

HENRY C. SOUSSAN

*The Gesellschaft zur  
Förderung der Wissenschaft  
des Judentums*  
in Its Historical Context

*Schriftenreihe  
wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen  
des Leo Baeck Instituts*

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*Dedicated to Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Lucas*

*18 September 1872 (Marburg) –  
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Henry C. Soussan

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## Abbreviations

AVJGL	Akademischer Verein für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur
AWJ-KB	Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins zur Gründung und Erhaltung einer Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums
AZJ	Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums
CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People
CJ	Centrum Judaicum, Berlin
CV	Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens
CW	Die Christliche Welt
DIGB	Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund
DLZ	Deutsche Literaturzeitung
GFWJ	Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums
HJB	Historisches Jahrbuch
HVJS	Historische Vierteljahresschrift
HZ	Historische Zeitschrift
IDR	Im Deutschen Reich
IF	Israelitisches Familienblatt
JC	Jewish Chronicle
JJGL	Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur
JJLG	Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft
JL	Jüdisches Lexikon
JNUL	Jewish National and University Library
JP	Die Jüdische Presse
JR	Jüdische Rundschau
LBIB	Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts
LBIYB	Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute
LZ	Literarisches Zentralblatt für Deutschland
LZB	Literarisches Zentralblatt
MGWJ	Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums
RÉJ	Révue des Études Juives
TG	Theologie und Glaube
ThLB	Theologisches Literaturblatt
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
ThR	Theologische Revue



## Introduction

Any research on the history of European Jewry is written in the shadow of the Holocaust. The researcher is aware of this fact and must try at all times to maintain an emotional distance from the events that led to the destruction of most of European Jewry. Such objectivity becomes especially necessary when the subject at hand is German Jewry and what is arguably its most important contribution to Jewish history, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the movement to understand Jewish religion and culture from a rigorously scholarly perspective. Consistently stamped by controversy, this movement was essential in the adaptation of Judaism as a religion to a modern, post-emancipatory environment; a development that has itself been both praised and vilified from different viewpoints along the religious Jewish spectrum. At this book's centre are the activities of the foremost German-Jewish organization to advance and further this movement, the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which existed between 1902 and its forced dissolution in 1938. Any study of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is incomplete without an analysis of the *Gesellschaft*, yet surprisingly little scholarly information is to be found about this organization. In order to place the organization in a historical and ideological context, an overview of the most important developments within *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is necessary, with particular emphasis on the ideological-religious ties between outstanding personalities and institutions tied to *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the period preceding the organization's foundation. This discussion will thus focus in part on the situation of Jewish *Wissenschaft* starting at the turn of the twentieth century, when internal and external influences prompted a break with traditional approaches to Jewish studies; a development paving the way for the emergence of a new scholarly methodology within the discipline.

*Wissenschaft des Judentums* offered each of the religious factions of German Jewry – Liberal, Conservative, and neo-Orthodox – a “scientific” justification for its view of Judaism; it helped shape a new identity for followers of one or the other denomination.<sup>1</sup> Crucially, the movement was always the subject of controversy, particularly within the religious Jewish community, where there

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<sup>1</sup> See M. A. Meyer, ‘Jüdische Wissenschaft und Jüdische Identität’, in J. Carlebach (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums: Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa*, pp. 3–20.

existed a strong feeling that it was too far removed from traditional Jewish learning. It was commonly held that in their eagerness to imitate non-Jewish academic developments, the proponents of *Wissenschaft* were diluting the identity of the Jewish people.

By far the most substantial criticism came from an outstanding scholar himself raised in the *Wissenschaft* tradition. Gershom Scholem first formulated his severe critique of the movement in 1944.<sup>2</sup> Several years later, he reiterated his original position, albeit in a somewhat milder tone.<sup>3</sup> The gist of the critique, however, remained the same: the movement was, he felt, “created and became effective under the influence of antiquated, idealistic and romantic ideas.”<sup>4</sup> Scholem portrayed the state of Jewish *Wissenschaft* in terms of a sorry juxtaposition. On the one side was the living organism of the Jewish people, on the other its scholarly rationalization; a rationalization often leading to a “censorship of the Jewish past”<sup>5</sup> arising from fear of discussing that “which happened in the cellar.”<sup>6</sup> The movement both embodied and was overshadowed by a “tendency to liquidate Judaism as a living organism.”<sup>7</sup> Life and death imagery pervades Scholem’s essay; his basic argument culminates in a putative citation of the eminent German-Jewish scholar Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907): “The only task left is to give the remains of Judaism a dignified funeral.”<sup>8</sup> For Scholem, the reason those engaged in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had mainly focused on apologetics was “that no purely academic institution existed addressing scholarly problems outside of any religious forum ... resulting in an inability to undertake meaningful projects.”<sup>9</sup> In Scholem’s view, the turning point in this situation occurred with the emergence of Zionism, which once again approached Judaism as a living organism.<sup>10</sup>

In retrospect, the attitude towards *Wissenschaft des Judentums* revealed by such statements would appear at best to lack balance, at worst to be egre-

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<sup>2</sup> G. Scholem, ‘Mitoch Hirhurim al Chokmat Jisrael’, in *Luach Haaretz* 4 (1944–1945), p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, ‘*Wissenschaft des Judentums* einst und jetzt’, in *Judaica* 1, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, ‘*Wissenschaft des Judentums* einst und jetzt’, p. 148. In his last published essay on the topic, Scholem reverted to his original severe stance. *ibid.*, ‘Die *Wissenschaft vom Judentum*’, *Judaica* 6, pp. 9–52.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> Although this quotation’s authenticity is dubious in that it seems to be found nowhere but in Scholem’s text, it has become firmly ensconced in the scholarly literature.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 157–158. The interrelationship of European scholars and their influence on the Jewish national movement has recently been examined by D. N. Myers in *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past. European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*.

giously unfair.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, as a result of Scholem's stature his attitude has often been reflected in various works discussing the movement over past decades.<sup>12</sup>

One question in particular must be addressed for initial assessment: how did the movement's protagonists view their own position with regard to both the German-Jewish community and the wider non-Jewish community? In this respect, it is important to note that the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums*, whose membership consisted of the vast majority of the leading German-Jewish scholars of Judaism, came into being precisely as a result of an intensifying crisis of learning – a widening gulf between scholarship and life that threatened to alienate the general population from the scholarly elite. Consideration of the activities of the *Gesellschaft* will allow us to verify the claim made in 1903 by the historian Simon Bernfeld (1860–1940) that this organization was an essential agent in the emergence of the so-called Jewish renaissance at the turn of the century, itself involving a conscious overcoming of this gulf.<sup>13</sup>

In a detailed discussion of the *Gesellschaft*, attention needs to be given to preceding organizations that shared its goal of disseminating knowledge to the public. Efforts in that direction are evident from the start, especially in the work of the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (henceforth *Culturverein*), the *Institut zur Förderung der Israelitischen Kultur*, and the *Vereine für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur*. The *Culturverein* in fact represented the first organized body devoted to synthesizing the tenets of Judaism with the findings of modern research while actively influencing prevailing social opinion. While sharing this ethos, the *Gesellschaft* was more consciously concerned with both integrating Jewish scholars representing a wide range of religious perspectives – Liberal and Orthodox – and positioning itself vis-à-vis the Jewish national movement, which viewed it with suspicion. At the same time, the organization was a pioneer of Jewish modernism in its assertion of a break in the hitherto presupposed union between faith and scholarship. Within such a framework, one of the main goals of the *Gesellschaft* was to convince Christian theologians of the cultural significance of Judaism, in the hope of paving the path

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<sup>11</sup> See M. Brocke, 'Gershom Scholem: Wissenschaft des Judentums zwischen Berlin und Jerusalem', in *Freiburger Rundbrief* 3 (1998), pp. 178–186.

<sup>12</sup> G. Scholem, 'Überlegungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums. Vorwort zu einer Rede, die nicht gehalten wurde', (1944), in G. Scholem, *Judaica* 6, pp. 7–52; P. Schäfer, 'Gerschom Scholem und die 'Wissenschaft des Judentums'', in P. Schäfer/G. Smith (eds.), *Gerschom Scholem – Zwischen den Disziplinen*, pp. 122–156; D. Weidener, 'Gerschom Scholem, Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und der 'Ort' des Historikers', in H. Horch, R. Jütte, M.J. Wenninger, (eds.), *Aschkenas. Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Kultur der Juden*, 11J./ H.2, pp. 435–465, here p. 444.

<sup>13</sup> S. Bernfeld, 'Geistige Strömungen im Judentum', in *Ost und West* 3 (1903), pp. 29–40.



to full social and academic acceptance of the Jews. In this respect, it is crucial to keep in mind that in early twentieth century Germany, no department of Jewish history or theology existed at any university.

The ethos of the *Gesellschaft* was defined through the combined efforts of its members, their programs, and their publications. For this reason, it is essential to closely consider the organization's publications within their scholarly context. Like any organization, the *Gesellschaft* attempted to fill a need and influence its environment. We thus also need to analyze the response to the organization by its Jewish and Christian target audiences – something to be accomplished through an examination of book reviews and other written testimonies such as the organization's correspondence. The structure and makeup of its membership as well as its financial situation will further clarify the position held by the organization within both German-Jewish and general German society.

At the start of the twentieth century, overcoming the apparent contradiction between a living religion and its scholarly rationalization had become a central challenge for *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The first independent Jewish research institute in modern Europe, the *Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, founded in 1919, reflected this challenge as a direct continuation of the *Gesellschaft*; like its predecessor, it was an effort – as conceived by Franz Rosenzweig (1887–1929) – to reconnect Jewish *Wissenschaft* to a Jewish community increasingly estranged from its religious and cultural roots. The question of the extent to which the *Akademie* drew on the experience of the *Gesellschaft* will also be addressed in this book.

## Literature and Source Material

Although the sources available for research on *Wissenschaft des Judentums* are diverse and abundant, those for the *Gesellschaft* are surprisingly sparse. Dieter Adelman has offered a first synopsis of its main publications,<sup>14</sup> and Jacques Ehrenfreund has included a brief overview of its activities in his book on Jewish memory and German nationality.<sup>15</sup> Some of the main sources analyzing these activities consist of both minutes of board meetings and annual reports, regularly included in the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*; furthermore, the annual reports sent out to members sometimes differ from the annual reports found in the *Monatsschrift* in that they include

<sup>14</sup> D. Adelman, 'Die Religion der Vernunft im Grundriss der Gesamtwissenschaft des Judentums', in H. Holzhey, G. Motzkin and H. Wiedebach (eds), *Religion of Reason out of the sources of Judaism: Tradition and the Concept of Origin in Hermann Cohen's later work*, pp. 3–35.

<sup>15</sup> J. Ehrenfreund, *Mémoire juive et nationalité allemande*, pp. 145–148.

crucial additional information such as detailed financial statements and membership lists. Many of these reports have been preserved in the archives of the *Centrum Judaicum* in Berlin and were made available to me.

The collection of private and official correspondence at the *Centrum Judaicum* stems from the *Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden* – the archives where the *Gesellschaft* sent its documentation for storage. The files include records up to 1925; a smaller collection can be found at the National Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.

Publications of the *Gesellschaft* constitute additional sources used in the framework of this book. Analysis of these works forms a basis for understanding the organization's role in the general development of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Locating a variety of contemporary book reviews made it possible to assess the scholarly and general public reception of these works. In order to depict the non-Jewish as well as Jewish reception, the most widely circulated newspapers and journals were considered. The Jewish journals include the *Monatsschrift*, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, *Die Jüdische Presse*, *Der Israelit*, *Das Hamburger Familienblatt*, and *Ost und West*. Non-Jewish scholarly journals include the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, the *Theologisches Literaturblatt*, the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, the *Zeitschrift für altorientalische Wissenschaften*, and the *Historische Jahresschrift*. Newspaper articles printed for special occasions such as jubilees and historical volumes formed an additional basis for assessing the organization's influence.

A great number of outstanding scholars were involved in the organization's activities. A group of the most important figures will be considered: Martin Philippon (1846–1916), Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943), Gustav Karpeles (1848–1909), and Samuel Krauss (1866–1948). The personal correspondence they left behind includes further valuable source material. Archival sources of this type will maintain their value for this and future studies in *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Because of the sheer volume of such material, its use has been limited to the most pertinent articles.

# I. The Movement of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*: A Historical Overview

## The Early Phase of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

“The entry of the Jews into the totality of modern culture finds its conscious expression in the concept of a *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.”<sup>16</sup>

Although the literature devoted to *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is by now enormous,<sup>17</sup> much of it has centred on the movement’s foundations and its significance for the intellectual history of the Jews. In this respect, the work of Siegfried Ucko and Ismar Schorsch – the latter focusing on the intellectual-ideological premises of the movement’s founding generation – is especially noteworthy.<sup>18</sup>

While scholars tend to agree about the centrality of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* for the development of modern Judaism, less agreement is apparent concerning the movement’s definition.<sup>19</sup> Despite outlining an entire program for the movement, Abraham Geiger denied the need for any such definition whatsoever. For his part, although writing within the framework of his own profound scepticism, Gershom Scholem stated, broadly and positively, in 1963 that “*Wissenschaft vom Judentum* [sic.] means for us a cognizance of our own nature and history.”<sup>20</sup> More recently, Shulamit Volkov has defined the movement as the source of the single most important contribution to the “project of modernity”. Volkov argues that *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is German Jewry’s

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<sup>16</sup> S. Ucko, ‘Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Wissenschaft des Judentums. Motive des Kulturvereins vom Jahre 1819’, in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 5 (1934), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> A selected bibliography can be found in J. Carlebach (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 221–230.

<sup>18</sup> S. Ucko, ‘Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen’, pp. 1–35. A number of Ismar Schorsch’s most influential essays have been assembled in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*.

<sup>19</sup> See A. Geiger, ‘Allgemeine Einleitung in die Wissenschaft des Judentums’, in *Nachgelassene Schriften* 2, ed. by L. Geiger, pp. 33–242.

<sup>20</sup> G. Scholem, ‘Wissenschaft vom Judentum einst und jetzt’, p. 148.

unique contribution, which she terms the “invention of tradition”.<sup>21</sup> An effort to clarify the parameters and contents of the movement is manifest from the start in an essay by Immanuel Wolf. Wolf (born Wohlwill, 1799–1847), was co-founder of the *Culturverein*, the first of many German-Jewish organizations responding to a combination of antisemitism and inter-communal tension. As a society devoted to promoting Jewish culture and knowledge, the *Culturverein* was established by some of the early champions of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*: Eduard Gans (1798–1839), Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), Moses Moser (1796–1838), and Wolf. In both its objectives and ultimate failure, the *Culturverein* offers a key to understanding the emergence of subsequent organizations.

Following Napoleon’s efforts to introduce Jewish civil equality, the inclination of Germany’s Jews to embrace the ideals of emancipation was further strengthened by the Prussian edict of 1812, which granted native-born status and citizenship to all legally resident Jews.<sup>22</sup> Only three years later, emancipatory hopes ran up against the contradictory regulations adopted by the different states at the Congress of Vienna. In August 1819, the *Hep-Hep* riots broke out in Würzburg. They quickly spread to neighbouring communities – a development which confronted Germany’s Jewish population with an expression of anti-Judaism reminiscent of medieval pogroms. Although the *Culturverein* is generally believed to have been brought into existence as a direct result of the riots, a recently published letter by Zunz – commonly considered the ultimate founder of Jewish *Wissenschaft* – emphasizes the inter-communal and educational significance of this pioneering project.<sup>23</sup> Its underlying goal was to study Judaism using the philological methods that had been pioneered in German universities; but this goal had a political dimension: confirmation of Judaism’s universal values, hence refutation of the pejorative image it had taken on for many non-Jews in Germany, and a significant number of Jews as well. In this way, a “rehabilitation” of German Jewry would be a natural consequence of the organization’s activities.

Along with establishing a research institute, the *Culturverein* published the first periodical devoted to that research, the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, edited by Zunz.<sup>24</sup> The *Culturverein* also instituted a practice of holding lectures for later publication in the *Zeitschrift*. Through the lecture medium, Zunz thus strove for inner emancipation – a re-education of the

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<sup>21</sup> See S. Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation*, p. 106.

<sup>22</sup> S. M. Dubnov, *Die neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes (1789–1914)*, *Das Zeitalter der ersten Emanzipation*, p. 209.

<sup>23</sup> See E. Lutz, *Der Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums und sein Mitglied H. Heine*, p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> L. Zunz (ed.), *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 1823. Suspended after three issues.

German-Jewish masses in the spirit of their gentile counterparts. Within the context of modern Jewish scholarship, such activities were essentially unprecedented; the journal's appearance also marked the first time the term *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was used in an official capacity.

It would soon become apparent, that the hopes tied to the *Culturverein's* journal could not be realized; the elitest scholarship it embodied was not, in the end, a suitable means of reaching a non-specialist public. Hence even Heinrich Heine, who had joined the *Culturverein* in August 1822, complained about the journal's incomprehensible language, declaring, in relation to the journal's third volume, that if he did not happen to know what the authors were trying to say, he would not understand a word.<sup>25</sup> Only three editions of the publication were printed (in March 1822, the second half of 1822, and June 1823). As a result, the *Culturverein* failed to gain recognition among Jews and non-Jews alike. Its membership never exceeded a hundred persons, and it was officially dissolved in May 1824. Later historians would point to an inability to communicate the goals of the new Jewish scholarship, together with its highly specialized language, as reasons for the organization's failure.<sup>26</sup> In subsequent years, every founding member with the exception of Zunz converted to Christianity; but the ethos of critically investigating Jewish history and culture initiated by the *Culturverein* would persist. The premises of the organization's founders became the *Leitmotiv* for the broader movement of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Let us now more closely consider the contents of the *Zeitschrift*. In its opening article, Immanuel Wolf develops his programme for the scholarly investigation of Judaism. The strong influence of contemporary German philosophy, and in particular of Hegel's conceptualization of a *Volksgeist* manifesting itself through a people's various forms of intellectual and artistic expression is unmistakable.<sup>27</sup> This sweeping Hegelian perspective saturates Wolf's introductory remarks:

If we are to talk of a *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, then it is self-evident that the word "Judaism" is being taken here in its comprehensive sense – as the essence of all the circumstances, characteristics, and achievements of the Jews in relation to religion, philosophy, history, law, literature in general, civil life and all the affairs of man – and not in that more limited sense in which it only means the religion of the Jews. In any event,

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>26</sup> See M. Philippson, *Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* 1, p. 168.

<sup>27</sup> On the influence of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel on *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, see R. Schaeffler, 'Die Wissenschaft des Judentums in ihrer Beziehung zur Allgemeinen Geistesgeschichte im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts', in J. Carlebach (ed.), *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 113–131.

it is the religious idea which conditions all the ramifications of Judaism and the one on which they are based.<sup>28</sup>

For Wolf, then, Judaism was the sum total of the Jewish cultural experience, from its ancient emergence through its development over the millennia. Such an approach represented a clear departure from traditional Jewish scholarly methodology, with its high-exclusive focus on biblical and Talmudic exegesis. In fact, in relation to that methodology the basic premise of Wolf's approach was a truly radical one: the need to critically scrutinize the most basic tenets of Jewish faith and practice, in particular Mosaic revelation and the authority of the Talmud.

This break with tradition was understood as facilitating German Jewry's acculturation into broader German society. Such an emancipative intention is evident throughout Zunz's writing, together with a hope for religious reform and – it would seem above all – academic recognition.<sup>29</sup> Despite his wish to maintain a substratum of religion-based values, Zunz was very clear in his insistence on an approach to Judaism grounded in the tenets of scientific scholarship – of *Wissenschaft*. An individual or group bound by superstition, he argued, could not free itself from a bias that was the enemy of such scholarship. The stance was revolutionary in that, for the first time in Jewish history, it was legitimate to consider a Judaism without religion – hence for modern Jewry to develop a new self-definition. The emergence of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* has thus often been defined as a central development in modern Jewish life and thinking. Looking backward, a paradigmatic representative of the movement, Ismar Elbogen, would state categorically that: “The borderline cannot be drawn sharply enough, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough, that *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was a novel creation, that it represents a break with the old knowledge and that it demands a fundamental difference in methodological approach.”<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that despite this emphasis on historical rupture and a move past religion, the movement's proponents also shared a fervent desire to rejuvenate Judaism and reconcile it with modern German thought and culture – not to see it vanish. In Wolf's words, Judaism was “not only of historical interest, not a principle that belongs to a lived past now merely preserved in the pages of history. It lives on, acknowledged by

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<sup>28</sup> I. Wolf, ‘On the Concepts of a Science of Judaism’ in *LBI Year Book 2* (1957), p. 202.

<sup>29</sup> See M.A. Meyer, ‘Jewish Religious Reform and *Wissenschaft des Judentums*: The Positions of Zunz, Geiger and Frankel’, in *LBI Year Book 16* (1971), pp. 22–26.

<sup>30</sup> I. Elbogen, *Ein Jahrhundert Wissenschaft des Judentums*, p. 6; see also M. Wiener, ‘The Ideology of the Founders of Jewish scientific research’, in *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science 5* (1950), p. 184, referring to a “break in Jewish life ... a new stage in historical development”; see also I. Schorsch, ‘The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship’, in *From Text to Context*, p. 158: “*Wissenschaft des Judentums* heralded a revolution in self-understanding”.

a not inconsiderable portion of humanity, even of European humanity, on a numerical basis alone.”<sup>31</sup> This preservative factor is precisely what Scholem believed was neglected by subsequent generations of German-Jewish scholars. Still, as early as Wolf there is manifest tension between such emphasis on Judaism as a living cultural system and principles of what can, from our post-Weberian perspective, be termed a high ideal of value-free scholarship. Jewish *Wissenschaft*, Wolf maintained, “begins without any preconceived opinion and is not concerned with the final result. Its aim is neither to put its object in a favourable, nor in an unfavourable light, in relation to prevailing views, but to show it as it is. *Wissenschaft* is self-sufficient, is in itself an essential need of the human spirit. It therefore needs to serve no other purpose than its own.” This stance was singularly unapologetic. Wolf went so far as to insist that Jewish *Wissenschaft* “treats the object of study in and for itself, for its own sake, and not for any special purpose or definite intention;” and he did not fail to draw conclusions taking into account prevalent concepts regarding Judaism:

No universally valid principle has yet been found to account for the circumstances of the Jews; and if there is ever to be a just decision on this issue, then this can clearly only be done through science [*Wissenschaft*]. Scientific knowledge of Judaism must decide on the merits or demerits of the Jews, their fitness or unfitness to be given the same status and respect as other citizens. This alone will define the inner character of Judaism and separate the essential from the accidental, the original from later addition.<sup>32</sup>

From its outset, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* vacillated between its internal educational and external political objectives, the latter being no less than an emancipation of German Jewry. This gaining of “status and respect” was to be brought about by convincing the non-Jewish public, most importantly the German academic establishment, of, precisely this possibility: to conceptualize Judaism in a scientifically valid framework – hence, proving its cultural and historical significance. For Zunz, then, the equality of the Jews could *only* emerge after official recognition of the new discipline.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, the objective of internal Jewish emancipation was to separate the “essential from the accidental”, to re-educate German Jewry through a re-formed Judaism, in order to enable assimilated German Jews to appreciate their cultural heritage.

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<sup>31</sup> I. Wolf, ‘On the Concepts’, p. 203.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> L. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, p. 58.

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