Cultural History as Enlightenment: Remarks on Ludwig Geiger's Experiences of Judaism, Philology, and Goethe

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IN GERMANY ACADEMICS FEEL INHIBITED in talking about Jewish intellectuals.[1] At first sight, their motivation seems quite unproblematic. No one could wish once again to exclude people who were themselves slow to define their identity according to their status as Jews, or to group them together as an object of study when they had so little in common. No one can forget the Nazis and the way they made so many Germans into Jews. It was, however, just this attitude that Gershom Scholem forcefully attacked when he wrote:

> After they had been murdered as Jews, they are now — in some posthumous triumph — being turned back into Germans, and it suddenly counts as a concession to anti-Semitic theories to wish to stress their status as Jews. What a perversion this is, all in the name of an understanding of progress that does everything possible to avoid confronting realities.[2]

As if there might not have been other difficult forms of Jewish experience than those that the Germans created for them!

The researchers whom Scholem castigates try to argue their way out of their inhibitions. They say: because of the difficulties in defining the Jews, the most that can be done is to define the way in which they were discussed and in which they discussed their own situation. For this purpose, they imply, one can use discourse and system theory, that theories make a convenient distinction between discourses and the people who use them; but in reality the researchers are prepared to recognize the power of the various discourses and are not interested in individuals' resistance to them. The people caught up in these systems are identifiable only when, as a group, they submit to these discourses. The idea of the power of systems is augmented by that of identity, an identity without

which the object of study simply does not exist. This means that one can speak of Jews only after anti-Semitism has thoroughly and coherently shaped them. The distinction is, of course, an unreal one; nevertheless, the researchers have to watch their research question creating their object of study and, as critical spirits, they feel that they must prevent this.

Such a distortion of a critical position is possible only when one insists on *identity* and feels that one must protect those people who did not achieve this identity from the attention of historians. But what happens to the suffering of these people and their attempts to escape their fate? I wish to suggest, instead, a dialectical view: the idea that even negativity has a reality. All these Jewish intellectuals living in the Second Empire and in the Weimar Republic were acting within a specific cultural situation in which Jewish traditions were placed against German traditions, and the decisions they reached had a specific quality, too. These decisions do not in themselves justify the use of the phrase "Jewish identity": their *difficulties* give the justification. That is what I mean by the "reality of negativity." Of course, these decisions take highly varied forms, and when one examines them closely — as we did in Marbach in the symposium "Jewish Intellectuals and Literary Study in Germany, 1870–1933" — they come down to a series of different biographies, the biographies of individuals who shared the experience of the problem.

If the historians who refuse to define their theme in this way are historians of science, they believe that they can use a third argument beyond discourse and identity: they argue from the autonomy of science as a system that simply excludes categories such as "Jewish." They argue that it is meaningless in the context of the history of science to talk of Jewish intellectuals, for the personal difficulties of the Jews (to the extent they are prepared to recognize these difficulties at all) influenced neither their scientific methods, nor their style, nor their results. In the halls of academe, they imply, everything is sweetness and light. But we still have to fight off system theory at this point, for system theory — in a way that is simply not understood in France — dominates scholarly writing in Germany. Its weakness lies in its inability to explain the fact that elements of one system can appear within another system and develop their potential there (I am explicitly talking of cultural values and of culture in general). The question I would like to raise and at least provisionally answer in this short paper is: what influence do the difficulties that academics experience, and the decisions that they are

forced to take outside the university, have on their activity within the university?

In every period science develops alternatives that have a certain steadiness. In the periods under discussion here there is a polarity between philology in the more restrictive sense of editions, biographical studies, and the like and the broader sense of philology, in which we may include Wilhelm Dilthey and Wilhelm Scherer. They combined factual knowledge with wider philosophical-aesthetic reflections.[3] From that combination developed from 1910 to 1925 what we know as *Geisteswissenschaften*.[4] And the relationship between science and literary criticism contained a whole range of alternatives.[5] There was a tension between the two, for the more intelligent academics knew that there was a methodologically essential link between literary criticism and its values, on the one hand, and philology as a discipline or science, on the other hand. The Jewish philologists, like everybody else, operated in the space between these alternatives (only in rare cases, such as that of Jacob Bernays, did they go beyond the alternatives),[6] but the way in which they chose between the two is invariably related to their biographies. Jean Bollack has shown that it was precisely the Jewish former students of Wilamowitz who made desperate efforts to develop his philological program, while his German former students indulged their genius along the lines of Wilamowitz's much more speculative mode.[7] Such choices, however, have significant consequences for the future history of a particular discipline, even if the options scholars choose lie within the parameters of that discipline.

Ludwig Geiger (1848–1919), to whom the rest of this paper is devoted, ascribed to German culture in general a universalizing force. Everything that is taken up into German culture, Geiger argued, is freed thereby of its prejudices, even of its anti-Semitism. (Incidentally, one finds the same naiveté in Marcel Reich-Ranicki's autobiography *Mein Leben* (My Life, 1999). It is alarming to see how helpless the Jewish *Bildungsbürger* becomes once he has accepted everything that claims to be culture.)[8] Such a culture Geiger sees to be at work in his discipline, and, as a result, he cannot develop a proper dialectic between cultural values and his scientific work. In political terms he belongs to the group Andreas Kilcher calls "the cultural theorists of assimilation."[9] He rejects both the anti-Semites and the Zionists, the latter of whom are, in their own way, also trying to isolate the Jews. His denial of the anti-Semitism in German culture almost makes Geiger a precursor of the discourse theorists, at least as far as his program is concerned. But the limitations of discourse theory are all too clear when one looks at

how his actions go beyond his program. He is forced into these actions by his object of study, literature itself, which is hardly short of negative remarks about Jews. Geiger persists in regarding this literature as part of a universalizing culture, even though — and this is one of his strategies — he has his favorites among German writers: Lessing and Heine, for instance. Goethe, however, presents more of a problem.

Bearing in mind that Jewish intellectuals, too, operate within certain scientific options, we may say that Geiger makes explicit use of the *separation* between science and public opinion, the area in which crude anti-Semitism was most at home. More-progressive scholars tried to overcome this gap, but Geiger holds back in terms of his methodology, because he has to protect his position — more precisely, he has to protect himself and his own loyalty to the Jewish faith. He achieves this protection both inside the university and as editor of a scientific periodical, the *Goethe-Jahrbuch* (Goethe Yearbook). I would like to look at this situation in detail under four headings: his attitude to Judaism; the "philological triangle" of knowledge, values, and institutions;[10] his strategies within his discipline; and, finally, his work on Goethe and the Jews.

Attitude to Judaism

In 1910 Ludwig Geiger published the biography of his father, the celebrated reform rabbi Abraham Geiger, a publication exercise traditionally carried out by the sons of famous scholars. In this biography Ludwig included the letter written to him by his father in 1866, when he was seventeen and had just decided to discontinue the study of theology. His father had written:

> Unless I am quite mistaken about your intellectual interests, your studies will focus on nothing other than the following: philosophy, ancient languages, in particular as they give expression to the most active forms of intellectual life, the history of their literatures, history in general, which is to say the development of the human spirit and in particular the intellectual movement which Jews and Judaism brought to mankind. Ultimately there is no difference between that and Jewish theology, regardless of whether it is theoretically acknowledged or actually put into practice. In this form you will have got to know it and, at least, learned to respect its legitimacy.[11]

The letter goes on to explain that since God's revelation took the preferred form of "great spiritual steps" that built successively on one another, contemporary Jewish theology insisted on an enlightened philosophy of history that — though it was close to German idealism — had its origins in Judaism. It was from Judaism that the idea proceeded of "a spiritual power shaping and guiding the unity of the world."[12] Without this idea of God, every culture would lose its sense of purpose. Abraham speaks of the "monstrosities" that would have to be identified in the Pentateuch if it were thought that Moses were its sole author.[13] For that reason Abraham had little difficulty in giving up old ritual laws — for instance, on diet, circumcision, or prayers such as that calling for a return to Jerusalem.[14] While the father was not forced to separate theoretical and practical theology, his son, as a historian of Judaism and a philologist, would secularize the program. In so doing he was guided less by that process of the rationalization of religion that Max Weber describes and at the end of which all religion is transformed into culture. More important for him is publicly to take away the theological grounds of Jewish rationality[15] but without surrendering its claims to truth. As a defensive strategy the idea of a culture that generates its own enlightenment is preserved — at least in those areas chosen by Ludwig Geiger: literature and a science based on impartial observation. Geiger does not define culture, as his father had, as the expression of a universal idea of God, an idea that comes ever closer to realization through history. Quite explicitly Geiger opposes to "culture" the (political and more protective) idea of "confession."

For times have changed. Geiger's argument is similar to those of the majority of Jewish national-liberal intellectuals in the early years of the Second Reich,[16] and the phrase frequently used by him and others was that they were "German scholars of the Jewish confession."[17] Assimilation, they argued, was a matter for nations and did not concern personal belief. There was no difference between Jews and Germans: if differences existed, then they were between Jews and Christians. As late as 1912, when the pressure on the Jews had become incomparably more acute, Geiger elaborated his opinions in greater detail as he responded to a questionnaire, the answers to which were collected under the title *Judentaufen* (The Baptism of Jews).[18] The questionnaire was a response to the publication in the same year of Werner Sombart's *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (The Jews and Economic Life, 1912) and had been sent to scientists and writers of the younger generation. One of the questions was: "What would be the probable consequences — in intellectual, political and economic life (or in just one of these) — of the assimilation of all Jews by means of conversion and intermarriage?"[19]

In his reply Geiger strongly challenged the view that such a state of affairs was desirable. He went on:

> But I wish most energetically to contest the idea that assimilation takes place only by conversion or intermarriage. This is a nonsense and a serious insult to all German Jews who, like their ancestors have done for the last one hundred years, have already become Germans and therefore do not need to become Germans again. If assimilation — and I can attach no other sense to the word — means becoming German in habits, language, behavior and feeling, then it requires neither intermarriage nor baptism.[20]

By taking up the ideas of the reform synagogue, with its clear belief in the enlightened evolution of the human spirit, and then applying these ideas to the German civilization of his time, Geiger was putting himself in an impossible position. He loses the one authority that could identify and condemn the monstrous anti-Semitism of German culture and leaves himself with nothing more than the modest instruments of philology with which to defend himself.

The Philological Triangle

"Separate issues" — this was Geiger's method and the principle according to which he organized his scientific life. He finds himself at a specific stage in the history of German philology, caught in a triangle of knowledge, values, and institutions that, in a consciously subversive way, he must use to his own ends.

The link between academic research and anti-Semitism has often been examined. We might recall two particular approaches: first, sociological studies of institutions have explained which values represented within the university served to block access to these institutions;[21] second, the sociology of knowledge has set out to explain the development of scientific knowledge and has established, at least within the natural sciences, that progress is made by specialization and that the pressure to specialize exists primarily on the periphery of an institution, whether seen geographically or in terms of hierarchy.[22] I wish to examine these approaches in greater detail to show that neither is adequate for the scientific history of Jewish *philologists*. One must bear in mind that in this field the object of study is linguistically and culturally bounded and, therefore, exposed to the value judgments of other interpreters.

1. *Social history.* Monika Richarz's "Zur Sozialgeschichte der jüdischen Intelligenz und der akademischen Judenfeindschaft 1780–1848" (On the Social History of Jewish Intellectuals and Academic Hostility to the Jews, 1780–1848, 1982) analyzes 280 reports prepared by academics from all faculties, giving their opinion on how adequately individual Prussian universities were prepared to implement the legislation on the Jews promulgated that year. "*Privatdozenten*," "*außerordentliche*," and "*ordentliche*" Jewish professors could be appointed according to this law, provided that such appointments were permitted by the university's statutes, on grounds of confession. Overall, the professors compiling these reports proved to be more conservative than their governments, and around half of them claimed that even the restricted appointment of Jews was incompatible with the confessional nature of their universities. Their arguments reflect both widely held cultural anxieties (caused by competition within the profession and the low esteem in which it was held) and more general prejudices — for example, the allegation that Jews did not really wish to assimilate. A professor of legal history writes:

> His [the Jew's] nationality is most closely connected with his religion, he cannot be rid of it for as long as he is a Jew. He will not assume German customs [*Volkstümlichkeit*] to any significant extent nor will he make use of the rights which are part of our way of life with the same devotion, love and efficiency as the Germans, nor will he cherish them and be able to teach them.[23]

No less cultural in their implications were the warnings against the subversion of the universities by the atheistic, liberal, and revolutionary ideas of the Jews — these warnings were backed up with reference to the literature of the time. It becomes clear how rigorously the professors wished to control access to the universities. The sociology of institutions can identify this situation, but it has difficulties in describing what these values mean for the life of the universities. For such values do not necessarily regulate research. Germanic philology presents itself to the outside world as a national philology, but within individual teaching seminars it often looks different — less regimented, for instance. Germanic philology does not necessarily identify itself with the supreme goal of national assimilation.

2. *Sociology of knowledge.* The institution creates a space that the individual sciences can use. Shulamit Volkov — her study focuses on the scientific success of the Jews during the Second Empire — bases her work on the idea of the quality of universality that characterizes the

university (or that, as Robert Merton says, represents its highest scientific norm). In this idea she sees the great attraction of the university for the Jews: "Science seemed to exercise particular attraction for those Jews whose fathers had already climbed the heights of success. In its at least apparent universality and in the emphasis it laid on merit and talent, science seemed to promise a community without barriers, in which individual achievement made everything attainable: a community which knew no racial or religious distinctions."[24] Because Volkov restricts her study to individual disciplines in the natural sciences, and because she does not study the research itself or read individual publications, her work relies on a mechanistic reading of an institutional law that we may summarize as follows: The progress of a science is the result of specialization. Specialization takes place only at the periphery, defined either geographically or in relation to the hierarchy of the discipline. Jewish scholars were forced into specialization. They had to stay as "Privatdozenten" for much longer than was normal and, if they were appointed to a chair at all, then seldom were they appointed at a *large* university. At small universities they could continue to cultivate their previous special areas of research without much hindrance.

Once again, one must ask: Is this true of philology? Is specialization the source of institutional success? Is it not rather the case that from 1900 progress in the field depended on the overcoming of philological specialization (positivism) and the introduction of new philosophical or methodological positions? Is it not the case that these innovations did not come from within the university but from the periphery, from those cultural circles that it was no longer considered desirable to exclude from the university? Philology follows its own rules, inasmuch as value judgments — whether or not they are intentional — are relevant to its methodology. In addition, between 1910 and 1925 the history of the discipline is marked by new philosophical positions (for which "progress" is not the appropriate word), whose intention is nothing other than the *overcoming* of specialization.[25] These impulses do, in fact, come from the periphery, but much less from the periphery of the universities than from the cultural-literary area (for instance, from the general philology of Hugo von Hofmannsthal), which was searching for points of contact with the university world.[26]

Philologists hold to the scientific norm in that individual beliefs are not permitted to find their way directly into research. This view comes out in clear mirror image as we read Nietzsche's critique: "Historical culture possesses positive and constructive qualities only in the wake of powerful new life-forces, for instance those of an emergent civilization:

that means only when it is directed under the control of a higher power and does not control and direct itself."[27] A basic distinction is made between facts and their arrangement into systems. Those very values that, in the eyes of the public, are regarded as the justification of the subject and are therefore paraded on ceremonial occasions ("Goethe, the Olympian," for example), are happily deconstructed in philological seminars. What Nietzsche called "life" soon assumed national meaning. Yet, the distinction between the university world and public opinion remains methodologically unsatisfactory, for cultural values are no less present in one area than in the other, and it is inevitable that — despite being discredited within the discipline itself — these cultural values imperceptibly become established within the institutions, at least provided that they are not used directly in selecting the objects of study. In the age of historicism the principal task is to master the diversity of knowledge: Geiger puts his trust in a culture that structures the world according to the values of the Enlightenment, and this is why he fails to recognize the dialectical link between a German culture riddled with prejudices and the scientific methods of philology. He fails to examine his own values not because they are unscientific but because they are the very foundation of his scientific activity.

Where Geiger fights back against anti-Semitic attitudes, he has recourse to philology and its tricks (for instance, establishing a canon) rather than attempting to transcend these attitudes from his awareness of their many theoretical weaknesses. Instead of separating issues, he knows that he ought to mediate. The self-discipline that this mediation requires is nowhere more apparent than in the review that he wrote of Victor Hehn's *Gedanken über Goethe* (Reflections on Goethe, 1887).[28] Geiger distinguishes between what can be said in a specialist journal and what can be said to a wider public. It is only in the nonspecialist journal *Die Nation* (The Nation) that Geiger can respond critically to Hehn's introduction of blatant value judgments into a scientific discussion ("Hehn lashes out at the Jews wherever he can," Geiger writes). He admits that in a scientific journal he would be less forthcoming: "If I praise the work, I am far from agreeing with all its opinions. But the presentation of this conflict is more suited to a specialized journal."

But even in those circles he cannot conduct any argument against the established practices of his discipline. He has only two options if things should turn against him. His positive option is to establish his own canon of texts. In fact, early on Geiger makes a special study of the role of women in literature and thus creates his own canon. His less positive alternative is to catalogue instances of anti-Semitism, as if it

were possible from an aristocratic distance to cultivate objects that depended on him for their survival. The philologist as a collector is characterized by his choice of objects and by his blind faith in the many ways in which culture could exercise power in science. For most Germans this "culture" has national implications; for Geiger the connotations are rationalist. Geiger relies on the power of his observing science to transcend prejudices. If science remains full of anti-Semitism, then all that is left to Geiger is a helpless and grieving sense of loss, for he obviously no longer believes in the ability of scientific observation to overcome prejudice. Indeed, he wrote in his review of Hehn's book: "If one reads tirades of this kind in some newspaper article, penned by an anti-Semitic hot-head, one would hardly bother to shrug one's shoulders. When you read them in the book of a man of the importance of Viktor Hehn — a man whom one would wish to respect completely — then one can feel only the deepest grief."[29]

Strategies / Habitus

Geiger's habilitation was as a historian in Berlin: his subject was "Greek and Roman writers in their assessment of Jews and Jewry." He found his way into a university career and into *Germanistik,* in particular, thanks to the explicit support of Wilhelm Scherer, who taught in Berlin from 1877 until 1886 and helped Geiger overcome the two things that made him an outsider: that he was a Jew, and that he came from another subject.[30] In 1880 Scherer ensured that Geiger was appointed extraordinary professor — the highest rank a Jew might expect.[31] In the same year Geiger established himself at the very center of German studies — Goethe scholarship — yet in a position that was both outside Berlin (with the Jewish publisher Rütten & Loening in Frankfurt am Main)[32] and outside the university, the latter by founding the *Goethe-Jahrbuch.*

Five years later, when the Goethe Society was founded, it had little choice but to use the *Jahrbuch* as its house journal.[33] Even though the society had no control over the contents — nevertheless, of course, the Goethe and Schiller Archive regularly used the *Jahrbuch* for publications from its holdings — a considerable subsidy was forthcoming. The Committee of the Goethe Society had few problems with the arrangement, and it was only Erich Schmidt, a pupil of Scherer's and professor of literary history in Berlin, who could not accept such institutionalized powerlessness. In consequence, his attacks on Geiger became more and

more virulent over the years: "The Y.book is not in the right hands," he argued in 1894, "Herr Geiger lacks the personality, the authority, the knowledge, the judgment, and the accuracy."[34] Some twenty years later, just before his death in 1913, Schmidt persuaded the Goethe Society to take its *Jahrbuch* away from Geiger.

Schmidt — the modern "Ladies' Professor" — framed his attacks for an anti-Semitic society, even though he himself was probably a bit freer of these prejudices. After Schmidt's death a Jewish colleague, Richard Moritz Meyer, applied for the position and had to hear from Gustav Roethe about Schmidt's aristocratic graces. Roethe explained that the university would rather have a count than a Jew, and — since there was no other Schmidt in sight — Roethe took the job himself. Roethe wrote to Wolfgang von Oettingen on 7 July 1913, just after he had been offered the chair: "I would have preferred them to take Burdach. It is evident that Berlin has to be represented in the executive, but I cannot wish Berlin to be represented by Rich. Meyer, particularly not at this moment — you understand what I mean without having to go into details. So I will get myself elected to the executive." And again on 10 May 1913: "You should not forget that Erich Schmidt had something if not aristocratic then at least something of a man of the world about him, he had that easy grace which comes from those circles and which we scholars generally do not possess." The truth was that Meyer was himself "a man of the world," but as a Jew he had never managed to be professor, thanks to Roethe's continuous obstruction.[35]

The generational conflict between Geiger and Schmidt was, at least in part, a product of anti-Semitism: that is to say, Geiger's defensive weakness came from the need to defend himself against anti-Semitism. Schmidt's urbanity caused him difficulties in more traditional circles, which had taken Geiger under their wing. Schmidt demanded that the *Jahrbuch* be popular and wanted a public figure to be editor. Such a representative literary personality should, he explained, be able to incorporate all aspects of philological knowledge — a standard up to which Schmidt himself never quite lived.[36] Schmidt did not believe that Geiger was such a personality — indeed, Geiger's whole approach was based on a professional concept of truth, rather than on representation — and Schmidt's attacks were personal in character. Geiger tried to make his position impregnable by separating out precisely those qualities that Schmidt wanted to synthesize. This is evident from the *Jahrbuch,* where Geiger kept his two bylines — the general essay and the scholarly critical treatise — quite a bit separate. Geiger was careful

to keep his own values out of sight and did not make any general response to the attacks, knowing that it would weaken his position to do so. The documents in Weimar make this clear. Geiger's approach to countering the attacks is unambiguous: to concentrate on the specific situation and individual issue. It is the exact equivalent of his disciplined and defensive personal style in separating out issues, which we observed in his review of Hehn's anti-Semitic book.

Goethe and the Jews[37]

If Geiger wants to talk *personally* about his philological concerns, he turns to the wider public. In *Die Juden in der deutschen Literatur* (Jews in German Literature, 1910) he sets out from a defensive position: "I am not writing here as a Jew, but as a literary historian. As a Jew I am involved in the topic: as a literary historian I have no parti pris."[38] He never expresses his conviction that literature can purify those unformed dark prejudices that are its starting point, even though he hopes that such a general conviction can carry him through the party feuding of the day. Unfortunately, the subject itself kept pulling him down to earth. Two texts in particular make this clear. These are his study of "The Faust Legend and Faust Literature before Goethe," which had appeared in *Westermanns Illustrierte Deutsche Monatshefte* (Westermann's Illustrated German Monthly) in 1889–90[39] and the more recent series of public lectures held in the winter term of 1904–5 at the University of Berlin, whose title we mentioned earlier: "German Literature and the Jews." Of particular interest is the section devoted to Goethe.[40]

Geiger's method is shaped by the idea that the history of culture is a process of enlightenment within which individual writers take their places. Individual works must be placed in a wider context than merely that of the author and his culture, for it is the work alone that can bring to light the pure — that is to say, rational — core of its author and its age. Since Geiger equates literature with reason — at least, within the historical process — it follows that he cannot separate out "literature" (in the sense of a higher power) from the individual works. In any case, he lacks a theory of the individual work and cannot, therefore, distinguish among the various forms in which reason may express itself from one work to the next. As far as the autonomy of the work of art is concerned, Geiger has no option but to regard every remark of the author inside the works as equally valid. Geiger is prevented by his determination to think universally from the recognition

he needed: that even aesthetic objects are less individual the closer they come to generally held prejudices — in other words, that aesthetic objects obtain universality only through individual qualities. The step that is distinctive to the aesthetic process is made up of many small steps. It would be a long time in the history of the discipline before there was any understanding of the process by which reason could come to be seen as part of what Theodor W. Adorno (and Peter Szondi) called "the logic of being produced."[41]

The works themselves show little evidence of either rationality or unreason. Geiger is, therefore, forced into elaborate reinterpretations and justifications of difficult works and obscure passages. We now turn to these reinterpretations and justifications.

Reinterpretation. Geiger regards the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* as a compilation of stories that were in circulation at the time, poorly composed and in a barbaric language. The puppeteers — themselves "actors of the lowest type, people quite without education or intellect"[42] — simply offered the basest section of the population a magnificent theme. The meaning of the theme can be found in the Faustian character of Faust himself, a character that is marked by the quest for knowledge. Geiger reads Goethe's *Faust* texts no differently from Lessing's *Faust* fragment. The downfall of Faust ordained from on high was unthinkable. It was inconceivable in the age of Enlightenment that the desire for knowledge could be punished as hubris. In fact, as we know, Goethe's intentions were quite different from those of Lessing. His natural theology has a considerable influence on *Faust Part Two*. If the diversity of the world increases to a point at which it is unresolvable, then nature intervenes in the form of sleep, unconsciousness, or death. There is a change of scene and the action continues elsewhere. We think, for instance, of the scene in which Phorkyas confronts Helen with the stories that are circulating about her: Helen does not respond by explaining how all these stories hang together; she falls into a swoon. This is an aesthetic action of the author's, which should be interpreted as follows: Goethe fundamentally negates the desire of the Enlightenment to accept and, within the appropriate limits, to know everything.[43] Geiger will not see this, and what he loves in Goethe is his own vision of Lessing.

Justification. In his lecture on Goethe and the Jews Geiger established a number of important facts,[44] among them Goethe's study of Hebrew, his knowledge of the Bible, his occasional Jewish acquaintances, the admiration Jewish women in Berlin bestowed on him, his respect for Spinoza and Mendelssohn. On the other side, no less clearly

Geiger identifies Goethe's support for a far from liberal law concerning the Jews; and he notes Goethe's early "Jewish sermon" and remarks against Judaism, such as those in the *Wanderjahre*. Geiger merely identifies such elements and does not delve more deeply, in an undefined way hoping that Goethe's literary involvement with Judaism would somehow ultimately benefit Judaism. At a more trivial level he does once blame Goethe's ill-humored remarks against Jews on a passing bad mood. Geiger relies on Goethe; and both are wrong, for culture is too weak to defend itself against its own anti-Semitism. In fact, of course, Goethe does differentiate between Jewish culture and the individual Jews whom he happened to meet, whether personally or in his readings in Jewish history:

> These myths are truly great, and they stand at an earnest and dignified distance from us and maintain the devotion we felt for them in our youth. As our heroes step forward into the present, however, we notice that they are Jews, and we feel the contrast between the patriarchs and their descendants — a contrast that confuses and disconcerts us.[45]

The Jewish tradition has been immersed in German culture, and Goethe can accept it in this form. Key concepts are human particularity and cultural universality. When one looks more closely, it is evident that Goethe interprets the Jewish stories within his own Christian culture, mostly according to the oppositions particularity/universality, law/love, and externality/inwardness.[46] This hierarchy is quite unmistakable, for instance, in the "pädagogische Provinz" of the *Wanderjahre* (II/2). Goethe's work is marked by a single construct, one idea that proceeds from particularity in the midst of pluralism. Ideas are universal, yet even if literary works are made from them, life and its prejudices soon find their way in. They are too weak to defend themselves against this invasion. Heteronomous cultural values that are taken up into texts keep much of their old meaning. In his Berlin lectures Geiger's attitude is both defiant and despairing. His basic conviction — that literature separates the poet from the mob — is only partly true of Goethe.

Translated by Hugh Ridley

Notes

[1] These reflections take up some of the critical ideas that led to the preparation of the international Marbach Symposium "Jewish Intellectuals and Literary Study in Germany 1870–1933" (jointly organized by myself in cooperation with a project team from the Marbach Center for the History of Germanistik and held in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach, 16–19 June 1999). Similar themes dominated the symposium discussions themselves, as their forthcoming publication (Wilfried Barner and Christoph König, eds.) will demonstrate. The position that I am explicitly contesting at this point is taken up by Jürgen Fohrmann, whose closeness to the ideas of Niklas Luhmann is also shared by Jürgen Kaube ("Jenseits der Identität," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 June 1999). Cf. also Christoph König, "Jüdische Gelehrte und die Philologien," in the publication of the Unit for Research into the History of Germanistik, *Mitteilungen* 9/10 (1996): 10–16.

[2] Gershom Scholem, "Juden und Deutsche," *Judaica II*, ed. Scholem (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970) 22.

[3] Cf. Wilfried Barner, "Literaturgeschichtsschreibung vor und nach 1945: alt, neu, alt/neu," in *Zeitenwechsel: Germanistische Literaturwissenschaft vor und nach 1945*, ed. Wilfried Barner and Christoph König (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1997) 119–49. Also Nikolaus Wegmann, "Was heißt einen 'klassischen' Text lesen? Philologische Selbstreflexion zwischen Wissenschaft und *Bildung*," in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Fohrmann and Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 1994) 334–450.

[4] *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 1910 bis 1925*, ed. Christoph König and Eberhard Lämmert (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1993).

[5] Christoph König, "Hofmannsthal unter den Philologen: Zum Verhältnis von Dichtung und Wissenschaft in der Kultur der Moderne." Habilitationsschrift of the Humboldt University in Berlin. (Publication forthcoming.)

[6] Jean Bollack, *Jacob Bernays: Un homme entre deux mondes* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 1998) (Savoir mieux 4).

[7] Cf. Bollack's contribution to the conference (footnote 1) under the title "Die klassische Philologie und die Juden vor 1933."

[8] Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Mein Leben* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999).

[9] Andreas Kilcher, "Was ist 'deutsch-jüdische Literatur'? Eine historische Diskursanalyse." (Unpublished manuscript.)

[10] Cf. Christoph König, "Wissen, Werte, Institutionen," in *Zeitenwechsel* (footnote 3).

[11] Ludwig Geiger, *Abraham Geiger: Leben und Lebenswerk. Mit einem Bildnis* (Berlin: Reimer, 1910) 178–79.

[12] Cf. Ludwig Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin: Festschrift zur zweiten Säkular-Feier. Anmerkungen, Ausführungen, urkundliche Beilagen* (Berlin: Guttentag, 1871). Guttentag reprinted this with a preface by Hermann Simon and two appendices in 1890. In this work Geiger explicitly commits himself to the scientific study of Judaism and says of Immanuel Wolf: "Judaism, according to Wolf's definition, is marked by the idea of the unity of God, which was alive in ancient times and among the Jewish people, even if it took up influences from other nations and on that basis passed on a message to other peoples. Mosaic law was the body that contained this intellectual content" (177).

[13] *Ibid.* 180.

[14] Ludwig Geiger recalled the second assembly of rabbis in Frankfurt on 21 July 1845, which his father chaired and at which his father distinguished between the eternal moral laws and ritual laws, which were means to a religious end but not an end in themselves (the Will of God). ("Eduard von Bauernfeld und die Frankfurter Rabbinerversammlung," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums,* 1 November 1895) 46–59.

[15] In a public lecture in 1910 he warned against the exaggerated claims being made in Jewish circles, referring, among other things, to the "arrogance about our own, i.e. Jewish achievements" (Ludwig Geiger, *Die deutsche Literatur und die Juden* [Berlin: Reimer, 1910] 7).

[16] Cf. Jacob Toury, *Die politischen Orientierungen der Juden in Deutschland: Von Jena bis Weimar* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966) 122. The Jews approved — on the basis of his constitutional concessions — of Bismarck's successful foreign policy and could, as a result, share in national feeling.

[17] Cf. for example Geiger, *Die deutsche Literatur und die Juden* 11.

[18] *Judentaufen,* ed. Werner Sombart et al. (Munich: Georg Müller, 1912).

[19] *Loc. cit.* 6.

[20] *Ibid.* 45.

[21] Monika Richarz, "Juden, Wissenschaft und Universitäten: Zur Sozialgeschichte der jüdischen Intelligenz und der akademischen Judenfeindschaft 1780–1848," in *Gegenseitige Einflüsse deutscher und jüdischer Kultur von der Epoche der Aufklärung bis zur Weimarer Republik,* ed. Walter Grab (Tel-Aviv: Nateev Print. and Publ. Enterprises, 1982) 55–73.

[22] Shulamit Volkov, "Soziale Ursachen des Erfolgs in der Wissenschaft. Juden im Kaiserreich," *Historische Zeitschrift* 245 (1987): 315–42.

[23] Richarz, "Juden, Wissenschaft und Universitäten" 70.

[24] Volkov, "Soziale Ursachen" 328–29.

[25] Cf. *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 1910 bis 1925.*

[26] Cf. Christoph König: "Wahrheitsansprüche: Goethes, Nietzsches und Hofmannsthals Ideen für eine allgemeine Philologie um 1905," in *Konkurrenten in der Fakultät. Kultur, Wissen und Universität um 1900,* ed. Christoph König und Eberhard Lämmert (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1998) 44–58.

[27] Friedrich Nietzsche: *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen: Zweites Stück. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben,* in his *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1972) 1: 239–330.

[28] The review appeared in *Die Nation* 4.38 (1886–87): 560–70. The quotations are taken from p. 570.

[29] *Loc. cit.*

[30] In 1877 he tried to have Geiger appointed as contributor to the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur,* which was jointly edited by Elias Steinmeyer, Karl Müllenhoff, and himself. He writes on 21 October 1877 to Steinmeyer: "Dr. Ludwig Geiger recently called on me, and I returned the visit. It seems to me important to give him a regular slot for writing on humanist literature in the Anzeiger." On Scherer's critical position during the anti-Semitism conflict see Jürgen Sternsdorff, *Wissenschaftskonstitution und Reichsgründung. Die Entwicklung der Germanistik bei Wilhelm Scherer: Eine Biographie nach unveröffentlichten Quellen* (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 1979) 215–17.

[31] Geiger recalled nearly forty years later, in 1918: "Scherer's kindness — and, I might add, his estimation of my person and my achievements — were such that, immediately after his move to Berlin, he declared that he wished to ensure that I obtained a professorship. For a man of this transparent integrity, word and deed were one" (*Vossische Zeitung,* 20 June 1918).

[32] Cf. *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Neuzeit,* vol. 2. Also *Emanzipation und Akkulturation 1780–1871,* ed. Michael Brenner, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, and Michael A. Meyer (Munich: Beck, 1996) 274.

[33] Cf. Norbert Oellers, "Elf Bemerkungen zum Beitrag von Karl Robert Mandelkow (zur Goethe-Gesellschaft in Weimar)," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 1910 bis 1925,* 356–61.

[34] Quoted from a motion proposed by Erich Schmidt to the Goethe Society on 4 April 1894 (Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv Weimar GSA 149/959, p. 313 verso).

[35] Both documents are in GSA 149/968. Cf. also Roland Berbig, "'Poesieprofessor' und 'literarischer Ehrenabschneider': Der Berliner Literaturhistoriker Richard M. Meyer," *Berliner Hefte* 1 (1996): 37–99. Also Hans-Harald Müller's contribution to the Marbach Symposium (footnote 1) under the title "Ich habe nie etwas anderes sein wollen als ein deutscher Philolog aus Scherers Schule: Hinweise auf Richard Moritz Meyer."

[36] Cf. Volker Ufertinger, "Erich Schmidt: Philologie und Repräsentation im Kaiserreich," University of Munich, Magister dissertation, 1995.

[37] Cf. Wilfried Barner, "Jüdische Goethe-Verehrung vor 1933," *Juden in der deutschen Literatur. Ein deutsch-israelisches Symposion,* ed. Stéphane Moses and Albrecht Schöne (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986) 127–51.

[38] Geiger, *Die deutsche Literatur und die Juden* 81.

[39] Ludwig Geiger, "Faustsage und Faustdichtung vor Goethe," *Westermanns Illustrierte Deutsche Monatshefte* 67 (1889–90) 752–67; cf. also Hans Mayer, "Faust, Aufklärung, Sturm und Drang," *Sinn und Form* 13 (1961): 1, 101–20.

[40] Geiger (footnote 15) 81–101. The chapter is titled "Goethe und die Juden."

[41] Cf. Christoph König, "Loslösungsakte: Zur Vernunft in literarischen Werken," in *Literaturwissenschaft und politische Kultur: Für Eberhard Lämmert zum 75. Geburtstag,* ed. Winfried Menninghaus and Klaus R. Scherpe (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 1999) 268–73.

[42] Footnote 39.

[43] Cf. Christoph König, "Wissensvorstellungen in Goethes *Faust II,*" *Euphorion* 93.2 (1999): 227–49.

[44] Generally of interest on this issue are Julius Bab, *Goethe und die Juden* (Berlin: Philo-Verlag, 1926) (Die Morgen-Reihe 3); Heinrich Teweles, *Goethe und die Juden* (Hamburg: Gente, 1925); Günter Hartung, "Goethe und die Juden," *Weimarer Beiträge* 40 (1994): 398–416. Cf. also Hartung's "Judentum," *Goethe Handbuch: Personen, Sachen, Begriffe A-K,* vol. 4/1, ed. Hans-Dietrich Dahnke and Regine Otto (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 1998) 581–90. Bab is the first to reject a question forced on the discussion from outside, namely, the isolation of one aspect of Goethe's harmonious personality. But Goethe's life is as exoteric as any extraneous cultural-historical idea.

[45] Letter to Carl Friedrich Zelter of 19 May 1912, in *Goethes Briefe und Briefe an Goethe,* Hamburger Ausgabe in 6 Bänden, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow, assisted by Bodo Morawe, 3rd ed. (Munich: Beck 1986–88), vol. 3, *Briefe der Jahre 1805–1821* (1988), no. 961, p. 193.

[46] Cf. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen (1772–73)," in his *Ästhetische Schriften 1771–1805,* ed. Friedmar Apel (Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker-Verlag, 1998) (Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker 151) 131–40.

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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