

Jews and Science in German Contexts

Edited by
ULRICH CHARPA
and UTE DEICHMANN

*Schriftenreihe
wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des
Leo Baeck Instituts*

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Mohr Siebeck

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Case Studies from
the 19th and 20th Centuries

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Foreword

In 2003 the Leo Baeck Institute in London (LBI) established a long-term project aimed at documenting and explaining the role of Jews in German-speaking academia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the beginning this project has been carried out in cooperation with the Sidney M. Edelstein Center for the History and Philosophy of Science, Technology and Medicine at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It is also closely connected to the *Modern Jewish History, Culture, and Thought* programme at the University of Sussex which gave the LBI an opportunity to integrate the topic into an educational framework. The project received its initial impetus from an exchange with Dan Diner (Jerusalem and Leipzig) which led to a conference organised by the Simon Dubnow Institute, Leipzig, in 2002, and the publication of a special section on science and the Jews in that institute's 2004 Yearbook. Apart from the editors, two other participants of the first meeting in Leipzig, Ruth Lewin Sime and Anthony S. Travis, contributed to the current volume. Other articles by members of the LBI research project have appeared recently in various journals and collected volumes. The present book is the first "home-publication" of the project and we owe great thanks to our colleagues at the LBI, especially Gabriele Rahaman for her careful editing of the articles, and the editors of the *Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts*, John Grenville and Raphael Gross, for their advice.

In connection with the LBI project four workshops were organised, three in Jerusalem (one in 2003 and two in 2006) and one in Brighton (2004). The project is an integral part of current developments in the field of Jewish Studies as well as that of history and philosophy of science. As to the first, this is reflected in the foundation of *Aleph – Historical Studies in Science & Judaism* in 2001, an annual journal edited by Gad Freudenthal and published by the Edelstein Center at the Hebrew University. *Aleph* is devoted to the exploration of the interface between Judaism and science. Its appearance provided the motivation for a serious engagement with questions related to Jews and the sciences, especially since *Aleph* also publishes scholarly pieces on modernity by authors such as David Hollinger and Shulamit Volkov. However, the main emphasis has been on the mediaeval period, since here the interrelations are more clear-cut because Jewish proto-scientists and

scholars can be primarily conceived of as Jews who connect their scholarly work with religious or theological attitudes. In the realm of modernity, however, with scientists becoming increasingly secular, attempts to create a relationship between Judaism and science pose a problem. The current volume addresses these difficulties at various levels by, for example, reconstructing the way in which Jewish scientists were concentrated in particular disciplines as well as by analysing practical and intellectual issues, emphasising certain ways of practising science, and looking at the methodology and metaphysics of science.

In contrast to most of the increasing number of biographical studies related to German-Jewish scientists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the emphasis here is on their science. The authors examine the relationships between the cultural and social situations on the one hand and various scientific activities on the other. The contributions document general tendencies as well as individual cases of research practices, achievements, attitudes and biases of Jewish scientists mostly in Germany and Austria but also in the United Kingdom and Palestine/Israel. At the same time, attitudes of non-Jews towards Jewish scientists are also considered.

The focus of the first section is on research practices, achievements, and their background.

Ute Deichmann analyses the work of Ferdinand Cohn, one of the founders of microbiology in the late nineteenth century. It is argued that the value which he attributed to empiricism, to the knowledge of literature in the field, to the outstanding research by others, his readiness to criticise and reject claims, and his predilection for reasoning can be related at least to some extent to his experience of the “testimonial” Jewish traditional education in his youth. In addition Deichmann draws attention to the possibility of drawing parallels between Cohn’s predilection for “discreteness” in nature – the individuality of bacterial strains – and the primarily legislative character of the Jewish religion and its classificational basis. This leads to the general problem of whether experience in religious practices may have at least in some cases contributed to a researcher’s predilection towards certain principles and methodologies in science. Questions of this type have been discussed extensively with regard to Newton and others, and there is thus every reason not to neglect them in this field.

In common with microbiology, chemistry was an area in which Jews played a major role in the nineteenth century. By focussing on Raphael Meldola, grandson of a chief Sephardi rabbi in London, and president of the British Chemical Society, who emphasised the achievements of German chemists in the English-speaking world, Anthony Travis explores the overrepresentation of German-Jewish chemists and entrepreneurs in the dye-making industry. He relates their success to craft skills, developed for centu-

ries in the Jewish communities, to existing occupation patterns as well as to new opportunities and restrictions on academic advancement. At the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century Jews were still among the most prominent contributors to chemistry in Germany.

Moritz Epple's article deals with the early activities in applied mathematics, literature and philosophical criticism of Felix Hausdorff, who (under the pseudonym of Paul Mongré) was a radical, Nietzsche-inspired critic of metaphysics and also a modernist mathematician engaged in set theory. Epple argues that the style of Hausdorff's later ground-breaking mathematical work was influenced significantly by his earlier intellectual outlook, with both being at quite a distance from cultural and scientific mainstream traditions in nineteenth century Germany. Whereas some aspects of Hausdorff's professional career can be easily related to his Jewish background, the question of whether or not, and to what extent, this background contributed to his remarkable – and in many ways singular – intellectual output remains an open question.

Deichmann's second contribution distinguishes between two different ways of working in biochemical research in early twentieth century Germany and analyses the backgrounds to both. She portrays Leonor Michaelis and his work as the representative of a group of highly successful, mainly Jewish, scientists who by a unique combination of (quantitative and exact) empirical research and theorising, as well as by possessing the abilities to bridge various scientific fields, became leading figures in novel research at the interface of medicine, biology and chemistry, in particular immunology, enzymology and intermediate metabolism. Emil Abderhalden here represents the majority of German – Jewish and non-Jewish – medical biochemists whose work was less scientific, lacking in rigorous experimentation and emphasising strongly medical application and concepts of colloidal chemistry.

The main theme of the second section of this volume is the impact of religious and ideological attitudes on scientific research and acceptance in society.

Raphael Falk portrays three Zionist scientists in the first decades of the twentieth century, Shneur Zalman Bychowski, Redcliffe Nathan Salaman, and Fritz Shimon Bodenheimer. Despite their very different religious and social backgrounds, they shared the seemingly contradictory aims of re-establishing a biological entity "Jew" while promoting universal humanistic values at the same time. Falk claims that this humanistic version of nationalism also allowed practising Zionists to maintain explicit racial and eugenic notions in spite of the developments in Nazi and post-war Germany.

Nurit Kirsh analyses the influences of Zionism as well as those of German antisemitic traditions on the research in human population genetic con-

ducted by three Israeli researchers who were former German or Austrian citizens, namely the physicians Chaim Sheba and Joseph Gurevitch and the geneticist Elisabeth Goldschmidt. Whereas their research complied with international scientific standards, the explanations they put forward were biased by virtue of excluding conclusions at variance with accepted Zionist views. Thus differences between Ashkenazi and Oriental Jews were established, but, in accordance with the Zionist ethos and German antisemitic traditions, they were also interpreted by the researchers according to the idea of a common biological origin of all Jews.

Yael Hashiloni-Dolev draws on her extensive study of attitudes towards reproductive genetics in Israel and Germany when examining the impact of religious cultures on the practical implementation of this science. She shows that Jewish and Christian religious understandings of abortion, eugenics, disability, suffering, and interference with nature (or God's creation) are relevant to the ethical dilemmas related to reproductive genetics in both countries, and even among citizens who claim to be secular. Whereas Jewish culture in Israel stresses the potential blessings of reproductive genetics, Christian culture in Germany emphasises its potential moral burdens, since it "plays God", has no respect for foetuses, and denies the value of suffering.

Ulrich Charpa attempts to shed new light on the question of Einstein's "Jewishness" as a scientist. He examines the view that most of what is widely cited in this regard – namely his political and social activities – can be characterised as actions *in favour of* Jews and not as features of a Jewish identity, and least of all as being decisive for his identity as a Jewish scientist. Even more disturbing in Charpa's view is the fact that Einstein's quasi-religious *Weltanschauung* which plays an essential part in his concept of science turns major traditional Jewish attitudes on their head. Charpa advocates the thesis that Einstein's way of looking at science and religion is an isolated anachronism, a very specific example of "Jewishness" mirroring central ideas of mid-nineteenth century German Reform Judaism. It was transmitted to Einstein by the prolific writer Aaron Bernstein whose books Einstein had read in his youth and about which he was still enthusiastic in his later years.

The third section focuses on Nazi Germany and the post-Nazi period, respectively, to examine the role of antisemitism in academia, though this topic enters into most of the essays.

The discussion about science and Nazi ideology has mainly focussed on "German" or "Aryan" Physics. In his contribution Aharon Loewenstein deals with an interesting but neglected international aspect to this topic, namely an article published in April 1938 by the German physicist Johannes Stark in the prominent English journal *Nature* entitled: "The Pragmatic and Dogmatic Spirit in Physics". Stark divides the world of physics into the "dogmatic" and the "pragmatic", the desired "pragmatic" sector being repre-

sented mostly by “Aryan” scientists, the undesired “dogmatic” one by Jewish scientists. Loewenstein analyses the background to the publication of this antisemitic article and the response it received from the scientific community.

Ruth Lewin Sime uses the post-war correspondence of Albert Einstein, Otto Meyerhof, and Lise Meitner with their former colleagues in Germany, Otto Hahn and Max von Laue, to analyse how some National-Socialist practices were continued after the end of the Second World War. In sharp contrast to the émigrés, Laue and Hahn played down the recent past because they regarded its memory as incompatible with their advocacy for German science and Germany and saw their émigré colleagues as permanent outsiders. Meitner and Meyerhof, sensitive to the prevailing mentality, refused offers to return to Germany.

The volume ends with a prosopographical overview by Simone Wenkel. Using a variety of sources, she gives a statistical overview of the participation of German-Jewish scientists in various fields of science and medicine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and draws up an extensive list that includes names and some biographical data on German-speaking Jewish scientists and medical scientists.

London, July 2006

The Editors

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I. Introduction by the Editors

Problems, Phenomena, Explanatory Approaches

Who is a German-Jewish Scientist?

1. *The Einstein case and its paradoxes*

On 14 March 1929, Albert Einstein's fiftieth birthday, the *Soncino-Gesellschaft der Freunde des jüdischen Buches zu Berlin* (Soncino society of the friends of the Jewish book in Berlin), marked the event by publishing the booklet *Gelegentliches* (A Miscellany). Its thirty-two pages included pronouncements by Einstein on the relationship between science and politics, on being Jewish, and on certain prominent personalities. Some of Einstein's opinions included in the topic of "*konfessionelle Traditionen*" (confessional traditions) were those which he considered himself unable to accept other than in terms of historical or psychological issues.¹ Though the society of bibliophiles was enthusiastic about the "Jewish genius" the fact that they were an obscure body prevented the booklet from receiving attention. The "Soncinos" were named after Joshua Soncino, the most successful of those early printers at the end of the fifteenth century who set up Hebrew presses. His first printing in Hebrew was the first Talmud tractate, *Berakhoth*. It starts by tackling the question at which time one should utter the *sh'ma* – the central tenet of the Jewish "*konfessionelle Tradition*". Most likely Einstein's answer to the rabbinic problem would simply have been "Never!"

While there is no need for historians of science to discuss whether or not such an answer would have caused Joshua Soncino to turn in his grave, Einstein's attitude towards his Jewishness is intriguing, particularly in view of his mythic status. Historian Shulamit Volkov observed that "If anyone may be compared with Einstein, it is two famous non-Jews"², namely Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen and Wilhelm Ostwald. Volkov makes this point in the course of her discussion on the reflections by Thorstein Veblen and others concerning the success of Jews in modern science. Volkov decided to omit Albert Einstein from her analysis of the part played by Jews in Ger-

¹ *Gelegentliches von Albert Einstein*, Berlin 1929, pp. 9 f.

² Shulamit Volkov, 'Jewish Scientists in Imperial Germany (Parts I and II)', in *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism*, vol. 1 (2001), pp. 215–281, here p. 260.

man research institutions. Here we shall not go into the reasons for this exclusion.³

Nevertheless, no study of the role of Jews in nineteenth and twentieth century German academia can avoid dealing with Einstein. However “atypical” we may consider him to be, according to current perceptions he is not only the representative of twentieth century science, but also the icon of a Jewish scientist. It is not by chance that Veblen, whose essay initiated the socio-historical discussion of the “intellectual pre-eminence of Jews” was fascinated by Einstein⁴ – even though the real Jewish figure in the background of his essay was probably his close friend Jacques Loeb.⁵ Moreover Volkov’s assessment that “Much of what has been written about scientists in general and Jewish scientists in particular revolves, strangely enough, around this enigmatic figure.”⁶ draws on the bibliographic content of the *Yearbooks of the Leo Baeck Institute*⁷ through the years to make her point. We concur. In comparison to the Einstein literature, relatively little has been published on Paul Ehrlich, Fritz Haber, Hermann Minkowski, Otto Stern, Richard Willstätter and other prominent Jewish scientists. There is no alternative to taking the bull by the horns – and the horns are the horns of a pragmatic dilemma:

- (Aa) Einstein is the most prominent *Jewish* person of the twentieth century.
- (Ab) His fame is grounded in his outstanding contribution to *science*.

›contrasts with‹

- (Ba) Einstein would never have agreed to the thesis that being *Jewish* matters in *science*.
- (Bb) Those people who advocated the thesis that being Jewish matters in science were antisemites and opponents of his contribution to science (the representatives of *Deutsche Physik*).

³ Volkov adopts the widespread romantic idea of Einstein as isolated genius and outsider. ‘Genialism’ is criticised in Ulrich Charpa and Ute Deichmann, ‘Jewish scientists as geniuses and epigones – scientific practices and attitudes towards them: Albert Einstein, Ferdinand Cohn, Richard Goldschmidt’, in *Studia Rosenthaliana* (forthcoming). As to Röntgen and Ostwald, the story of outsiders can also be criticised for several reasons.

⁴ On this see William T. Ganley, ‘A Note on the Intellectual Connection between Albert Einstein and Thorstein Veblen’, in *Journal of Economic Issues* 31 (1997), pp. 245–250.

⁵ See Charles Rasmussen and Jacques R. Tilman, *Loeb: His Science and Social Activism and Their Philosophical Foundations*, Philadelphia 1998, (chap. V: ‘Loeb’s influence on Thorstein Veblen’), pp. 93–121.

⁶ Volkov, ‘Jewish Scientists’, p. 257.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 257, fn. 11.

2. On connecting science to particular individuals and groups

To commentators on science there seem to exist three possible reactions to the dilemma (that reflect in some ways Groucho Marx's paradoxical joke on his refusing to join a club that would accept him as a member). They mirror the well-known oppositions in history and philosophy of science connected to catchwords like "relativism", "objectivism", "internalism", "externalism" and so on. The three attitudes are the following:

1) Science is *not* an objective affair. Irrespective of whether Jews constitute a relevant and interesting sample, science is a matter of groups and it is driven by their interests. As to Einstein's objectivism, it is nothing more than a case of a philosophical self-deception on how scientific views are "fabricated". In the words of social constructivists the Theory of Relativity, "is a truth which came into being as a result of decisions about how we should live our scientific lives, and how we should license our scientific observations: it was a truth brought about by agreement to agree about new things."⁸ The usage of the word "truth" is only confusing if we consider the presuppositions held here. Said in a somewhat formal manner: to the relativist to describe a theory by a group G as true is a statement on the attitudes of G and not on the truth-value of the theory. What is meant by the social constructivist commentators in this case is that the Theory of Relativity is neither true nor false in the traditional sense. It is interpreted, and categorically seen, as something like a castle or a flag, a product serving the specific purposes of a particular social group.

The same holds true for the level of the *meta-scientific* evaluation of a researcher's contribution. Assessing a contribution to science such as Einstein's as excellent or outstanding is socially fabricated in the same way as is science. Einstein's fame is part of the ideology that accompanies the triumph of those theoretical physicists who "defeated" their opponents. There is no objective meta-scientific criterion that would prevent historians from writing the reverse story with Philipp Lenard and Johannes Stark and other representatives of *Deutsche Physik* as "heroes".

2) Particular contexts, orientations and human factors of all kinds do not have anything to do with the quality of scientific work. If the work of a scientist can be connected to those factors it is *bad* science, as for example Lysenko's genetics in Stalin's Soviet Union. If we consider Einstein as a great researcher we should avoid speaking of him as a Jewish scientist in the strict sense of the word. Instead, it would be more correct to say that we are dealing with a scientist who in a manner of speaking is "occasionally" Jewish,

⁸ Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch, *The Golem: What Everyone Should Know about Science*, Cambridge 1993, p. 54.

meaning that his Jewishness is detached from his universal contribution to scientific progress. And if there are any connections between the history of science and the history of the Jews at all, there are only those such as the well-known tendency of prominent scientists to take advantage of the fame of the specialist to promote some non-scientific, in this case “Jewish”, objectives.

3) The quality of scientific work can be influenced by characteristics of the individuals who carry it out. Scientific progress goes along with favourable human conditions, attitudes towards learning, being talented, being inclined to work assiduously, the existence of social surroundings that hold someone in high esteem because of his or her achievements as a researcher and so on. This does not exclude the idea of scientific truth.

Position 1) has the merits of drawing our attention to interesting topics, but the disadvantage of leading us into trouble if we have to explain the obvious superiority of some scientific views compared with others. We all share many “progressivist” intuitions, for example, the one that modern astronomy has a much *better* predictive and explanatory power than Ptolemy’s system. Seen against the background of what the relativist calls the “decisions about how we should live our scientific lives” this superiority is not explicable. Even more irritating for relativists is the fact that modern astronomy is superior even according to Ptolemy’s own methodological concepts.⁹

As to Relativity Theory – “our scientific life” in 2006 is vastly different from that of 1905, when Einstein’s and Poincaré’s first essays were published. Imperial Germany, the Berne Patent office, the French Third Republic, are long gone, but the robustness of Relativity Theory is evident. Researchers all around the world working in different social and political contexts agree on the same theory and its empirical support, a “miracle” to the relativists – and a matter of course to their opponents.

Position 2) mystifies scientific progress and collides with the “real story”. Progress is modelled as a self-regulated change somehow above and beyond the heads of the scientists. But researchers are human beings, living their lives not in isolation – and, as history of science has shown, scientific change is not an *optimal* advance at every point of the research process. In many cases theories and empirical techniques that were well suited to make their superiority evident in the long run were not necessarily the best choice from the beginning (heliocentrism was empirically seen not a well supported model of planetary motion in Copernicus’s epoch).

Position 3) recommends itself as a course between that of relativism and the one pursuing the isolation of science from scientists. In sociological terms

⁹ Cf. among others, G. E. R. Lloyd, ‘Saving the Appearances’, in *idem*, *Methods and Problems in Greek Science*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 248–277.

it has already been outlined in the writings by Robert Merton, Joseph Ben-David and others. Science insofar as it turns out to be epistemically¹⁰ reliable, relevant and excellent in some other respects is not merely a social product, but a social *achievement* – it comes into being under specific, favourable conditions. Among these conditions are the availability of material things like libraries and laboratories; but the main factors are the competences of learned human beings and their will to practice them.

Why has this simple approach along the lines of our commonsense thinking about achievements not flourished and why has it apparently lost its appeal in recent decades? At the philosophical level this goes along with the development of philosophical action theory, especially the influence of authors such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Donald Davidson and Georg Henrik von Wright. Summing it up in simple terms, modern action theory starts with differentiating between action and mere behaviour and identifies “volitional” factors (motives, intentions) as being decisive in this respect. The next philosophical step is to discuss the nature of such mental states and to determine their connection to these states, such as belief. The logic of action explanations varies the elementary structure of the “Practical Syllogism”: in the language of von Wright and others P does A, because P aims at B and believes A to be an adequate means to accomplish B.

This line of thinking on action and its explanation makes it easy to overlook that motives are *not* always the most *relevant* explanatory factors.¹¹ In the normal case, *achievements* – that is, actions of a good or even excellent quality compared with other actions – cannot be convincingly explained by motives. If, for example, a chess grandmaster defeats a trained amateur, this cannot be plausibly explained by his stronger will to win. According to our everyday experience, the “volitional” factor will be much more powerful for the amateur. To explain the grandmaster’s achievement one has to refer to “non-volitional” factors, such as his knowledge about thousands of chess sequences, his intelligence, his prior experience and so on, in other words his *competences*.

Considering the “human factor” – that is the scientists and their capabilities – is a priority task if we are interested in understanding science, particularly scientific progress. And if there are certain individuals or groups of individuals who disproportionately contribute to scientific achievements, such

¹⁰ On the respective philosophy of science see Alvin H. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World*, Oxford 1999, (chap. 8, ‘Science’), pp. 221–291; David Papineau, *Science and Truth*, Inaugural Lecture, King’s College London 1992; Ulrich Charpa, *Wissen und Handeln. Grundzüge einer Forschungstheorie*, Stuttgart 2001.

¹¹ Cf. John McClure and D. J. Hilton, ‘Because You Cannot always Get what You Want: When Preconditions are Better Explanations’, in *British Journal of Social Psychology* 36 (1997), pp. 223–40.

as seventeenth century Jesuits¹², Merton's seventeenth and eighteenth century Protestants and nineteenth century Quakers¹³, they are worthy of documentation and discussion. The narrative of the German-Jewish scientists cannot be excluded from this project. However, as the Einstein case already indicates, there are some serious difficulties with the expressions "Jewish" and "German-Jewish" of the type which do not trouble us when we deal with Jesuits or Quakers.

3. *On vague and classificatory usages of "Jewish" and "German-Jewish"*

(i) "German"

For reasons historical and otherwise we start with the word that does not cause many difficulties, "German". The main two usages are complementary: according to the first, Western tradition of understanding nationality as citizenship, the term in our context would refer to people who spent at least a considerable part of their scientific lives as citizens of Imperial Germany or the Germany of the Weimar Republic. The second understanding of the concept of nation, as developed by Herder and the Romantics, plays down such "external" features and emphasises the importance of language, culture and history. In this sense many citizens of the Habsburg Empire match the concept of being "German", because among other things, the German language was their first or at least their preferred means of communication, or they shared certain "German" customs, such as for example students being members of a *Burschenschaft*. Both usages provide perspectives to commentators that may overlap or coexist. Speaking of a "German-Xish" person is not necessarily burdened with many difficulties. This, however, does not have to apply in every case, as for example with émigrés. The legitimacy depends on the context, that is, the respective questions we are dealing with. There are many reasons to consider someone a German scientist such as, for instance, if the person in question has held an academic position in Germany or has received his or her scientific education there. The main problem, however, occurs with the word "Jewish".

(ii) "Jewish"

The adjective "Jewish" as found in phrases such as "Jewish scientists", "Jewish physicist" and "scientists from Jewish families" varies in its meanings. At one extreme it indicates a meaning in accordance with Stark's

¹² Cf. Mordechai Feingold (ed.), *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters*, Cambridge, MA 2002.

¹³ Cf. Geoffrey Cantor, 'Quaker Responses to Darwin', in *Osiris*, vol. 16 (2001): *Science in Theistic Contexts*, pp. 321–342.

(*Jüdische Physik*) and Bieberbach's (*Jüdische Mathematik*) views as well as with those of other representatives of so-called "German" science. Because of this paramount association with National-Socialist constructs it is advisable not to make use of expressions like "Jewish science". Moving away from that, we might as well simply refer to those kinds of science that were carried out by people whose Jewishness was relevant, in the same sense that it is sensible to speak of Jewish handicraft in mediaeval Spain. It might be appropriate, for instance, to describe the disciplinary position of religiously distinguishable graduates. This has distinct analogies in sociological studies of science based on the demarcation of a given population i.e. the classificatory usage of "Jewish". The representation of Jewish scientists in the academic world becomes in that way a quantitative fact in need of an explanation – as for example the apparent over-achievement of Israeli mathematicians.¹⁴ However, the basis of the classification of "Jewish" persons, which is indispensable for quantitative inquiries, is still an unsettled problem in as much as it cannot refer to a group sharing the same kind of label. One manages by following conventions, for example adhering to verifiable denominations, but the problems are obvious when looking at the insufficiency of the German Biographical Dictionaries ADB and NBD classifications (see the last chapter of this volume).

The origin of these problems becomes clear if we take into consideration the fact that the relationship between the components of phrases such as "Jewish physicist" in everyday usage is far more complex than is the case with a classification. Most of our everyday predicates are *vague* which means they include a comparison. For example we speak of hard wood as opposed to soft wood – but do not consider it hard compared to steel.

Adjectives such as "German" or "Israeli" seem to take on a special or unique status; we generally interpret them as classifying. In the case of the adjective "Jewish", matters stand differently: it is not established whether phrases such as "Jewish scientist" or "Jewish families" mark an *intersection between the set of scientists and that of Jews*. Matching other everyday phrases leads us to position an entity called Jew in a quasi-series, for example describing a certain building as a house. This alternative can be found again at the level of the usage of nouns. The English language offers two substantival matches for the expression "Jewish"¹⁵:

¹⁴ Thomas Schøtt, 'Scientific productivity and international integration of small countries: Mathematics in Denmark and Israel', in *Minerva* 25 (1987), pp. 3–20.

¹⁵ The Hebrew word 'yehudi' has an adjectival as well as a substantival usage.

(A) “Jew” or “Jews”¹⁶

(B) “Jewishness” (“Yiddischkeit”¹⁷ in Yiddish)¹⁸

Case (A) is connected to a predominantly classificatory usage. Divergences, that is the vague usage (which can be traced, among others, to Maimonides), will be dealt with later. Case (B) demands a *vague*, that is consequentially seen, comparative usage to maintain plausibility. In line with the classificatory usage of (A) someone is *either* Jewish *or* not; the vague use of (B) characterises a person as being *more or less* a Jew or Jewish, respectively. How both usages of “Jewish” allow or exclude phrases like “the Jewish contribution to science” will be discussed in the following.

(iii) *The classificatory usage of “Jewish” and “Jew”, respectively*

Classifying a person as “Jewish”, and respectively as a Jew, is a linguistic practice found in a multitude of more or less everyday contexts, such as the ordinary registration of parishioners. With the current context of discourse in mind, the two relevant classificatory usages are: the halakhic classification and the National-Socialist one.

The National-Socialist classification

National-Socialist classifications characterised certain individuals as “full Jews”, “half Jews”, “half-castes of first and second class”, and as “three-eighth-Jews” (Globke), which in many cases even led to confusion among National Socialists themselves.¹⁹ Despite the fact that these classifications now seem quite strange, one must not ignore the fact that they are absolutely relevant for contemporary scientific historical research, since certain biographical phenomena can only be explained by the nature of these National-Socialist classifications: it may be that a “three-quarter-Jew” as defined by National-Socialist terminology cannot – from the halakhic perspective – count as a Jew at all. Curt Herzstark is a case in point. He was a computer-pioneer, whose “ethnicity” appears far more comprehensible if a National-Socialist approach is

¹⁶ In Hebrew this usage would match relating someone to *am yisrael* or *yahadut*.

¹⁷ Somewhat differing from this appraisal as vague expression referring to a personality feature is Jacob Neusner, ‘Defining Judaism’ in *idem* and A. J. Avery-Peck, *The Blackwell Reader to Judaism*, Oxford 2001, pp. 3–18, here p. 4, who obviously acknowledges the specificity of the Yiddish expression (“refers more specifically to the folk elements of the faith”), but nevertheless identifies it with Judaism.

¹⁸ There is no analogue in modern Hebrew. It follows the categorical vocabulary of the old language. One could perhaps coin something like “*yehudiyut*” in order to express what at best is paraphrased as “*be-zurah yehudit*” (“in a Jewish way”). One should perhaps note that there is also an English usage of “*Yiddishkeit*” that is neglected here.

¹⁹ An overview on this is given in Jeremy Noakes, ‘The Development of Nazi Policy towards the German-Jewish “Mischlinge” 1933–1945’, in *LBI Year Book*, vol. 34 (1989), pp. 291–354.

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