

Max Weber's Views on Jewish Integration and Zionism: Some American, English and German Contexts

Guenther Roth

Abstract

At the time of his visit to the United States in 1904 Max Weber wavered between his apprehensions about the negative effects of mass emigration on the 'Anglo-Saxon spirit' and his recognition of the success of Jewish integration in view of the traditional affinities between Judaism and Americanism. Theodore Roosevelt's and Grover Cleveland's articulation of these affinities appear in somewhat confused form in Weber's texts. George Eliot's similar views on Anglo-Saxon and Judaic affinities predated those of the two presidents and of Weber and Werner Sombart. In the early 1870s Eliot, who was avidly read among Weber's relatives, advanced a proto-Zionist position against a background of increasing antisemitism. Early Zionism attracted Sombart's and Weber's attention in the same antisemitic context. Weber did not believe that Zionism could succeed in its main goal of restoring Jewish nationhood and confronted what was then a mainly secular political movement with the underlying religious dynamics of the Judaic tradition, as he understood them from his study of ancient Judaism.

Keywords: Jewish integration, ancient Judaism, early Zionism, Max Weber, George Eliot, Theodore Roosevelt, Grover Cleveland.

During his visit to the United States in 1904 Max Weber not only searched, with limited success, for traces of the Protestant ethic, but also studied the social problems posed by mass immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Parallel to his well-known concern about the displacement of German farm workers, under East Elbian agrarian capitalism, by Polish 'cheaper hands', he came to the US with the apprehension that mass immigration from the European periphery could change the character of the English and German settlements, especially in the Midwest. In his St. Louis lecture, which exists only in a completely garbled translation, he said something like this:

If the expansive power of the Anglo-Saxon-German settlement of the rural districts and, besides, the number of children of the old, inborn [native] population are on the wane, and if, at the same time, the enormous immigration of uncivilized elements from eastern Europe grows, a rural

population might soon arise which cannot be assimilated by the historically transmitted culture of this country; this population would change forever the standard of the United States and would gradually form a community of a quite different type from the great creation of the Anglo-Saxon spirit.¹

Weber's observations in Chicago and New York convinced him, however, that there were countervailing forces to the cultural dangers of mass immigration.

Preoccupied with the composition of 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', Weber ambiguously combined his concerns about multi-ethnic mass migration with his speculations about Puritan legacies. It appeared to him that there was an important difference between Polish and Italian Catholic peasants and Jewish immigrants. With Sombart, who also attended the St. Louis World Congress of Arts and Sciences, he perceived an essential similarity between Judaism and 'Americanism'. Weber was particularly interested in the efforts to integrate recent Jewish immigrants, attributing their relative success both to energetic self-help and putative Puritan legacies. Although at the time political antisemitism in Germany did not make headway in formally reversing Jewish emancipation, Weber believed that the different German traditions vitiated a similarly high degree of assimilation. Given his tendency to project his political ideals onto the Anglo-Saxons, it appears that he would have welcomed a greater integrative capability on Germany's part. Along the German spectrum, Weber's position was remarkably philosemitic, but it was not free of ambiguities and ambivalences. His family's and his own friendship with scholars from Levin Goldschmidt and Ferdinand Frensdorff to Georg Jellinek and Ernst Lesser are well-known and so are his frequent academic recommendations, no matter how hopeless, for Jewish scholars.² But the National Liberal ideal of the culturally homogeneous nation state, which Weber inherited from his parents' generation, did not encourage even a limited degree of ethno-cultural pluralism, although it did not command religious conversion.

1. See (the illogical title) 'The Relation of the Rural Community to Other Branches of Social Science', *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (MWG), I/8, 242 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1998). The translation made by Charles Seidenadel (or in his name) appeared originally in *Congress of Arts and Sciences* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1906). Given the editorial rules of the MWG, the volume editor Wolfgang Schluchter had no choice but to print the corrupted text, with only minor corrections of obvious typos; the 1952 retranslation into German by Hans Gerth could not be used.

2. See the chapter on antisemitism and ambivalent coexistence in my *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2001), ch. XIII.

I would like to proceed in three steps. First I shall deal with Weber's perception of American and Jewish affinities and with the source of his reference to an American President whom he cites as a witness. I will offer an alternative explanation to one recently advanced in the first partial volume of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* in the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (I/22-1). At issue are public statements by Theodore Roosevelt and Grover Cleveland; the former praised successful Jewish integration, the latter put the ancient Jewish commonwealth and the United States on the same pinnacle of divine election. Next I will turn to George Eliot's views on Anglo-Saxon and Jewish affinities, which predate Roosevelt and Cleveland and anticipate Weber and Sombart. Eliot was avidly read among Weber's relatives. His uncle Adolf Hausrath misinterpreted (or misremembered) Eliot's proto-Zionist novel *Daniel Deronda* in his apologetic memoir of Treitschke and his antisemitism. Although I have no evidence that Max junior read Eliot's late writings, they further illustrate and confirm his understanding of Anglo-Saxon and Jewish similarities. Lastly, I will treat Weber's complex view of Zionism, as revealed in his conversations with Ernst Lesser before and after the First World War. Weber did not believe that Zionism could succeed in its main goal of restoring Jewish nationhood and confronted what was then a mainly secular political movement with the underlying religious dynamics of the Judaic tradition, as he understood them from his study of ancient Judaism.

Throughout my purpose is a close examination of Weber's texts and sources, not a general interpretation or an effort to answer the largely ahistorical question of whether he was a 'philosemitic antisemite'.³

1. Max Weber, Theodore Roosevelt and Grover Cleveland

In 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' and the religion chapter in *Economy and Society*, Weber pointed to the American success in assimilating Jews, in contrast to Germany.⁴ Recently returned from the US, he recounted, 'It may perhaps be mentioned as a characteristic phenomenon that one of the leaders of the Educational Alliance, an organization which promotes with amazing success and munificent resources the Americanization of Jewish immigrants, described to me as the foremost goal of creating the *Kultur Mensch*, a goal pursued through all man-

3. See my excursus 'War Max Weber jun. ein "philosemitischer Antisemit"?', *Familiengeschichte*, pp. 470-73.

4. For the latter see Hans Kippenberg, with Petra Schilm and Jutta Niemeier, (eds.), MWG, I/22-2, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Teilband 2: Religiöse Gemeinschaften; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2001).

ner of artistic and social instruction, the emancipation from the second commandment'.⁵ In a passage on 'the wretched Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe (*Ostjuden*), who served the God of their fathers and business at the same time', Marianne Weber cited from a letter of Max to his mother about the (in her words) 'thousands of pariah children' – Max himself did not yet use the term pariah in 1904 – who daily frequent the Educational Alliance:

They have everything imaginable here... The absolute selfgovernment of the children in the clubs, in which they do not allow anyone to interfere and strangers to pry, is really the foremost means of Americanization. The young people's freedom from authority in their struggle for existence bears its fruits here. They come in as the children of 'schnorrers' who strictly adhere to all religious rituals, and they leave this training institution as 'gentlemen' and pounce upon the Negroes of the South, on whom they practice a frightful usury.⁶

This appears to me, however, a doubtful aspect of successful assimilation.

In *Economy and Society* Weber linked travel reminiscence and historical thesis:

Not the pious, orthodox Jews, but the Reformed Jews, who escaped orthodoxy, such as nowadays the products of the Educational Alliance and, of course, baptized Jews, have been absorbed (*resorbiert*) by the Puritan nations, especially the Americans, to the point of absolute loss of any trace of difference – certainly in earlier times but even today in spite of everything. This contrasts with the situation in Germany, where the Jews remain

5. 'Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 3 (1905), 91; cf. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (trans. T. Parsons; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 270; trans. S. Kalberg (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2002), 234. The Educational Alliance, founded by German Jews in New York City, began in 1889 as a settlement house at 197 East Broadway. Its educational and charitable programs expanded greatly in the following decades and also influenced the public school programs for integrating foreign(-born) students. Weber's host, the Columbia University economist Edwin R.A. Seligman (1861–1939), was chairman of the Committee on Education for the Educational Alliance. Weber also met Dr. David Blaustein (1866–1912), an Alliance director (see n. 27 below). For Blaustein's own views, see *Memoirs of David Blaustein, Educator and Communal Worker*, arranged by Miriam Blaustein (New York: Arno Press, 1975 [1913]). Blaustein's wife recounts, without identification, a visit by 'the famous sociologist from abroad who was anxious to discuss, at first hand, the problem of "assimilation" with the pros and cons of the East Side' (p. 57). Alas, at the time Weber was considered neither famous nor a sociologist.

6. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber. A Biography* (trans. Harry Zohn; New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), 303; with an introduction 'Marianne Weber and Her Circle' by myself. Max used the English term 'selfgovernment'.

even after many generation 'assimilated Jews' (*Assimilationsjuden*), and this difference points up once more the actual affinity of Puritanism and Judaism.⁷

The phrase 'in spite of everything' presumably refers to the enormous immigration into the US and the growing racist and Social Darwinist opposition; between 1880 and 1919 about 23 millions immigrants arrived in the country. A paradox underlay, however, the asserted American affinity: 'Yet precisely the non-Jewish element enabled Puritanism to play its special role in the creation of the modern economic temper and also to succeed in the absorption (*Resorption*) of Jewish proselytes, which was not accomplished by nations with other than Puritan orientations'.⁸ Leaving aside the tenability of Weber's recourse to a distant, if not invented Puritan past, the medical term *Resorption* is not without some troubling overtones. It seems to indicate a desirable outcome, although Weber makes what he considers a historically factual statement.

Clearly, Weber viewed the integrating force of the melting pot in positive terms, and Marianne followed him in her report on the role of American women:

The charitable work of private persons is faced with gigantic tasks. Every year a flood of 800,000 immigrants from the poorest and most uneducated [*kulturloseste*] strata of the European proletariat pours into the American ports. The Irish, Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Poles and thousands of Galician and Russian Jews, who have no place and hope in their homeland, seek a viable existence, and whereas many of them were completely without political rights before, they can now become full citizens with voting rights within five years.⁹

Like many American Protestants, however, Max considered the flood of immigrants a threat because 'it tends to undermine the old democratic traditions'.¹⁰ To his mother he reported: 'In spite of all, the Americans are a wonderful people, and only the Negro question and the terrible immigration constitute the big black clouds'.¹¹ At the time the largest contingents of immigrants consisted of Polish and Russian Jews and Italians. But if Weber found the enormous immigration 'terrible', he also realized how desperate the condition of Jews in Russia was. He

7. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich; Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1968), 623. The phrase 'Assimilationsjuden' is ambiguous and its general usage unfamiliar to me.

8. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 623.

9. Marianne Weber, 'Was Amerika den Frauen bietet', *Centralblatt des Bundes deutscher Frauenvereine* (March 1, 1905, 178).

10. MWG, I/10, 273.

11. Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 302.

lamented the situation of 'the brutally mistreated inhabitants of the Russian ghettos'¹² and the Bialystok pogrom (p. 659) of June 1906 – the Kishinev pogrom dated to April 1903, before Weber's American journey. In his article on 'The Transition to Pseudo-Constitutionalism' (1906) he remarked that 'the fate of these five to six million people can in no way be adequately treated in its terrible seriousness in my sketch'.¹³ Weber could not anticipate that Nazi Germany would one day murder five to six million Jews and that one result would be the ethnic cleansing of Jews as well as Germans from eastern Europe and Russia.

In a passage on the nation in the early version of *Economy and Society* Weber referred to 'those Americans who still believe in an American and Jewish affinity, as an American President confirmed in an official document'.¹⁴ The immediately preceding sentences read:

Whether the Jews may be called a 'nation' is an old problem. Most of the time, the answer would be negative. At any rate it would be answered differently by the mass of Russian Jews, by the assimilating West European and American Jews, by the Zionists. In particular, the question would be answered very differently by the peoples of their environment, for example, by the Russians on the one side and the Americans on the other'.¹⁵

In the 1920 version of 'The Protestant Ethic' Weber inserted a formulation about 'the feeling of an inner affinity with Judaism, as it is expressed in Roosevelt's well-known letter (*Schreiben*)¹⁶ (Kalberg 233; Parsons 269) – now the 'official document' is merely labeled a letter. By calling the letter 'well-known' Weber avoided the trouble of citing his source. But who in Germany would still have remembered Roosevelt's statement? In their edition of the first segment of *Economy and Society*¹⁷ Wolfgang Mommsen and Michael Meyer acknowledge: 'We could not clearly establish to which document this referred'.¹⁸

12. MWG, I/10, 302.

13. MWG, I/10, 362.

14. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 923.

15. Max's mother Helene used the term nation unselfconsciously. She called the old family friend Ferdinand Frensdorff, professor at Göttingen, 'a person of rare kindness and nobility, one of those Jews who, like Goldschmidt, make one admire only the virtues of their nation' (letter to Fritz Baumgarten, winter 1879/80; see Roth: *Familiengeschichte*, 460). Max described Frensdorff as 'one of the most amiable persons I know, to whom I am much indebted', but without calling him Jewish (letter to Emmy Baumgarten, Aug. 20. 1887); see *Jugendbriefe* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1936), 269.

16. See Parsons and Kalberg (trans.), *The Protestant Ethic*.

17. The older version, MWG, I/22-1, 243.

18. Mommsen and Meyer refer to a letter of 22 August 1904, by the American

I would like to suggest that Weber had in mind the letter Roosevelt sent on 16 November 1905 to Jacob Schiff, who presided over the ceremonies commemorating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the settlement of Jews in the United States.¹⁹ On Thanksgiving 1905 a celebration took place in Carnegie Hall, at which Ex-President Grover Cleveland gave the main address; already in 1903 he had denounced at the same location the Kishinev pogroms before thousands of protesters. Much more clearly than Roosevelt did Cleveland asserted the American and Jewish affinity by lifting ancient Israel and the US to the same level of divine election. Werner Sombart cited both Roosevelt and Cleveland in his book *The Jews and Economic Life*. In February 1911 he sent a copy to 'Max Weber in friendship', who wrote his remarks on affinity before June (according to the editors).²⁰ It is unclear, whether Weber himself read the document.

Sombart wanted to buttress his assertion 'that modern capitalism was basically nothing but an emanation of Jewish nature' and that Jews had exerted a constitutive influence on the development of the United States.²¹

ambassador in St. Peterburg, Robert S. McCormick, to the Russian foreign minister Count Lamsdorf. Roosevelt appears to have been cited in this letter about American Jews denied Russian visas: 'Whose intelligence and sterling qualities fit them to be typical representatives of our people'. A follow-up shows, however, that McCormick cited not Roosevelt, but from instructions received from Secretary of State John Hay on July 1, 1904, in which Roosevelt's position is stated indirectly: 'In the view of the President it is not easy to discern the compensating advantage to the Russian government in the exclusion of a class of tourists and men of business, whose character and position in life are such as to afford in most cases a guarantee against any abuse of the hospitality of Russia and whose intelligence and sterling moral qualities fit them to be typical representatives of our people'. Mommsen and Meyer cite the last part of the sentence, but the whole statement appears to me a weak illustration of Jewish and American affinity. See *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, with the Annual Message of the President. Washington transmitted to Congress 6 December, 1904 (Government Printing Office 1905), 790; see also Cyrus Adler and Aaron Margalith, *With Firmness in the Right. American Diplomatic Action Affecting Jews* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1946), 272-73. For the general context see Taylor Stults, 'Roosevelt, Russian Persecution of Jews, and American Public Opinion', *Jewish Social Studies* 33 (Jan 1971), 13-279; Philip Ernest Schoenberg, 'The American Reaction to the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903', *American Jewish History Quarterly* 63 (September 1973), 262-83.

19. See 'The Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Jews in the United States 1655-1905. Addresses delivered at Carnegie Hall, New York, on Thanksgiving Day 1905' (New York: The New York Co-Operative Society, 1905).

20. Weber thanked Sombart on 27 March 1911, MWG, II/7, 154-55.

21. Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1911), 38.

He claimed that this 'ran counter to the conventional wisdom, at least in Europe'; Weber scribbled the almost illegible marginal note: 'Not in America. Roosevelt on Russian Jews'. Although Roosevelt's rule was not to send a message on such festive occasions, in this case he wanted to make an exception:

because the lamentable and terrible suffering to which so many of the Jewish people in other lands [he could not name Russia] have been subjected, make me feel it my duty, as the head of the American people, not only to express my deep sympathy for them, as I now do, but at the same time to point out what fine qualities of citizenship have been displayed by the men of Jewish faith and race...even in our colonial period the Jews participated in the upbuilding of this country'.²²

Sombart paraphrased this passage and cited the last sentence in English.

Sombart did not cite passages from the program in which Roosevelt praised the compatibility of civic integration and preserving the Jewish faith and way of life and explicitly included the masses of recent persecuted and impoverished immigrants. In his militant rhetoric Roosevelt declared:

I am glad to be able to say, in addressing you on this occasion, that while the Jews of the United States, who now number more than a million, have remained loyal to their faith and their race traditions, they have become indissolubly incorporated in the great army of American citizenship, prepared to make all sacrifice for the country, either in war or peace, and striving for the perpetuation of good government. This is true not only of the descendants of the early settlers and those of American birth, but of a great and constantly increasing proportion of those who have come to our shores within the last twenty-five years as refugees reduced to the direst straits of penury and misery.²³

This appears to me less a direct assertion of affinity than an affirmation of successful integration but with identity maintained.²⁴

22. 'Addresses delivered at Camegie Hall, 1905', 18.

23. 'Addresses delivered at Camegie Hall, 1905', 19.

24. At first Roosevelt had hesitated to protest the pogroms officially. Of course, tactical interests influenced him. In the election of 1904 it had helped him that he had vociferously supported the note of protest, rejected by the Russian government, against the Kishinev pogrom. Although he employed the usual ethnic stereotypes in private, he was prudent enough not to share the biological racism of the liberals. It is true, however, that he embraced a variant of social eugenics in his campaign against 'racial suicide' – the fault of all those women who became professors at the Seven Sisters or entered Boston marriages instead of producing super-intelligent sons.

Sombart cited Cleveland only with regard to the Jewish contribution to Americanism (understood in an idealistic sense) that transcended that of all other nationalities, but did not mention the comparison with the ancient Jewish state, which would have been the best evidence for Weber's assertion. Cleveland, son of a Presbyterian minister, painted a grandiose, religiously grounded picture:

If the people of the United States glory in their free institutions as the crown of man's aspiration for self-government, let them not be unmindful of the fact that the Jews among us have in their care and keeping the history and traditions of an ancient Jewish commonwealth astonishingly like our own Republic in its democracy and underlying intention. This ancient commonwealth was ordained of God for the government of His chosen people; and we should not close our minds to a conception of the coincidence in divine purpose discoverable in the bestowal, by the Ruler of the universe, of a similar plan of rule, after thousands of years, upon the people of the United States, who also had their beginning in willing submission to God's sovereignty, and the assertion of freedom in His worship'.²⁵

This is a stunning 'mythistory' (to use William McNeill's term), a politically motivated mythologizing of historical events.²⁶ It should here be understood as a reaction to the strong opposition against mass immigration and perhaps as a late defense of an important decision on Cleveland's part: two days before leaving the presidential office for the second time, in March 1897, Cleveland successfully vetoed the immigration restrictions voted by Congress and thus prevented a significant curtailment of mass immigration.

25. 'Addresses delivered at Camegie Hall, 1905', 12-13.

26. The comparison between a republican Jewish commonwealth in antiquity and the American Republic was part of the religious rhetoric of the revolutionary period and the early republic. See, for instance, Samuel Langdon's election sermon 'The Republic of the Israelites An Example to the American States' before the General Court of New Hampshire on 5 June 1788, in Conrad Cherry (ed.), *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 93-105; Cherry used as epigraph for his book a phrase from Abiel Abbot's Thanksgiving Sermon of 1799: 'It has often been remarked that the people of the United States come nearer to a parallel with Ancient Israel, than any other nation upon the globe. Hence Our American Israel is a term frequently used; and common consent allows it apt and proper.' For a recent neo-conservative effort to link Judaism and Americanism see Michael Novak, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), esp. ch. 1, 'Jewish Metaphysics at the Founding'. For a critique see Gordon S. Wood, 'Rambunctious American Democracy', *New York Review of Books*, 2 May 2002, 21-22.

2. *Antisemitism and Proto-Zionism:*
From Heinrich von Treitschke to George Eliot

In view of the fact that Imperial Germany's political institutions and the prevailing mentality were completely different, such addresses would have been unthinkable for heads of state, both the parallel with ancient Judaism and the expectation that the *Ostjuden* (as Marianne called the American immigrants too) could be integrated relatively quickly. Moreover, the national self-portrait of two American presidents was a mirror-image of that combination of antisemitism, Anglophobia and anti-Americanism so prominent in Heinrich von Treitschke and Eduard Meyer.²⁷ Treitschke's antisemitism demanded complete assimilation, Meyer's denied its possibility. It is true that Treitschke did not call for the abolition of the emancipatory laws, but even his faithful friend Adolf Hausrath could not deny his great antisemitic impact.²⁸ Hausrath first reminded his readers of Treitschke's affirmation: 'Among reasonable people there can be no talk about curtailing the legal emancipation of the Jews; it would be an obvious injustice'.²⁹ But he then

27. 'We recall that, when Treitschke began to think in terms of sea power and imperialism after 1871, he focused on England as the real enemy and framed Anglo-Saxon liberalism, commercial interest and empiricist mentality into a picture of hatred. In connection with this, he attributed to the English church a greater affinity with Judaism than was true of German Protestantism. This Jewish influence on English religion and morality also appears in Eduard Meyer's writings after 1914. In line with Weber's much discussed studies [the 'Protestant Ethic'] of 1904 Calvinism and the Puritan sects are made responsible for this development. They taught the English people how to interpret the New Testament in terms of the Old: hypocritical self-righteousness and cant were the frightful consequences in all walks of life.' Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1967), 297.

28. See Adolf Hausrath, *Zur Erinnerung an Heinrich von Treitschke* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1901). When Hermann Baumgarten ended his friendship with Treitschke and criticized the second volume of his *Deutsche Geschichte*, Hausrath took not only Treitschke's side but also expressed his general aversion against all liberals who favored more powers for parliament, lumping them all together as Jews. Max Weber reported to his father on 5 May, 1883 from Heidelberg: 'At once I had a very heated discussion with Uncle Hausrath, who attacked Uncle Hermann in a truly shocking manner...he poured bitter bile over all parliamentary events of the last seventeen years, of course lumping together all representatives of the constitutional principle under the label of Jews... I was glad when he broke off, since I feared he would turn his whole anger against me too' (*Jugendbriefe*, 74).

29. Hausrath cited from Treitschke's notorious 'Unsere Aussichten', *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 44 (15 November 1879), 575; reprinted in Walter Böhlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1965), 11.

went on to recall Treitschke's careless thought experiments in the absence of practical suggestions:

Treitschke finally demanded that the Jews should abandon not their religion but their national identity among the German people. They should become fully German without any reservations. One can call this a vague demand, but it was not meant to be an offense... For my part I was unhappy about the conflict [the *Antisemitismusstreit* of 1880]; for me it was not a question of whether the Jews were our *Glück* or *Unglück* – Theodore Mommsen and Adolf Stöcker [the Court Chaplain] should argue this out – I was concerned with our duties now that we had the Jews. He would not want to apply the practical method preferred by the Russians. What then? He laughed about a friend's view that the Middle Ages had failed to solve the problem when [Christians] could have done so without burdening their conscience. Treitschke recalled that in his lectures his teacher [Friedrich Christoph] Dahlmann had once regretted the ineffectualness of that Egyptian pharaoh's politically prudent measure. But if one asked him seriously what he wanted done, he was as perplexed as other people'.³⁰

At the time Heidelberg professors debated possible measures. Helene Weber described to her husband a dinner party at the home of Ida and Georg Weber in March 1880:

At table I sat next to Erdmannsdörffer... We got deeply involved in the Jewish question, where E. goes far beyond Treitschke. He finally asked Bluntschli whether it was not legally feasible to outlaw immigration and residence for all Jews. Bluntschli agreed but pointed out that Jews as such could not be singled out in view of the legal equality of the religious denominations... I found it quite interesting to get a peek at the views held in this circle.³¹

In his apologetic memoir of Treitschke the theologian Adolf Hausrath, who used the nom de plume George Taylor for his historical novels, suddenly referred to George Eliot in a confused passage. In her last years Eliot dealt intensively with Jewish identity and assimilation. Hausrath claimed:

In view of the deplorable agitation at the time, Eliott [*sic*] in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, advanced the accusation that Germany is persecuting the Jews whereas for thirty years the eminence of its literature has been owed to Jewish brains. By contrast, Treitschke reproached the Jewish press for

30. Hausrath, *Zur Erinnerung*, 119, 122-23.

31. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Deponat Max Weber-Schaefer ana 446. The historian Bernhard Erdmannsdörffer, with whom the young Max studied in Heidelberg, took Treitschke's side in the conflict with Hermann Baumgarten. On Johann Caspar Bluntschli see also his article on 'Jews' in *idem* and Karl Brater (eds.), *Deutsches Staatswörterbuch* (Stuttgart 1860), 442. (At the time of the dinner conversation anti-Chinese agitation led in the US to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.)

trying 'to introduce the advertising slogans (*Marktschreierei*) of the commercial world into literature and the jargon (*Kauderwelsch*) of the exchange into the sacred heart of our language'.³² He asked in reply what that Jewish brain had done to the German language in the fields of journalism and belles lettres where it was dominant. Elliot [*sic*] should have thought of the poets who account for Germany's literary reputation and who will last—Gutzkow, Freiligrath, Freytag, Geibel, Mörike, Bodenstedt, Claus Groot, Fritz Reuter, Jenssen, Lingg, Raabe, Putlitz, Strachwitz, Stieler, Wolff and many others—not one 'Jewish brain' among them!³³

There is, in fact, no such specific assertion in Eliot's 1876 novel, only a remark put in the mouth of the banker Joseph Kalonymos: 'Our youth fell on evil days; but this we have won: we increase our wealth in safety, and the learning of all Germany is fed and fattened by Jewish brains—though they keep not always their Jewish hearts'.³⁴ There is also no such assertion in 'The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!', an essay Eliot published in 1879, the year before her death, and the *Antisemitismusstreit*. In the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, where Treitschke triggered the *Streit*, he did not comment on Eliot. Perhaps he did in a letter, but Hausrath seems to have inserted his own opinion, quite apart from his memory lapse after a quarter of a century. Hausrath completely ignored the fact that novel and essay were not only a protest against antisemitism but also advanced a proto-Zionist project and championed ethnic and linguistic nationalism as against liberal and Jewish cosmopolitanism. This could have interested him, since George Eliot, once so liberal but ever more conservative in later years, tried to find an answer to Treitschke's and Hausrath's question of what to do about the Jews. Eliot argued that a restored Jewish homeland could contribute more to historical progress than could complete absorption. She became very interested in the Palestinian agrarian settlements that were supported by the Alliance Israélite Universelle.³⁵ In the guise of Theophrastus Such—the title of her collection of essays—she asked:

32. Hausrath quoted from Treitschke, 'Noch einige Bemerkungen zur Judenfrage', *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 45 (10 January, 1880), 91, repr. in Walter Böhlich, *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (Frankfurt a.m.: Insel Verlag, 1965), 85. Hausrath's phrase 'deplorable agitation' may refer to the fact that the antisemitic agitation in the new German Reich began as early as 1875 in the arch-conservative *Kreuzzeitung* (according to Harry Bresslau in Böhlich, 55). Eliot sent the first part of *Daniel Deronda* to her publisher in May 1875; the novel was published in eight parts between February and September 1876. It is unclear whether she had in mind the new antisemitic wave in Germany when she wrote the novel and somewhat later 'The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!'

33. Hausrath, *Zur Erinnerung*, 121.

34. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (New York: New American Library, 1979), 661.

35. See William Baker, *George Eliot and Judaism* (Salzburg: Salzburg Studies in

If we are to consider the future of the Jews at all, it seems reasonable to take as a preliminary question: Are they destined to complete fusion with the peoples among whom they are dispersed, losing every remnant of a distinctive consciousness as Jews; or, are there in the breadth and intensity with which the feeling of separateness, or what we may call the organized memory of a national consciousness, actually exists in the world-wide Jewish communities – the seven millions scattered from east to west – and again, are there in the political relations of the world, the conditions present or approaching for the restoration of a Jewish state planted on the old ground as a centre of national feeling, a source of dignifying protection, a special channel for special energies which may contribute some added form of national genius, and an added voice in the councils of the world?³⁶

Eliot considered the cosmopolitan direction of social evolution inescapable, but wished it to be slowed down and attenuated pluralistically. In the long run the 'fusion of races' was inevitable:

The tendency of things is toward the quicker or slower fusion of races. It is impossible to arrest this tendency: all we can do is to moderate its course so as to hinder it from degrading the moral status of societies by too rapid effacement of those national traditions and customs which are the language of the national genius – the deep suckers of healthy sentiment.³⁷

At the same time Eliot emphasized the exceptional English and Jewish affinities and also pointed to an English parallel to ancient Judaism – an early anticipation of Grover Cleveland's mythistory. In 'The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!' she drew a striking historical parallel:

There is more likeness than contrast between the way we English got our island and the way the Israelites got Canaan... The Puritans, asserting their liberty to restrain tyrants, found the Hebrew history closely symbolical of their feelings and purpose... We must refer the passionate use of the Hebrew writings to affinities of disposition between our race and the Jewish. Is it true that the arrogance of a Jew was so immeasurably beyond that of a Calvinist? And the just sympathy and admiration which we give to the

English Literature, 1975), 138. In time Eliot read much Jewish literature in German, French and English. She took Hebraic lessons from her 'dear Rabbi' Emanuel Deutsch, possibly the model for the mythical figure of Morcedai in *Daniel Deronda* (Baker 206). See also Bernard Semmel, *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 120-21. In view of Eliot's eminence as a female English novelist with an interest in Judaism it is unsurprising that the Educational Alliance in New York organized a 'George Eliot Circle for girls'. The Alliance was, however, far from being a spearhead of Zionism. See Moses Rischin, *The Promised City. New York's Jews 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962): 101.

36. 'Impressions of Theophrastus Such', *The Works of George Eliot* (New York: The Nottingham Society, n.d.), v. 8, 164.

37. Eliot, 'Impressions of Theophrastus Such', 161.

ancestors who resisted the oppressive acts of our native kings, and by resisting rescued or won for us the best part of our civil and religious liberties – is it justly to be withheld from those brave and steadfast men of Jewish race who fought and died, or strove by wise administration to resist, the oppression and corrupting influences of foreign tyrants, and by resisting, rescued the nationality which was the very hearth of our own religion?³⁸

As was true of Cleveland and Roosevelt, George Eliot's bold picture of Anglo-Jewish affinities was not without a defensive undertone that presumed a good measure of public resistance. She tried to advance positive arguments, something that was lacking in Hausrath's anecdotal recollections. When the latter wrote his memoir, which appeared in 1901, the first Zionist world congress had already taken place in Basel in 1897. What had been a literary idea in Eliot's mind turned into a Zionist program when Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) recognized during the Dreyfus affair, as Ephraim Shmueli put it, that 'assimilation rather than separation or self-segregation may be a most vigorous cause for post-emancipatory anti-Semitism'. Shmueli went on to remark that Weber did not learn this lesson: 'His intensive rationalism...paired with the liberal belief in full assimilation of the Jews as the ultimate solution, prevented him from even considering such a possibility. This fact explains his attitude toward Zionism'.³⁹ In my view, however, Weber was aware of the counterplay of emancipation and antisemitism, just as was Sombart who wanted to recognize it especially in France and the United States.⁴⁰ But this does not explain Weber's attitude toward Zionism, which was strongly influenced by his long-range historical perspective on the world religions. His views on Zionism can best be gleaned from his exchanges with Ernst Lesser.

3. *Weber's Views on Zionism*

About 1904/5 Zionism was discussed in Lujo Brentano's home in Munich. Brentano's private secretary, the son of an orthodox Polish Jew, was very interested in it. Among visitors to the house were not only the leader of the Munich Zionists, a Russian Jew, but also Marianne Knapp, Georg Friedrich Knapp's daughter, who in 1907 married the Jewish physiologist Ernst Lesser (1879–1928) in a civil ceremony.⁴¹ As Marianne Weber

38. Eliot, *The Works of George Eliot*, v. 8, 152–53.

39. Ephraim Shmueli, 'The "Pariah-People" and its "Charismatic Leadership"', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 36 (1968), 213.

40. See Friedrich Lenger, *Werner Sombart 1863–1941* (München: Beck, 1994), 212.

41. Lesser, who did pioneering research on insulin in Mannheim, is correctly

recalled, Marianne Lesser and her sister Elly Heuss-Knapp and their husbands frequented the salon in the Souchay-Fallenstein mansion where the Webers held their *jours* after Hausrath's death in 1909. Marianne mentioned that 'the problems of Judaism' were often discussed freely since many of their young friends were Jewish. She was, however, irritated by the appearance and messianic stance of the very young Ernst Bloch and caricatured him in thin disguise. Max had Bloch in mind when he wrote to Sophie Rickert on 20 November 1912: 'Sundays, when we practice collective welfare, the battle cry arises: "In our camp is Israel!" – recently represented by the figure of the *Knalljude*. Your father-in-law would have been delighted.'⁴²

At one occasion, in August 1913, Weber discussed Zionism with Ernst Lesser and Julius Simon, who had described the colonization efforts in Palestine. When Weber asked about the religious dimension, Simon acknowledged that 'religion and the national component' are difficult to separate, but maintained that the 'national idea, with the revival of Hebrew as its symbol, and not religion, formed the basic Zionist consensus'; religion was a private affair. Weber agreed that more colonization was feasible, but did not believe that the Zionist goal of a rebirth of the Jewish people could be achieved because there was no 'guiding idea' (*tragende Idee*) that could make western Jews go to, and stay in, Palestine: 'When Ezra went to Jerusalem, he held the Torah. What do you have?' This was Lesser's recollection a decade later, when Marianne Weber solicited materials for her biography.⁴³

Afterwards, on 18 August 1913, Weber wrote a clarifying letter to Lesser because he felt that the central issue had not been sufficiently addressed. Marianne reprinted part of it in her biography, but the full letter has only recently been recovered.⁴⁴ Weber did not doubt that tens

identified in MWG, I/22-1, 223, n 22. The German and English index of Marianne Weber's biography of Max mistakenly refers to the Berlin dermatologist Edmund Lesser. On conversations in the Brentano home, see Paul Wallich, 'Lehr und Wanderjahre eines Bankiers', *Zwei Generationen im deutschen Bankwesen 1833-1914* (Frankfurt: Knapp, 1978), 196.

42. MWG, II/7, 761-62. Sophie Rickert's father-in-law was Max Weber Sr's old parliamentary colleague Heinrich Rickert (1832-1902), one of the liberal leaders in the fight against anti-semitism. The term *Knalljude* (referring to the stereotypical figure of the Jew) may be contemporary student jargon or Berlin slang. Zohn translated the term as 'arch-Jew', when Max characterized Dr. Blaustein in New York City as 'an idealist of the purest sort, while being a "Knalljud" of the most extreme physiognomy' (Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, p. 303, translation altered).

43. See Ernst Lesser to Marianne Weber, 12 June 1922, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Berlin, Rep. 92, NL Max Weber, Nr. 29.

44. See MWG, II/7, 8 (forthcoming); the letter is today in the Jewish National and

of thousands of families could be settled in rural and urban locations, but feared that even if a million or a million and a half Jews could gain relative autonomy, they would be at the mercy of the Great Powers; England would have to take the Arabs into account. Weber also wondered whether emigration to Palestine could significantly reduce the demographic pressures in the Russian Pale. He elaborated on his comparison with syndicalism, which could retreat to an ethical stance of pure conviction (*Gesinnung*), but not so Judaism with its concrete historical expectations:

Judaism and especially Zionism has as its inner premise a highly concrete 'promise'. Will a profitable colony, an autonomous small state, hospitals, and good schools ever act as a 'fulfilment' of those grandiose promises, rather than as a critical reflection on them? And even a university? For its meaning (*Sinn*) – heterogeneous to the economic purpose of the settlement and the easing of the population pressure – would be that the Jews' sense of *dignity* could be restored by the existence and the intellectual possession of this ancient holy place in this form, just as once the Jewish diaspora was sustained by the realm of the Maccabees after its war of independence against the world empire of the Seleucids; as the Germans all over the world are sustained by the German empire, and Islam by the existence of the Caliphate. But Germany is, or at least seems to be, a powerful empire and the Caliphate still occupies a large area. But what can a Jewish state at best be today? And what about a university that would offer only the same things as the others? It would certainly not be completely insignificant, but it still could not be compared to the old temple.⁴⁵

What, then, is chiefly missing? It is *the temple and the high priest*. If these existed in Jerusalem, everything else would be of secondary importance. It is true that the devout Catholic also demands the pontifical state, though it be of the smallest dimension. But even without one, and even more without one, his sense of dignity is enhanced by the fact that the politically powerless Pope in Rome, as the purely spiritual ruler of a people of 200 million, is infinitely more than the 'King' of Italy. A hierarchy of twelve million Jews in the world – and that is what constitutes Jewry – would, of course, be something of really great significance for the Jews' sense of

University Library, Jerusalem, Autograph Collection. See also Hans Kippenberg's editorial note in MWG, I/22-2, 223 n. 22.

45. Weber's reference to a projected university in Jerusalem is probably related to Martin Buber's and Chaim Weizmann's proposal propagated at the 11th Zionist congress in 1913. See Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 358. On 27 November 1913, Martin Buber spoke in Heidelberg on 'The Problem of Jewish Religiosity'. In the discussion Weber advanced his pariah thesis; Buber replied that next to the Religion of Law a Jewish folk religion had come into being. See Eckart Otto, 'Die Tora in Max Webers Studien zum Antiken Judentum', *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte*, 7 (2001), 43.

dignity, and it does not matter whether they are believers or not. But where is Zadok's lineage?... Where an orthodoxy which would submit to such a hierarchy?... Where is it possible to do anything like that today?... It seems to me that the real problems of Zionism are bound up with the fact that this is where the values would lie that really concern the Jewish national sense of dignity, which remains closely tied to religious conditions.⁴⁶

It is striking that Weber insisted so much on the religious dilemma of Zionism. For many years, however, secular Zionism succeeded in instilling self-respect and dignity into its followers, especially through its youth organizations. It is true that some orthodox opponents focused their hopes on the restoration of the temple, whereas many others opposed agricultural settlement and state formation.⁴⁷

Among the former was the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935). For many years his antagonist was the secularist Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the leader of the Revisionist Zionists and advocate of mass immigration and self-defense. From the mid-1930s, however, Jabotinsky favored a 'synthesis between nationalism and religion' that came to prevail in later decades.⁴⁸ In the long run Weber's insistence on the importance of the religious justification appears to have been warranted.

Weber's skepticism toward the prospects of Zionism in 1913 did not prevent him from lending his name to a short-lived semi-official committee 'Pro Palästina' in April 1918, together with his brother Alfred and

46. Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 469; translation altered

47. In *Economy and Society and Ancient Judaism* Weber mentions Zionism and orthodox opposition only anecdotally; in *Economy and Society* once more with an American reminiscence: 'Even today residential clustering is characteristic of orthodox Jews when they are contrasted with Jews of the Reform group, as for example in the United States. Similarly, the Sabbatical year, which in its present form is probably a product of post-exilic urban scholars learned in the law, made it impossible for Jews to carry on systematic intensive cultivation of the land. Even at the present time German rabbis endeavor to apply the prescription of the Sabbatical year to Zionist colonization in Palestine, which would be ruined thereby' (p. 618). See also the earlier passage: 'Even now the Zionist colonization of Palestine has met with an absolute impediment in the form of the sabbatical year, a product of theologians of later Judaism. To overcome this difficulty, the eastern European rabbis, in contrast to the more doctrinaire leaders of German Jewish orthodoxy, have had to construe a special dispensation based on the notion that such colonizing is especially pleasing to God' (p. 471). See also *Ancient Judaism* (trans. H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale; New York: Free Press, 1952), 48, 437.

48. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 1972), 365. For a more complex portrayal of Jabotinsky, see Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle. Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Sombart as well as a very heterogeneous group of parliamentarians, professors and publicists.⁴⁹ The committee was supposed to rally Zionist support at a late hour—after the Balfour Declaration and after much of Palestine had already fallen to the British army. Sombart's support was consistent: Ever since his book on Judaism and his public lectures on 'The Future of the Jews' in 1911/12 he had received much Zionist applause because he considered Jewish assimilation impossible and Palestinian colonization the only viable solution. Weber's motivation is, however, less clear. In a conversation in February 1919 recalled by Ernst Lesser, he retained his reservations about Zionism and also seemed to consider an exodus of German Jews undesirable. Matters were apparently different with regard to the *Ostjuden*. By 1915 Weber was much worried about the future status of Poland. He opposed incorporation into Austria, but even more into Prussia because it would not only bring in millions of Poles but also open the frontiers to *Ostjuden*.⁵⁰ At the time he tried and failed to become an official consultant on eastern affairs. Full of resignation, he returned to his studies and buried himself deep in ancient Judaism. An active political role would have prevented him from continuing work on the essays on the world religions on which so much of his international reputation came to rest. Since he could not alleviate 'the problems of Judaism', in truth, largely problems of Germany, retreating to scholarship proved a better fate.

49. See Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1969), 434-35.

50. See Weber's letter to Franz Eulenburg, 28 December, 1915, cited in W. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920* (trans. Michael Steinberg; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 220: 'If incorporation in Austria is not to be considered, and incorporation in Prussia even less so (free movement of those Jews across our borders!), then we ought to discuss the correct tariff policy toward Poland, should it become a "protectorate" of both powers.'