans, they help create order out of the chaos.⁴ The world is a jungle, but worldviews provide a transcendental canopy.

This chapter considers the multiple and changing worldviews of western Jewry in search of ontological and physical security in a post-Enlightenment world of nation-states. Because the volume provides multiple worldviews on worldviews, and Chapter 1 situates worldviews in relationship to forms of relationalism and humanism, I should begin by briefly explaining why I occupy the cell of humanist relationalism. I adopt a sociological relationalism that does not venture into quantum-style relationalism or hyper-humanism. Although I have been informed by others in the project that quantum-style relationalism subsumes sociological relationalism because it is the mother of all relationalisms, which it might be, but I have not been persuaded that the

¹ Kalberg 2004. ² Kalberg 2004: 140–41. ³ Kalberg 2004: 141. ⁴ Berger 1969.

former's high level of abstraction is either necessary or can be sufficiently grounded to capture the changing meanings and practices of worldviews. Moreover, although there are communities, religious and otherwise, whose worldviews incorporate relationality with nonhuman forms, at best this is a minor feature of Judaism and the Jewish people.⁵

My sociological position also distances my argument from substantialism in ways that follow from constructivist international relations. Actors, whether they are individuals or groups, are social constructions. Said otherwise, they are not natural but rather are social kinds. This sociological position can and does incorporate the possibility that groups can be more than aggregates of individuals and can have a collective identity, and that these collectives can have enduring features, including identities, beliefs, interests, and practices. But this differs from substantialism's tendency toward essentialism and reification. Instead, worldviews "do not have a life of their own, apart from their human carriers."⁶ As Katzenstein writes in his discussion of Weber and Dilthey in Chapter 1, the interpretive tradition works at the individual and group levels of analysis to access the cultural meanings and significance that individuals and groups give to the world; however, these worldviews are not the byproduct of psychology, but rather of a culture with an integrity. Worldviews, in this way, provide a "causal impulse" akin to the conditions of possibility discussed by constructivists.⁷ As social constructions, worldviews can be settled or unsettled, and they can be unsettled by internal developments and contradictions or by external shocks and disturbances.

These dimensions of humanist relationalism inform my narrative of the changing worldviews of western Jewry in response to the Enlightenment and the rise of the nation-state. All groups are social kinds and thus are constructed. Most groups that make an impression have a history, and in the case of the Jews it is 5,782 years and counting. And, similar to all social kinds, Jews have debated what defines them as a people, what is their purpose, how to make sense of suffering, what are their core tenets, how to interpret and give meaning to their central texts, who is and can be a member, and what are the boundaries between themselves and others and what should be their relationship to them. Jews have managed to maintain a collective identity despite having lived most of their history in exile and, in the modern period, in pockets of isolated communities strewn across the Christian and Muslim worlds. Yet there is diversity within unity, which is always the case for any community or cultural grouping, and especially so for a people that are diasporic, dispersed, and, historically speaking, have lived in relative isolation from each other. Ashkenazi and

⁵ See, for instance, Povenilli 2016. ⁶ McNeill 1998: 1. ⁷ Kalberg 2004.

Sephardic Jews share a unity, but also a diversity. So, too, do many western Jewish communities. As the punchline to several Jewish jokes goes: two Jews, three synagogues.

Jews are both a certain and an uncertain people. They are a certain people to the extent that they have a strong collective and transnational identity with mutual obligations. They are an uncertain people with regard to their survival. As a barely tolerated and often hated minority, Jews have experienced all kinds of oppression, violence, forced migration, and genocide. Jewish history and important religious events are often narrated by moments of considerable suffering. Indeed, suffering is so central to the Jewish historical narrative that, according to the eminent historian of Jewish history Salo Baron, they possess a “lachrymose” view of their history.⁸ And, according to various other scholars, this reading of history shapes their worldviews and anxiety about their physical and ontological survival.⁹ The consequence is that suffering and survival enter worldviews in two ways. Suffering must be explained, and in a way that provides meaning. And the threat of destruction is part of their worldview.

The historical period I examine – a post-Enlightenment world of nation-states – posed threats to and presented opportunities for western Jews that, in turn, led to a change in worldviews. Although worldviews have various dimensions, I focus on what is called the “Jewish Question.” The theologically stylized formulation is: are the Jews a people apart, or are they a light unto nations? Should they emphasize and preserve those laws, customs, traditions, and rituals that make them distinctive, or should they accentuate and cultivate what they share with humanity? How should they balance and navigate the relationship between particularism and universalism?¹⁰

These theological questions began to have practical importance with the rise of the Enlightenment and the nation-state in Europe in the eighteenth century. The urgent question became: how can the Jews, a diasporic, transnational community, find a secure place in a world with universalizing tendencies and that is carved up into different territories that are expected to circumscribe identities and loyalties?¹¹ The Enlightenment and nationalism compelled Jews to reconsider how they classify themselves as a people, their place and purpose in the world, and

⁸ Baron 1963. ⁹ Katz 2008; Benbassa 2010.

¹⁰ On the relationship between particularism and universalism in Jewish political thought, see Cohen 2003; Eisen 1983; Lundgren 2001; Slezkine 2004; Walzer 2001.

¹¹ Gottlieb 2006: 10 (quoted in Pianko 2012). On a similar note, see Batnitzky 2011: 169–79.

their relationship to non-Jews. The universal threatened to remove the boundaries that distinguish Jews as a separate people, and inclusive forms of nationalism expected the Jews to transfer their loyalties from their fellow brethren to their fellow citizens.¹² Under such conditions, the Jews might possibly cease to exist as a people, cut off from other Jews and their history. But if they refused the invitation, they would potentially signal that they were a separate and possibly threatening people. At least they had a choice. Other countries, shaped by counter-Enlightenment and chauvinistic nationalism, treated Jews as the quintessential “other,” an outsider worthy of exclusion, persecution, and violence. Different worldviews began to emerge in relationship to these different circumstances. There is a larger history lesson here: if you want to understand how different Jewish communities have answered the Jewish Question, start by looking at the gentiles. This piece of advice is attributed to Heinrich Heine, the great nineteenth-century poet and writer who was born a Jew and then converted to Christianity. A Yiddish proverb offers a similar, though more fatalistic, conclusion: *Vy es kristit zikh, azoy yidlt zikh* – “As the Christians go, so go the Jews.”¹³

The responses by Jewish communities to these challenges and opportunities provided by the Enlightenment also were mediated by political theology. Whether Jews are primarily a religious, national, or ethnic community is a post-Enlightenment debate that underscores how Judaism has become less important to Jewish identity for many western Jews. But even when it appears to have receded, it still figures prominently. An ongoing challenge for any religious community is the translation of theological concepts rooted in text into political choices shaped by context.¹⁴ In short, political theology is the process and result of connecting the transcendental to the imminent. The search for a “usable past” is central to this exercise. There is no one, true, original meaning or interpretation. Religious texts do not speak for themselves; there is an active

¹² Elazar 2000; Lundgren 2001; Miller and Ury 2010; Sznajder 2007.

¹³ Cited in Mendelsohn 1993: 37.

¹⁴ There is no single definition of political theology. For a menu of choices, see Cavanaugh and Scott 2007; Kerr and Labreche 2018; and Kessler 2013. For Lilla (2007), conversations about political authority, the ends of politics, and the human condition often venture into the divine. Cavanaugh and Scott (2007) define it as “The analysis and criticism of political arrangements (including cultural-psychological, social, and economic aspects) from the perspective of differing interpretations of God’s ways with the world.” Their definition touches upon Carl Schmitt’s (2005:36): “All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they are transferred from theology to the theory of the state – but also because of their systemic structure.” Following Emile Durkheim’s concept of religion, others define political theology as the infusion of political concepts with the sacred.

human process of interpretation that occurs at the individual and collective levels. Consequently, all religious communities debate the meaning of texts and which elements are most urgent and salient. History and politics channel this search for a usable past, and mold this past into the ingredients that shape a worldview. The recognition that religion shaped how Jews understood the meanings, and responded to the challenges, of the Enlightenment and nationalism underscores that worldviews are never hermetically sealed but are constantly rubbing shoulders with, absorbing, and reacting to other worldviews, a point raised by other chapters in this volume.

These unsettled times underscored how worldviews are simultaneously background and foreground. Whereas Chapter 1 focuses on the background, I shift the angle to the foreground. Western Jews are engaged in backward- and forward-looking debates about how to respond to current circumstances and challenges in ways that connect the past to a possible future that addresses their ontological and physical security. There is no single answer to these debates. However, if a proposed solution is to find an audience, it must satisfy the need for both physical and ontological security. And while there have been multiple answers, they are *Jewish* responses. But the fact that responses are in the multiple, and that different responses can become hegemonic in different national and transnational contexts, highlights how a single community can have multiple worldviews and how any community's worldview, just like its culture, has both unity and diversity.¹⁵

The rest of the chapter is divided into two sections organized around two periods, from the 1800s through 1948, and from 1948 to the present. Global structures and world-turning events provided the stimulus for the transformation of Jewish worldviews. The first section describes how variations in the Enlightenment and nationalism, and the perceived necessity of Jewish sovereignty and statehood for survival, led to the emergence of four Jewish worldviews: a diaspora nationalism, which mixed nonterritorialism and particularism; a rooted cosmopolitanism, which combined nonterritorialism and universalism; an ethnonational Zionism, which blended territorialism and particularism; and a prophetic Zionism that contained territorialism and universalism. The second section examines how the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel led the two largest Jewish communities in the world, the American and the Israeli, to develop two distinct worldviews: American Jews continued to orbit around a rooted cosmopolitanism; and Israeli Jews migrated from a

¹⁵ Kalberg 2012: 74.

prophetic Zionism to ethnonationalist Zionism. The conclusion draws out the lessons of this story for humanist relationalism.

5.1 Jewish Worldviews: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

Except for the brief slice of history when they had political power in ancient Israel, Jews have been a minority people in exile that operated with a nearly singular worldview that pivoted around isolation in and exclusion from the world. Jewish life and religious practice varied regionally and historically, but this was diversity within unity. However, after centuries of relative isolation, two yoked transformations forced Jews to reconsider their worldview.

The first major transformation was the Enlightenment. By privileging reason over superstition, change over tradition, science over religion, and, most importantly, humanity over discrimination, Enlightenment thought held that people should be judged as individuals and on their achievements, not their religion or other discriminatory factors. Because the Enlightenment made it less defensible to treat some people as inherently inferior and undeserving of equal treatment and respect, it represented the beginning of the emancipation of the Jews and other minorities and the possibility of having rights and citizenship.¹⁶ This was a revolutionary moment in the history of the Jews. As Salo Baron, pronounced more than ninety years ago, “The history of the Jews in the last century and a half has turned on one central fact: that of Emancipation.”¹⁷ Two decades ago, David Vital similarly concluded that: “The principal engine of change in the modern history of the Jews of Europe was the revolutionary idea that it might be after all right and proper for them to enjoy full and equal civil and political rights with all other subjects of the several realms they inhabited.”¹⁸ In his monumental history of Jewish emancipation, David Sorkin reviews how the variable of the emancipation nearly determined differences in the conditions of European Jews since the eighteenth century.¹⁹ In any event, with the possibility of their emancipation, the debate about their relationship to the particular and the universal spilled out of the *yeshivot* and into politics. Yet not all states and polities embraced Enlightenment; indeed, most European Jews lived in places where counter-Enlightenment flourished and Jews were defined as less than human.²⁰

¹⁶ Katznelson and Birnbaum 1995. ¹⁷ Baron 1928: 515 (cited in Sorkin 2019: 2–3).

¹⁸ Vital 1999: 29 (cited in Sorkin, 2019: 3). ¹⁹ Sorkin 2019.

²⁰ Bethencourt 2016; Stuurman 2017.

Similar issues emerged because of the second major transformation: the rise of nationalism. A nation, generically speaking, is a political community that is bound by a common history, language, religion, spirit, or sense of fate. What gives the nation something of a special status in modern politics is the project of nationalism and its goal of statehood. In short, nationalism consists of a nation with a collective identity and interests, and with the belief that its interests and self-determination are advanced by gaining or maintaining sovereignty or authority over a homeland. In many instances, the nation replaced God as the sacred.²¹

As self-defined nations went about their business of nation- and state-building, some had open clubs while others were restricted. The classic distinction is that between civic and ethnic nationalism, which, not coincidentally, was coined by a Zionist and Jewish scholar of nationalism, Hans Kohn.²² In ethnic nationalism, membership is determined by blood, lineage, kinship, and tribe. As Michael Ignatieff famously described, in this brand of nationalism “an individual’s deepest attachments are inherited, not chosen.”²³ States that subscribe to this form of nationalism favor one group over another. In those countries where ethnic nationalism took root, Jews did not have to consider which features of their Jewishness they were prepared to surrender to become part of the nation because they were, for all intents and purposes, automatically disqualified from membership. An alternative form of nationalism is based not on blood or heritage, but on a shared civic character. “This nationalism,” Ignatieff argues, “is called civic because it envisages the nation as a community of equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values.”²⁴ In the early days of nation- and state-building, this meant transforming regional, religious, and ethnic identities into a unifying national identity.

The rise of nationalism alongside the first wave of globalization helped to create the rise of cosmopolitanism. There are many kinds of cosmopolitanism, but most modern forms trace their origin to the Enlightenment and include several core tenants. There is a belief that each person is of equal worth and a subject of moral concerns. Relatedly, individuals and communities have duties and obligations to all other humans near and far and that transcend existing territorial, political, cultural, gender, racial, and religious boundaries. And, humans should strive to transcend “particularism in order to achieve a more complete understanding of that experience.”²⁵ These modern forms, moreover,

²¹ Smith 2004. ²² Kohn 2005. Also see Mosse 1997; Tamir 2019.

²³ Ignatieff 1995: 3–5. ²⁴ Ignatieff 1995.

²⁵ Hollinger 1985: 59. Also see Appiah 2007; Beck and Sznaider 2009; Calhoun 2008; Cheah, 2006; Gilroy 2005; Waldron 2000; Alevi 2015; Greene and Viaene 2012.

became more desirable with the simultaneous rise of the nation-state and the internationalization of the world; whereas the former demanded that individuals circumscribe their identities and duties, the latter encouraged individuals to transcend borders.

There has been a spirited philosophical and political debate regarding the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism ever since they emerged as projects and aspirations around the mid-nineteenth century.²⁶ As should be apparent by comparing how Duara in Chapter 7 and I approach the topic of cosmopolitanism, the relationship between it and nationalism is hard to pin down because neither has a fixed meaning, and the boundaries between them have evolved in relationship to each other and in response to the historical times. And, to further complicate matters, the boundaries between them are not only historically fluid but also community dependent. Different communities in historical and spatial proximity can have very different views of the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. To go deeper down the rabbit's hole, as I will soon do, the same community can have contending views about this relationship. That said, the debate tends to orbit around whether nationalism and cosmopolitanism are competing or complementary.

The zero-sum view is that they are rivals and that when one is up the other down, a view that derives from the belief that national and cosmopolitan identities, like oil and water, cannot mix. During the era of nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalism was in and cosmopolitanism was out. This was an era of state-building, in which society was expected to not only defer to the state but also to identify with it and no others. Movements that imagined an alternative political project that directly challenged the authority and purpose of the state, such as socialism, and those peoples who were viewed as incapable of shifting their loyalties, such as the Jews, were viewed as enemies of the nation. This nineteenth-century perspective appears to be making a comeback, as current trends exhibit a retreat from forms of internationalism and cosmopolitanism and the return of a self-centered nationalism.

Alternatively, cosmopolitanism and nationalism might have a positive-sum and symbiotic relationship. Nations have common interests that can only be individually and collectively advanced with the presence of a cosmopolitan spirit. In this regard, forms of cosmopolitanism can stabilize, not undermine, a world organized around the nation-state. Many nations and nationalisms present themselves as serving not just the

²⁶ Sluga 2015.

nation-state but also the international community, and such presentations and their associated practices can help legitimate the nation-state. Cosmopolitan beliefs and practices can deepen while maintaining the legitimacy of the state. For instance, Immanuel Kant imagined a historical unfolding whereby states developed a pacific relationship while maintaining their sovereignty.²⁷ There have been historical periods when such sentiments developed into dominant trends and practices in the world order. For instance, World Wars I and II discredited egoistic nationalism and created a space for the development of internationalism with islands of cosmopolitanism. Lions and lambs could not only coexist, but also enjoy a platonic consummation.

The rise of nationalism and the Enlightenment profoundly impacted how Jewish communities answered the Jewish Question and pursued their ontological and physical survival in an era of the rise of nation-states. After centuries of having little choice but to be a people apart, the emergence of nationalism and the nation-state meant that Jews were judged according to whether they were perceived to be capable of shifting their loyalties from each other to the state. Whether nationalism was, on balance, more positive than negative depended on which form prevailed. In the emerging folk nationalisms of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, Jews were defined as outsiders because of their heritage, dress, religion, and Yiddish tongue. Under such circumstances Jews had very limited choices, including immigrate to the West, join movements such as socialism that aspired to remove all differences between peoples, or become Zionists.

In situations of civic nationalism Jews were welcome – on the condition that they shed any transnational identity in favor of their new state-bounded identity. For instance, in 1789, Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre famously declared: “To the Jews as a nation – nothing; to the Jews as human beings, everything.”²⁸ If the Jews wanted to be a nation, then they could not be French, and if they wanted to be French then they had to forget any thoughts of being a nation. Jews decided to become French. A similar process occurred in other liberal-oriented nations, as Jews became Germans, Dutch, British, and Americans. But if the Jews were not a nation, then what were they? Either a religious community or an ethnic group, or some combination thereof, but in any case this was a private and not a public concern. Complicating their claims, though, were the eastern Jews, who had been excluded from membership and

²⁷ Kant 1784.

²⁸ French National Assembly, December 23, 1789 (cited in Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz 1995, 114–16).

were now increasingly claiming that the Jews were a nation that deserved their own homeland or state. If the eastern Jews were right about the Jews being a nation, then western Jews were trying to con their Christian neighbors.

The Enlightenment and civic nationalism also placed new demands on Jewish communities. Jews had the opportunity to be granted equal rights and accepted as citizens of the nation-state – but only if they abandoned those features that gentiles found offensive and believed sustained their clannish tendencies. It was not enough to pledge loyalty to the nation – they had to fit in. Accordingly, Jews began to reconsider their way of life, traditions, and religious laws and customs, attempting to reform or remove those that Christians found contemptible and that Jews believed would hinder their bounded integration into a modern, civilized society.²⁹ They removed any claims to be a “chosen people” or that they were in exile, each of which communicated the view that Jews were both superior and just passing through. But how much of a makeover was too much? At what point did altering their practices to win acceptance turn into an assimilation that was a euphemism for cultural suicide? The *Haskalah* movement in the nineteenth century was one of the first important attempts to provide an answer.³⁰ Centered in Germany, it advanced the simultaneous solidarity of the Jews and their integration into Christian societies. In the United States, a Judaism that once had no need for adjectives now began to acquire them – reform, conservative, and Orthodox. Reform Judaism became the primary vehicle for allowing Jews to remain Jews while also fitting into a modernizing and liberalizing society. It was this prophetic theology that helped to nurture a cosmopolitanism and universalism among western, and especially reforming, Jews.³¹

Reform Judaism drew much of its inspiration from prophetic Judaism.³² Prophetic Judaism refers to the sayings of the prophets who lived between the seventh and eighth century BCE, a period in which the Jewish tribes were having difficulty sustaining themselves, religiously and politically. They had formed a monarchy, an unusual move for a people that believed that only God was a true king. The monarchy became corrupt and arguably blasphemous as it used faith to mask its many indiscretions. In response to these transgressions, dozens of prophets, including Amos, several Isaiahs, Hosea, and Micah, professed that God had spoken directly to them, commanding them to exhort the Jews to return to a path of righteousness, to reaffirm that there was only one, invisible, God, to choose good over evil, and to work for justice. God’s

²⁹ Batnisky 2011; Meyer 1990. ³⁰ Litvak 2012. ³¹ Barnett 2016. ³² Barnett 2016.

message was clear: to be righteous requires more than unthinkingly following commandments, reflexively holding ceremonies, and performing rituals to be righteous – it also demands an ethical life, treating others kindly, and working for justice. A house of worship that becomes a “den of thieves” is not pious. Reform Judaism drew from the prophetic tradition as it emphasized the importance of ethics and justice – themes that did not require Jews to spend hours in prayer and that made them appear more acceptable to non-Jews.

The combination of the kinds of emancipation and nationalism split the Jewish community into four stylized worldviews distinguished by the intersection of nonterritorial/territorial and particular/universal. Particularity regards whether Jews are a people apart and universality whether they are part of a common humanity. Deterritoriality captures whether Jews can (and should) exist without a home or state of their own. Judaism and the Jewish people are attached to the ancient land of Israel, reflected in and reinforced by religious texts, songs, prayers, and expressions. But this attachment does not necessarily demand either immigration to their ancient homeland or the belief that Jews require an exclusive homeland or state in order to survive and thrive.³³

Territoriality concerns whether Jews need a homeland or state of their own that allows them to control and defend their lives. Zionism is the chief example of territoriality.³⁴ It originated in the nineteenth century in Europe and as a response to Jewish ontological and physical insecurity; if Jews became part of other nations they might assimilate to the point of disappearance, and Jews needed a state of their own for self-determination and self-defense. In this respect it tracks with many other nationalisms at the time, but as a latecomer it drew from the various existing nationalisms. But in almost all versions Zionism was intended to do more than provide protection and self-determination; it was also intended to provide a break from and a return to history. Centuries of living in exile had led the Jews to acquire many unsavory characteristics: obsequious, weak, compliant, cowardly, passive, and willing to obey even the most suicidal of commands.³⁵ According to mainstream Zionist thought, diaspora Jews do not get respect from gentiles because they do not deserve it. By returning to Palestine and working the land, by building a state and defending it with courage, muscle, and power, Jews will recover their dignity and Christians will treat them with the respect they have earned. Zionism was a twelve-step program that

³³ Alroey 2011; Boyarin and Boyarin 2002; Dubnov 2007; Pianko 2010; Smith 1995.

³⁴ For a sampling of this rich menu and vast literature, see Aveni 1981; Hertzberg 1979; Lacqueur 2003; Linfield 2019; Meyers 1995; Selzer 1970.

³⁵ Luz 2008: 50–52; Eisen 1983; Zerubavel 1995.

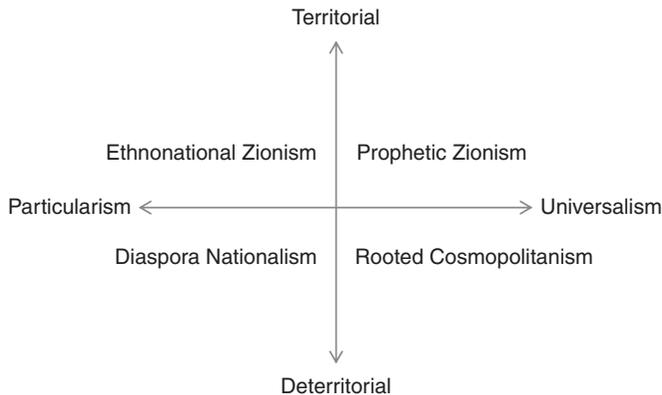


Figure 5.1 Worldviews of Western Jews

would help Jews become “normal” and make an awe-inspiring return to history.

Three caveats before describing each worldview. Because subcommunities can have their distinct worldviews, there could be as many worldviews as there are subunits. I am including those Jewish worldviews that want to maintain the physical and ontological survival of Jewish people. There were Jews who were quite tired of the “disaster” of being Jewish, as Howard Kallen undiplomatically put it, wanting to shed any sign of their Jewishness, and who felt no love for or obligation to the Jewish people.³⁶ Some assimilated into society either by rejecting Judaism and/or converting to Christianity. Many Jews also joined socialist and communist movements, which held that anti-Semitism would end with the arrival of a socialism that would choke off the supply of opium that turned the masses into religious dopes.³⁷ Second, I am examining those Jewish worldviews that are political to the extent that they are attempting to address the social organization of the Jewish people in a world carved into nation-states. There are religiously oriented sects that, for all intents and purposes, have withdrawn from the secular world. Third, these stylized views are ideal-types.³⁸ In other words, their purpose is not to reflect a granular reality, but rather to help identify different kinds of, and measure change in, worldviews. There might be three synagogues for every two Jews, but it also might be theoretically and empirically advantageous to compare all three to two different ideal-types. In this regard, they are sociological

³⁶ Kallen 1921: 37–38. ³⁷ Marx 1844. ³⁸ Kalberg 2004; Swedberg 2018.

categories because they identify distinctive attributes that distinguish between types, and historical categories because they can help trace change in and across Jewish communities.

Prophetic Zionism emerges from the interplay of territorialism and universalism. It is territorial because it demands a homeland or state for the Jews in the land of ancient Israel where they can enjoy self-determination and marshal their own defense. This form of Zionism also had a universal or cosmopolitan character, both in terms of how it imagined organizing state–society relations and the state’s place in the world. There were two major branches of prophetic Zionism. A liberal Zionism imagined the creation of a liberal state, in which all inhabitants would enjoy liberty and equality. It would become a light unto nations. This was the Zionism of Herzl, many leaders of the Zionist movement such as Chaim Weizmann, and the prevailing form in western countries such as the United States. There also was a Labor or Socialist Zionism. This Zionism emerged as a critique of capitalism and bourgeois nationalism, aspiring to create a socialist state that would provide the foundation for genuine equality and justice and become a role model for the world until a global socialism emerged that would remove the need for a world divided by sovereignty. This was the Zionism of Moses Hess, Ber Borochov, David Ben-Gurion, the Jewish leadership in Palestine, and the Mapai government that ruled Israel for three decades. Both liberal and labor Zionism, though, confronted the limits of egalitarianism when having to create a *Jewish* state with a significant Arab minority in a hostile environment: as a Jewish state, would Jews enjoy special privileges, and would the state provide room for non-Jews in its national identity? And as a Jewish state, how would it respond to the potential threat posed by the Palestinians and Arabs? Importantly, liberal Zionists tended to be highly secular and labor Zionists quite hostile to religious authority.

Ethnonational Zionism ascribes to the idea that a state for the Jews should be by and for the Jews. There are two major branches. One follows from revisionist Zionism.³⁹ Spearheaded by Ze’ev Jabotinsky, it began less as a rejection of Zionism than as a critique of the Zionist leadership in Palestine and abroad. Although he never rejected liberal values, his nationalism had a strong ethnic and racial component. He also admired those European nationalisms that wanted to flex their muscle and militarize, even going so far as mimicking some of Italian nationalism’s fascist elements. Unlike the labor and liberal Zionists, who exhibited some flexibility in their territorial demands, he imagined a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan River. He passed away in exile in 1940, and his

³⁹ Zoupna 2008.

legacy continued with Menachem Begin and others, often venturing from a minimalist to a more maximalist revisionism.⁴⁰ Alongside revisionist Zionism is religious Zionism, which blends nationalism and Orthodox Judaism. Of the many important intellectual figures, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook was among the most influential, interpreting the Jewish return in messianic terms and advocating for the establishment of a Jewish state that followed religious law on all of ancient Israel.⁴¹

Diaspora nationalism refers to a Jewish people dispersed across different lands that see themselves as a nation with a shared identity, history, and common fate.⁴² As responses to the emerging European nationalism, diaspora nationalism developed alongside, and in ways as a counterpoint to, Zionism.⁴³ The primary point of differentiation between it and forms of Zionism is the necessity and possible function of a Jewish state. The Jewish people would benefit from common, transnational institutions, and even be members of multilateral institutions and international organizations, but these features of political life could be accomplished without a sovereign state. Perhaps most critical in this regard was cultural, religious, and physical survival. Many diaspora nationalists advocated a two-front campaign – develop forms of autonomy at home and global norms and institutions to protect them from their domestic enemies. Also, while diaspora nationalists tended to reject the idea of a state, they nevertheless favored a Jewish homeland to provide a fertile ground for a Jewish renaissance and to anchor Jews in a universalizing world. Not only did they believe that a Jewish state was impractical, but many also thought that living in the diaspora was ethically superior to political sovereignty. Whereas Zionists saw exile as producing abnormalities and deformities in the Jewish character, some diaspora nationalists believed that it nurtured a cosmopolitanism and more easily merged the particular and the universal, developed a multiperspectival view, and integrated the best of different cultures. For some non-Jews, this diasporic character became a major explanation for the purported genius of the Jews. Living on the margins enabled Jews to create something world-turning from loose and disparate ends; Marx, Einstein, and Freud became the paradigmatic examples.⁴⁴

Rooted cosmopolitan sits at the intersection of nonterritoriality and universality.⁴⁵ It overlaps with diaspora nationalism in terms of its

⁴⁰ Shimoni 1995: 209. ⁴¹ Kaplan 2005. ⁴² Anderson 1992.

⁴³ Brenner 2018; Devine 2018; Gertz 2018; Rabinovitch 2012; Shunsky 2018.

⁴⁴ Veblen 1919.

⁴⁵ The label “rooted cosmopolitanism” has a checkered history because of its association with Stalin’s anti-Semitic campaign against Jews. For a quite different usage that I follow, see Tarrow 2005 and Loeffler 2018.

rejection of the necessity of Jewish sovereignty for a meaningful and secure Jewish life. But whereas diaspora nationalism often imagined forms of geographic, legal, and political autonomy in order to maintain the Jewish cultural identity, rooted cosmopolitans tended to root themselves in the individualism of liberal, democratic societies. Relatedly, while diaspora nationalism tended to hope for various forms of national and international protections to secure their cultural and physical existence, rooted cosmopolitans tended to rely on a strategy of acceptance and a liberalism of equality. Consequently, diaspora nationalism flourished in eastern Europe, and rooted cosmopolitanism in Western liberalizing democracies. Rooted cosmopolitanism's liberal, democratic roots also account for its suspicion of Zionism because of its exclusionary nationalist character. Consequently, while Zionism might be necessary for securing the physical and cultural existence of some Jews, they are fine where they are.

Rooted cosmopolitanism's universalism stems from a political theology and humanism that accentuates the liberal and pluralist character of modern (international) society. In this way, its domestic political culture shapes its international and cosmopolitan orientation. Accordingly, rooted cosmopolitans tend to have the sort of orientation associated with liberal internationalism, and for two major reasons. One is that their universalism crosses borders. Their values of liberalism, democracy, equality, and liberty are not tied to the nation-state but rather are part of global justice. As Jews they could play a role in bringing these values to the rest of the world, and many of them did, as evidenced by their role in the creation of international human rights. The other reason owed to Jewish survival and security. The same humanistic values that brought security and acceptance to them in Western liberal democracies could also help bring security to Jews in non-Western lands. As such, advocated internationalism and civilizing missions.⁴⁶ And, it just so happened that those western countries where Jews were becoming accepted and enjoying access to political power were also the West's major powers, creating, at times, a relationship between Jewish interests and imperialism.

5.2 Profiles in Changing Worldviews

These four primary worldviews that crystallized in the early twentieth century had different answers to the Jewish Question and Jewish ontological and physical security in the context of changing kinds of

⁴⁶ Leff 2006; Green 2008; Wistrich 1998: especially 64.

Enlightenment processes and nationalism. As I argued in the opening pages, worldviews can change because of internal and external developments. In the first half of the twentieth century, Jewish worldviews were shaken by a series of violent ruptures that culminated in the Holocaust. In the second half of the twentieth century the worldviews of the two largest Jewish communities, the American and the Israeli, followed their environments: among American Jews it remained part of rooted cosmopolitanism, with shades of particularism; in Israel, a prophetic Zionism became replaced by an ethnonational Zionism.⁴⁷ Once again, for the sake of simplicity and because of space constraints, nuance is an unaffordable luxury.

5.2.1 1900–1948

The first half century of the twentieth century constituted a downward spiral of the destruction of European Jewry. Pogroms cycled and recycled through Russia and Eastern Europe until the outbreak of World War I. The war had a disproportionate effect on the Jews, the end of the war continued the killing spree, and the new states of eastern Europe maintained their well-earned reputation for anti-Semitism. The combination of counter-Enlightenment forces and chauvinistic nationalism fed into a rabid anti-Semitism, beginning in Nazi Germany but then spreading to other parts of Europe; at times, the Germans and the local populations appeared to engage in one-upmanship regarding who could be cruelest to, and kill the most, Jews. Nazi Germany might have lost the war against the allies, but they almost won the war against the European Jews.

The Jews of Europe had few (if any) protections or exit options. Following in the footsteps of diaspora nationalism, following WWI many eastern Jewish leaders proposed the construction of semi-autonomous provinces and specialized rights for the Jews to provide security and preserve their cultural identity. Because these new states could not be trusted, they and various western Jewish leaders, including the relatively influential American Jewish delegation, proposed internationalizing these rights and creating protections lodged in the new League of Nations. Predictably, the new leaders of Eastern Europe opposed the idea of carving out a state within a state, Western states were hesitant about establishing robust enforcement mechanisms that would dispense with the principle of sovereignty, and so states created the unprecedented international minority rights treaties – but without enforcement

⁴⁷ Much of this section draws from Barnett 2016.

mechanisms. Unsurprisingly, these rights had little protective value when they were most needed over the next two decades.

The only other option was immigration, and while Germany and other countries were prepared to see their Jews flee at the appropriate price, there were few countries prepared to accept them. The United States had been a principal destination point for European Jews before World War One but it all but closed its doors in 1924. Palestine was the other alternative. Britain's Balfour Declaration of 1917 pledged to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which was subsequently endorsed by the League of Nations, and Britain became its mandatory authority. From the very start the British had to try and accommodate two competing nationalisms, and became increasingly resistant to allowing substantial Jewish immigration for fear of triggering unrest and possibly civil war. But because Palestine was the only possible option, and because the violent anti-Semitism in Europe proved the fundamental point that Christians would never figure out how to protect or stop killing Jews, the Zionists' demands became more urgent and forceful; Britain, though, refused to do anything that might distract from its focus on Nazi Germany or cause the Palestinians to rebel or become allied with Germany.

The destruction of European Jewry had an immediate impact on which worldviews were seen as either practical or utopian to the point of suicidal. Because diaspora nationalism could not address how to protect the Jews' physical security, it retreated to the steam rooms, cafes, and other places where Jewish intellectuals debated utopian solutions. Rooted cosmopolitanism in many Western states, and especially in the United States, began to warm to Zionism for several reasons. Arguably most important in the United States was the emergence of an American culture that provided space for hyphenated identities.⁴⁸ Against this welcoming possibility, American Jewish leaders such as Louis Brandeis, who would become the first Jew appointed to the US Supreme Court, began reassuring American Jews that they could be part of the Jewish and the American nation, and that their Zionism did not diminish but rather strengthened their American identity. But all the while theirs was an *American Zionism*: Jews needed a homeland and not a state; and any homeland had to recognize the rights of the Arab population. In short, many early-twentieth-century American Zionists favored forms of binationalism in Palestine – not partitioning Palestine, but rather finding a formula for Jews' and Palestinians' coexistence.⁴⁹ Importantly, although anti-Semitism was also on the rise in the United States, American Jews doubled down on liberalism and universalism, emphasizing how America was their home and Zionism

⁴⁸ Barnett 2016. ⁴⁹ Ben-Israel 2018.

was a solution for other Jews. Not until 1942 did American Jewish organizations finally accept that Jews needed a “commonwealth” – that is, a state, of their own.

Labor and revisionist Zionism, which represented prophetic and ethnonational worldviews, battled each other for influence and power in the Yishuv and in world Zionist organizations; but, in the end, ideology mattered a lot less than whose strategy and tactics for creating an independent state seemed most compelling and practical. Labor Zionism, led by David Ben-Gurion, which was busily creating a proto-state and placing facts on the ground, controlled the major Jewish institutions in Palestine and, for all intents and purposes, represented the Jewish community in relations and negotiations with the British authorities. The Revisionists’ charismatic powerhouse Ze’ev Jabotinsky died in exile in 1940, and their other leaders, including future Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, lived underground as a consequence of their acts of terrorism against Palestinians, British mandatory authorities, and the occasional Jewish rival.

The Holocaust followed by the miraculous return of Jewish sovereignty after 2,000 years combined evils and dreams beyond imagination. Catastrophe then renewal. It is impossible to overstate the magnitude of their impact. The Holocaust and Israel became historically and metaphysically connected through death and rebirth. And their combination helped Jews, across these worldviews, make sense of the suffering and provided a way to cope. The Holocaust caused Jews to turn dark and to wonder how it was possible that God could have allowed such horrors to happen. What had they done to warrant such a punishment? What did this evil say about the world? Jews responded to these religious, spiritual, and existential challenges in various ways. Some turned their backs on religion, God, and the very idea that it was possible to explain the Holocaust. The Holocaust, like all events of such horror, destroyed the conceptual resources available to make sense of evil and suffering.⁵⁰ Indeed, to try to even make sense of the Holocaust represented an obscenity.⁵¹ As Theodore Adorno famously wrote, “There can be no poetry after Auschwitz.”⁵² Not the creation of the Jewish state, or anything else, could ever explain, justify, or give meaning to the destruction of the European Jews while the world stood by and let it happen.⁵³

⁵⁰ Neiman 2002: 256. ⁵¹ Neiman 2002: 250–58, 261–62.

⁵² Adorno 1949: 34 (cited in interview with Herbert Marcuse on Adorno).

⁵³ Bauman 2001.

Many others, however, invested Israel with a significance and a meaning that enabled them to cope with the horrors of the Holocaust and have reason to hope. This can be interpreted as a form of theodicy.⁵⁴ The eighteenth-century philosopher Gottfried Leibniz introduced the concept to a modern audience, and then Max Weber illuminated the concept as it became central to his sociology of religion. Different religions and ethical communities have offered different responses to the existence of evil, sin, and disappointments in a transcendental and divinely ordered world, but the need to do so is powerfully felt in those religions that believe in a loving and all-powerful God.⁵⁵ As Max Weber wrote, “The more the development [of religious ideas] tends toward the conception of a transcendental unitary god who is universal, the more there arises the problem of how the extraordinary power of such a god can be reconciled with the imperfection of the world.”⁵⁶ Although many Jews, religious and secular alike, refused to try and find meaning in the Holocaust, Israel provided a blessed stand-in. It gave them a reason for belief. The Holocaust became part of the sacred, and, by extension, so too did Israel.

5.2.2 1948–2020

The destruction of European Jewry and the creation of Israel meant that the United States and Israel became the two largest Jewish communities in the world. Both began building their lives. In the United States, anti-Semitism became unacceptable (though it still occurred) and Jews became integrated into what was now referred to as a Judeo-Christian America. There was not the same need for Jewish country clubs, hospitals, community centers, and the like as Jews were increasingly allowed to join more inclusive institutions. Many Jews also became involved in various civil rights and empowerment movements, seeing their own struggles in those of others. In hindsight, the surprise is not that the Holocaust impacted the outlook of American Jews, but that its impact was so minimal at the outset and that American Jews continued onward with a cosmopolitan ethic.

Israel began with a prophetic streak, but this principle became compromised as a matter of politics; or, alternatively stated, Israel wanted to be both particular and universal, but the former ranked above the latter in terms of the hierarchy of needs.⁵⁷ In his speeches and writings at the time, Ben-Gurion often referenced the prophetic tradition and Israel’s rightful

⁵⁴ Fuller 2011; Neiman 2002; Weber 1963.

⁵⁵ Berger 1969: 59–80; Leibniz [1710] 1998; Weber 1948.

⁵⁶ Weber 1963: 138–39 (cited in Morgan and Wilkinson 2001: 201).

⁵⁷ Lieblich and Shachar 2014.

place as a light unto nations. But the prophets had never dealt with the harsh reality of gathering Holocaust survivors and Jews from Arab lands in numbers that equaled the existing population in Israel, and developing an economy under dire circumstances and without natural resources. Nor could Israel beat swords into ploughshares surrounded by enemies that pledged its destruction; instead, necessity suggested just the opposite. In the document declaring Israel's independence, Ben-Gurion reassured that all citizens, regardless of religion, race, gender, or creed, would be treated as equal.⁵⁸ Liberal democracy was not twaddle, but this was a Jewish state, and while Israeli Arabs were formally equal and had the right to vote, this potential fifth column did not enjoy the same rights or freedom of movement as Jews.

The 1967 and 1973 wars had a significant impact on the worldviews of American and Israeli Jews, though with slightly different effects. For many Jews, the major plot lines of the wars tracked each other. In both cases Arabs waged war and the world stood by. In 1967 the Arab states mobilized their armies and marched them to their border with Israel with speeches predicting Israel's coming destruction. Israel went to the United Nations, France, and the United States for help, but found none. Instead of waiting to be attacked, it struck preemptively, and in six days demolished three Arab armies and captured the Sinai, the West Bank and Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, flipping the standard narrative of Jewish weakness on its head. Six years later, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on the holiest day in Judaism, and once again the world stood by and did nothing. Even the United States hesitated to resupply an Israeli army that was on the ropes. Israel turned near-defeat into victory, but a pyrrhic one.

This is also a period that coincides with the construction of the "Holocaust." The Holocaust was no stranger to American Jewish life, but it was relatively minor compared to what it would become. Beginning in the 1970s the Holocaust gained prominence in the United States and around the world, aided by the collective effort of well-placed individuals and organizations, and especially Jewish leaders and associations, who determined it must become more central to Jewish and global consciousness. The increased emphasis on the "Holocaust" resulted from accidental and intentional activity, sincere and strategic action, and the conjunction of forces beyond anyone's control. The wars of the Middle East and the sanctification of the Holocaust bonded to form a single experience for American Jews.⁵⁹ By the mid-1970s it was near impossible to think about Israel without also conjuring up the Holocaust, and vice

⁵⁸ Cited in Walzer 2012: 74. ⁵⁹ Woocher 1986: 132.

versa. The Holocaust was an immediate reminder that Jews are never safe and can never rely on others for their existence, and that a self-reliant, strong Jewish state is the only guarantor of the Jewish people. Israel is a Jewish state dedicated to ensuring the survival of the Jews, in the here and now, in the future, in Israel, and in the diaspora. The Holocaust reminded Jews that forces would rise, from time to time, to destroy the Jewish people, and Israel reminded them that Jews would persevere.

Because of the wars and the growing salience of the Holocaust, the balance between particularism and universalism among American and Israeli Jews shifted from the latter to the former. Israel became part of the American Jewish identity.⁶⁰ For many American Jews, Israel became a form of idolatry, and to be a Jew in good standing depended more on supporting Israel, right or wrong, than keeping Shabbat. There was an increase in American Jewish immigration to Israel, but American Zionism continued to mean American Jews providing financial and political support from the United States. Alongside Israel, the Holocaust also helped to reinforce the more particularistic aspects of the American Jewish identity and create a greater attachment to Israel. But they remained rooted cosmopolitans with strong universalistic tendencies.

In Israel a new form of nationalism began to develop, much less prophetic and much more ethnonationalist and messianic in character. When Israel's borders were limited to the 1949 armistice, there was little room for religious and revisionist Zionism to expand. But the capture of the territories, and especially those seen as part of biblical Israel, provided an outlet for their visions of a Greater Israel. And those Israeli Jews who might not see the ideological value of the territories could appreciate adding to Israel's strategic depth. Israeli settlement activity began soon after 1967, and then accelerated with the 1977 election of Menachem Begin, whose Likud Party had strong roots in revisionist ideology. The Labor and Likud parties continued to vie for control, but the ground was shifting to the right. The Holocaust also became more fully intertwined in Israeli Jewish identity, though in a context of a growing ethnonationalism that amplified Israel's particularism.⁶¹

Like what happened in the United States, the Holocaust also became central to Israeli identity beginning in the 1960s. In the first decades of the Israeli state, the Holocaust victims were treated as a living example of life in the galut; many Israeli leaders held to myths of Jews going to their deaths like sheep, and occasionally referred to survivors as "soaps." The 1961 trial of Albert Eichmann was one of the first showcase events in

⁶⁰ Barnett 2016; Ben-Moshe and Segev 2007. ⁶¹ Zertal 2005.

Israel, and, beginning with the 1967 war, Israel began using Holocaust analogies to refer to the conflict with Arab states and the Palestinians.

Despite these shared experiences that swelled feelings of Jewish precarity, their preexisting worldviews offered different ways to respond to such feelings, creating a growing difference in worldviews between American and Israeli Jews. American Jews retained a strong attachment to Israel, but began to increasingly question their relationship to an Israel that appeared to contain a different set of values than them. American Jews remain both Americans and Jews. They retain a strong sense of their Jewish identity, but it is a Jewish identity that continues to be profoundly shaped by an American experience that retains strong connections to humanism and cosmopolitanism. The Israeli Jewish identity, on the other hand, is defined by its ethnic and religious character. There is little remaining of prophetic Zionism in Israeli politics as ethnonational Zionism has become hegemonic.⁶² The consequence is that Israeli and American Jews have become brothers from different planets. And while these brothers maintain relations, these relations are fraught with tension and opposition. The Jewish Question remains.

5.3 Conclusion

I want to conclude with two observations regarding the relationship between Jewish worldviews and relationalism. The first is the recognition that while worldviews presume a permanence, they also are susceptible to change. To distinguish between change *in* a worldview and change *of* a worldview requires some measure of distinction. In other words, what aspect of a worldview is being isolated and used to mark a transformation? There is no gold standard, in part because there are various elements of worldviews. My account of Jewish worldviews, though, has focused on the relationship between the community and their relationship to outsiders and their place in the world, otherwise known as the Jewish Question. But, as many of the major European intellectuals, who also happened to be Jewish, observed, you don't have to be Jewish to experience the Jewish Question. The relationship between the particular and the universal, as Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Levi-Strauss, Berlin, and Arendt, and other eminent Jewish scholars noted, is a central feature and experience of modernity. And for a Jewish community defined by religion and ethnicity, the universalizing properties of the Enlightenment and modernity threatened extinction.

⁶² Gertz 2018; Weingrod 2018.

Accordingly, the central question for many Jewish communities became how to retain some semblance of their Jewish identity while integrating in an increasingly humanistic world. There were many factors that shaped how different Jewish communities answered this dilemma, including what their non-Jewish neighbors might think of them. And if their non-Jewish neighbors were not pleased, there was the chance that their toleration might wear thin. As such, this was a debate that was shaped by historical context and the search for security mediated by the desire to retain features of a religious and secularized Jewish identity. And the very fact that there was not one answer but multiple answers, all formed under the rubric of the Jewish Question, highlights how a single community can have distinguishable worldviews.

The second point is more directed at hyper-humanism. As I stated at the outset, my sociological relationalism incorporates not just a humanism but also a recognition that while all groups are socially constructed, they also can have enduring properties and see themselves as having a history and memory that links them from the past to the present to the future. When Jews began debating the Jewish Question in the late eighteenth century, they did so with a belief that they shared a common history and set of religious texts that provided the wellspring of memory and belonging. Being and becoming were part of a dialectic process, and neither could exist without the other. There must be a there there – a desire to maintain some semblance of belonging even as they choose different paths for becoming. Jews might not have agreed on the basis of their belonging, but they agreed on the necessity of keeping belonging alive. The particular required a permanence, even if at the level of metaphysics, with the danger that humanism might turn into a version of hyper-humanism. What would be the consequence? Jews, and all communities would become ever-changing things (or things that are not things) that have little basis of existence. Their sense of self would have no basis in history, culture, or belief. Individuals would experience alienation and anomie. They would cease to have hopes or ways of coping with disappointment and suffering. Do humans long for this deracinated existence? Communities are often criticized for the burdens and obligations they impose on their members, but a world defined by highly mutable and constantly disappearing things sounds like another form of imprisonment.

The questions posed in this volume are reminiscent of Martin Buber's struggle to find a comfortable relationship between humanism and relationalism. Born in Vienna in 1878, he moved to Germany as a young man, rose to considerable prestige, and then fled Nazi Germany for Palestine in 1938 at the age of 60, where he taught at the Hebrew

University of Jerusalem. In a recent biography, Paul Mendes-Flohr underscores how Buber eventually committed to a relationalism to try and align the particular and the universal. As Mendes-Flohr tells it, there were three stages to Buber's intellectual development.⁶³ In Stage One he worried that the Enlightenment would lead to the erasure of the supernatural Jew, who is deeply connected to thousands of years of tradition, history, and practice, and rooted in Torah and rabbinic tradition, and to the rise of the "natural" Jew, who aspires to become part of humanity. This shift owes partly to the attraction of Enlightenment thought and to the desire to mute anti-Semitism by doing everything to avoid offending Christians. But at what cost? Humanism, Buber warned, would lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people and offer nothing but emptiness.

In his effort to recover the supernatural Jew, Buber turned to Hasidism, which he believed represented a sort of "pure" Judaism. However, Buber hoped not for a return, but rather a rebirth – a Jewish renaissance. In Stage Two Buber entered into Jewish politics, embraced Zionism, and worked for Herzl. What attracted Buber to Zionism, though, was not the idea of imitating European politics or establishing a Jewish state, but rather the possibility of promoting a Jewish cultural renewal in which Jewish rebirth and humanity were in dialectical relationship. Indeed, he feared that a Jewish nation that became a sovereign state would cease to have the ability to enjoy a real Jewish renewal; European nationalisms were hardly attractive role models. Buber championed binationalism, broke from organized Zionism, and concluded that renewal did not require living in Palestine but rather could occur in the diaspora.

Stage Three begins when he moves to Berlin, continuing his Judaic learning, and becomes mentored by Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel. He now adopts a relationalism that is steeped in both the imminent and the transcendent and the particular and the universal. Such commitments provide the metaphysical foundations for a fluidity between being and becoming and his magisterial *I and Thou*. He retains an abiding belief that the Jews are rooted in a primordial covenant whose life in faith is mediated through religious texts. But there is always the danger that a people might become cloistered and unable to engage in genuine dialogues with those outside the community. He wanted a Jewish people that were able to realize their "commitment to a larger family of humankind" and worried that Jewish nationalism in Palestine might develop in a way that disregarded the genuine needs and aspirations of non-Jews.⁶⁴ Such a nationalism would not only harm Palestinians, but would also lead to a damaged Jewish people in Israel. Jews, like all peoples, need to be able to establish

⁶³ Mendes-Flohr 2019: 164–65. ⁶⁴ Mendes-Flohr 2019: 238–39.

relations that recognize others and allow the possibility of being changed through dialogue. Buber's worldview was both Jewish and humanistic. In this regard, he wanted to avoid the dangers of substantialism and hyper-humanism and locate an ethical humanism and a form of politics that recognized the intrinsic relationship between being and becoming.

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