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Citation for published version:

Riga, L & Hall, JA 2016, 'Jewish conditions, theories of nationalism: Cartographical notes', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 371-390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12141>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1111/nana.12141](https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12141)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Nations and Nationalism

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Jewish Conditions, Theories of Nationalism: Cartographical Notes

Liliana Riga (Edinburgh) and John A. Hall (McGill)

European thinkers with Jewish backgrounds, whether ascribed, embraced or denied, experienced nationalism in the most visceral ways imaginable. Their reactions and theorizations to this new political form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were varied and complex, and of enormous interest for nationalist studies. This essay seeks to open a research agenda: though a good deal can be said thanks to specialized studies on which we draw, we make no claim that a complete account is offered. These are cartographical notes, mapping some but not all of the territory involved.

We begin by describing the complexity of conditions and dilemmas facing thinkers with Jewish backgrounds across Europe, taking as our point of departure the observation that these thinkers created much of the grammar that we use when thinking about nationalism. The discussion is then organized around four broad theoretical frames, with the choices made and the theoretical routes that resulted analyzed in the core of the paper, characteristically with reference to particular theorists. A measure of fuzziness will be present. All the routes described characterize nationalism but only a few thinkers within them created fully-fledged social scientific theories of nations and nationalism. Jean-Paul Sartre insisted that Flaubert was a bourgeois writer, but added that not every bourgeois was a Flaubert. In that vein we can say that whilst most Jewish thinkers experienced nationalism not all of them theorized it. The conclusion offers some reflections on the differential quality of the more fully developed social scientific theories of this protean force.

Two prefatory comments are needed, to note the scope of the essay and to avoid misunderstanding. The first is obvious. Thinkers of the period discussed who did not have Jewish backgrounds also contributed to our understanding of nationalism, as Ernest Gellner made clear when privileging the insights of Malinowski above those of Wittgenstein (Gellner 1998). Hence the claim being made is about disproportion rather than exclusivity. Still the analysis will later allow for a general speculation as to the social worlds or moments that encouraged thought about nationalism. The second consideration is complex, and more important. There has been something of a revolution in the study of nationalism—following from subtle changes in social theory. Concepts used in daily life may mislead scientific analysis. Nationalism is a category of practice as well as a category of analysis (Brubaker 2004). This has pointed all of us towards understanding nationalism—at least on occasion—as a homogenizing practice of elites, trying to discipline varied peoples so as force them into a single mold. The analytic point can apply all the more to the category of ‘Jew’, most certainly given its use by anti-Semites. Is it right, to put the matter pointedly, to consider someone Jewish who is secular, wholly bereft of cultural loyalty to the religion of his ancestors, and who holds no such self-ascription?

We agree that social scientists should avoid reification, not least because there is no claim here that the content of Judaism informed theories of nationalism or that there is anything inherent in 'Jewishness' itself. But care need not block inquiry. On the one hand, we are concerned with choices and theorizations, with different roads taken—thereby bringing us in line with the demand for biographical specificity. On the other hand, we insist that many categories that concern social science are real—actually existing and experienced as such. This most certainly can apply to nationalism. But it can also be true of Jewish conditions: ascription can make actors deal with Jewish dilemmas even if they wished to avoid them, or felt that they had left such circumstances far in their own past. Mindful that no one likes to think of themselves as prisoner of their own biography, we claim that choices reflected not only responses to nationalism, but also theorizations of varied theoretical belongings, normative and descriptive, that followed from real integrations and exclusions.

Dilemmas

The situation facing Jews changed dramatically at the end of the eighteenth century. The granting of citizenship rights by the French Revolution allowed Jews the possibility of belonging. One should say immediately that there was a sting in the tail from the start in the putative opening of nation-states to this historic minority, marked by its lack of a territorial base. Clermont-Tonnerre favored the granting of such rights but thought fit to add in 1789 that '[W]e must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to the Jews as individuals... It is repugnant to have... a nation within the nation,' insisting that 'if they do not want to be citizens, they should say so, and then, we should banish them' (quoted in Hunt 1996: 88). Two years later, and partly in fearful response to French emancipation, between 1791 and 1795, the Russian state formalized the Pale of Settlement and it territorially confined its Jewish subjects precisely because it could not banish them. So emancipation stopped in Eastern Europe in 1878, and for Russian Jews it only came with Soviet citizenship.

Still, emancipation was the fundamental tectonic shift that allowed the social mobility that led to the massive Jewish contribution to European culture. One consequence of this was a deep gratitude for being allowed to enter nation-states and, accordingly, both a diminution in attachment to Judaism and the breaking of transnational loyalties. Of course, just as the Jews of France became loyal to that country so too Jews elsewhere developed patriotic feelings for states that they felt to be their own. Yet Jewish confessional fragmentation into national social worlds meant differentiated attachments to states—possibilities in some places and panic in others. Ernst Renan's 1882 'What is a Nation?' described possibilities present in France rather than in Cisleithenia. Further, if assimilation in post-emancipation France meant that social mobility or 'entry' could only be achieved by 'exit' from the ghetto, by the time emancipation arrived in Germany much structural assimilation had already taken place, as had a prior detachment from traditional Jewish communities (Birnbaum 1995).

Put differently, how and when nation-states crystallized shaped Jewish positioning vis-à-vis emerging nationalisms. The route to nation statehood was slow and organic in

France and England because ‘state’ came before ‘nation’ (Mann 1995). In contrast, the fact that ‘nation’ came before the ‘nation-state’ in the multiethnic empires placed great pressure on Jews. On the one hand, ethnonationalisms ‘from below’ profoundly shaped integration’s possibilities and constraints, particularly for rising and socially mobile educated Jews; on the other, imperial elites began to feel themselves under threat, and later in the period moved to turn empires into nation-states or to homogenize administratively—complicating Jews’ already delicate assimilation dilemmas and placing them between homogenizing or centralizing empires and the boosted ethnonationalisms that imperial nationalizing strategies were creating (Lieven 2000; Miller and Berger 2014).

This takes us to an important piece of analysis concerning the dilemmas that interest us, namely that of the change of tenor in the spirit of nationalism over the nineteenth century, from something putatively liberal to something rather different, namely anti-Semitic ethnonationalism:

....what [ethnonationalists] hate above all else are just those damned cosmopolitans, who lack roots of their own and wish to impose their rootlessness on others, and try to make it a universal norm in virtue of some grey general humanity. These rootless people are, not surprisingly, engaged in activities such as trade or thought, which lead them to these bloodless values. But that is not for us, say the romantic nationalists: we are rooted to the soil...we feel, we do not calculate...and we spurn those who do...(Gellner 1998:19).

This is the classic late nineteenth century cultural blending of the romantic search for authenticity with social Darwinism. This insistence on belonging, having roots tying one into society placed Jewish minorities in a difficult position, as Gellner noted:

...the minority had no illusion of its own to go back to. It only had the recollection of the ghetto, which by definition was not a self-sufficient community or culture at all, but an unromantically (commercially) specialized sub-community of a wider world within which it was pejoratively defined. Although in fact a literary populist nostalgia for the shtetl does exist nevertheless, Jewish populist Romanticism is in the end a contradiction in terms...

So the romantic reaction placed the Jews in a dilemma far sharper than the Enlightenment had done. They were largely deprived of the illusion of a possible return to the roots, an illusion indulged by their gentile neighbours with enthusiasm and conviction. Though shalt not covet thy neighbour’s Gemeinschaft! But, of course, one does. So what’s to be done? The options that were logically open were either to infiltrate the Other’s Gemeinschaft, or to create a new one of one’s own, whether or not there had been any peasants available for the past two millennia, who could define its folk culture (1987: 78).

An insistence on the authenticity of roots and theorizations of the assimilationist choice are two of the routes that will concern us, especially the moral complexities involved in the latter; and we will add a further two. But before turning to them attention must be given to two further dimensions of these dilemmas.

The most immediate involves the consequences of generational choices and theorizations made in light of emancipation's possibilities and constraints. However clichéd, 'fathers' did hand the 'sons' something against which to react—often experienced as either too much Judaism or too much assimilationist cosmopolitanism. If the 'fathers' had made the emotional break with Judaism to raise 'free cosmopolitans', the 'sons' often responded to being raised in 'nothingness'; while those raised religiously wrestled with new cultural sensibilities and choices somewhere between acculturation and assimilation. This could characterize something of the German-speaking Jews of Kafka's Prague, where 'blame for the modern dilemma was placed on the liberal values of the fathers' generation' (Spector 2000: 109; cf. Kadarkay on Lukács 1991). Generational choices became part of inherited internal geographies, and they were navigated as such. Differently put, the dilemmas of assimilation did not stand still, particularly as the available repertoires of belonging and integration multiplied.

Dilemmas and choices were further structured by geopolitics. After the First World War, a rapid succession of geopolitical realities radically changed the character of assimilation or integration, and so too the available options, real and theoretical. Late nineteenth century dilemmas of belonging were redefined in 1919—the year in which pogroms peaked in Europe: the Minority Treaties agreed at Versailles inscribed Jewishness ethnolinguistically, moving beyond traditional confessional protections to substantively new, culturalist ones (Fink 2006). Jewishness as ethnicity or as nationality was rapidly replacing other kinds of attachments, and so too was recognition that it was impossible to escape it. Even in the 1920s Soviet Union—arguably one of the unlikeliest places for the vigorous pursuit of Jewish autonomy—the reality was that Jewish protections would still be relegated to minority rights in someone else's territorial autonomy (Bemporad 2013). The consequences of this reality eventually appeared in a world of ferocious nationalist homogenization, indeed one that perfectly exemplified Gellner's 'one nation, one state' definition of nationalism. As a consequence, post-Holocaust thinking closed the long arc of the complex responses to emancipation with a return to binaries: some form of assimilation or integration or emigration to one's 'own' state—before later attempts to pluralize nation-states.

While most thinkers of Jewish background had reactions to growing ethnonationalisms, theorizations became more urgent and sustained toward the end of the period under consideration, not least because the fluidity of multiple and overlapping religious, cultural and linguistic identities began to crystallize around rather more fixed identifications of ethnicity or nationality. Nevertheless, the political space theorized by thinkers shaped by the late nineteenth century—Otto Bauer, Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Jabotinsky, György Lukács and Karl Polanyi, Lewis Namier and Hans Kohn—remained multiethnic, often aligned with social democratic critiques and attempts to fix and re-design empires. They sought ways of taming the exclusionary potentials of

ethnonationalisms while carving space for an emerging Jewish nationalism. Interwar theorizations involving returns to empire were sometimes hopeful nostalgia or futurist abstraction. In contrast, later thought was less a product of empire than of ethnonationalizing states and traumatizing expulsions. The subsequent generation of thinkers born in the first decades of the twentieth century—Karl Popper and Arthur Koestler, Berlin and Karl Deutsch, and latterly Gellner and Elie Kedourie—was shaped by late-Habsburg liberalism and post-Tsarist socialism. This was the most secular generation: liberals and anti-communist intellectuals shattered by the realization that late nineteenth century liberalism was less a secure product of social evolution than a benign historical oddity (Hacohen 2000, 2012). As a result, these Cold War Atlantic liberals and postwar cosmopolitans produced a body of social thought on nationalism defined less by populist nostalgia for the *shtetl* than by nationalist and universalist nostalgias for empires, real or invented, warm or abstractly cold, and for social and epistemological worlds free from culture's confinements.

Choices

In view of how distinctive eras and atmospheres formed the social circumstances and conditions against which choices and thought took form, we identify four general theoretical frames that resulted, illustrated by exemplars, and note subtle differences within them. An initial comment is that there is some sense of historical change, along the lines already noted, in the categorization—from the initial emancipation through the ending of empires to adapting to life within nation-states. It is important to stress that the categories do not so to speak cage individuals. Some thinkers moved very rapidly between positions. Disappointment with 'entry' could sometimes provoke returns to even more particularist forms of loyalty (Birnbaum 1995: 97). Consider too the career of Arthur Koestler: from Zionism and socialism to Cold War warrior, with an extraordinary final denial that Jews had ever really existed! (Cesarani 1998; Scammell 2010). More common and less dramatic was the attempt to occupy two positions at the same time, sometimes creating confusion within the social theories that resulted. But it is equally important to distinguish responses to nationalism that did not necessarily result in theoretical engagement from those that occasioned greater or more sustained reflection on the character of nations and nationalism. We move carefully between both in the exemplars below.

Assimilation and erasure

One response to ethnonationalism's dilemmas was assimilation, a term we use here broadly and non-categorically to stretch the spectrum of differentiated attachments from various forms of acculturation to integration to ethnic 'disappearance'. Indeed the spectrum of qualities that defined a 'assimilated Jew' became more varied and subtle, almost elastic in character, with important implications about choices and theorizations. Sociological constraints mattered as much as intellectual commitment: 'assimilated' could mean virtually any degree of cultural distance from the experience of the *shtetl* Jew, destabilizing even the most 'assimilated'. As Stanislawski wrote of the Russian writer and Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky:

....culturally Russified, not totally unaware of his Jewish origin but largely oblivious to and uninterested in its meaning and import. To call this stance that of an ‘assimilated’ or ‘acculturated’ Jew is to vastly understate and underrate the psychological, ideological, and social complexity of political and cultural identity for [Russia’s] cosmopolitan Jews of the fin de siècle. (2001: 131-32).

Unlike the more constraining social ascriptions experienced in shetl communities, many assimilated Jews like Jabotinsky were raised ‘with the knowledge that we were Jewish but didn’t have to be’ (quote in Halkin 2014: 16). This wrestling with the assimilationist choice inspired in Jabotinsky the most essentialist theorization of nationalism: how, he reasoned, could a ‘pure blooded’ Jew assimilate and not erase his own subjectivity (Mogilner 2013: 7-8)? Put differently, the assimilationist position (whether premised on acculturation, assimilation or erasure) theoretically implies social constructivism, that is, the possibility of choice and of multiple attachments when faced with the challenges of allegiance. Its power as a theoretical frame is that it recognizes the basic social fact of existing forms of assimilation and integration. This position stands in stark contrast with that of ‘authenticity’ and ‘essentialism’, discussed below.

The various attachments implied in the assimilationist choice could of course be principled based on genuine admiration for what was believed to be a high culture. But was instrumentally motivated assimilation merely opportunism, to be distrusted because it lacked conviction? Could invisible roots be uncovered for those who had converted? These challenges could involve attempts at total erasure, with the internal Jewish charge of self-hatred often aimed less at those seeking exit from Jewishness than at those seeking to erase it. In these decades socialist internationalism could imply this kind of self-erasure. But even as denial, ‘exit’ could be accepted as normalized partly because of its ubiquity, partly because of an almost silent recognition of its historic necessity depending on time and place, and partly because it still accorded a certain negative recognition. But more could be involved. Malachi Hacohen’s earliest treatment of Popper noted not just anti-Zionism but touches of anti-Semitism in a riveting critique that stressed the loneliness that came from dreaming of the open society, and failing to appreciate the home that Zionism offered (Hacohen 1996).

Still the most ubiquitous response to these pressures was patriotism, seen in high rates of volunteering in war (Aberbach 2013). When asked by the city of Paris in 1916 as to policy towards incoming Russian Jews, and animated by a cultural confidence from within an assimilated experience, Durkheim argued that Russian Jews’ voluntary conscription (and war death) rates demonstrated exceptional patriotism since they understood very well how much they owed France (Elkarati 1990). Echoing Clermont-Tonnerre, Durkheim thought Jewish distinctiveness would disappear given political inclusion and an absence of anti-Semitism. His remarkable defence of the Ostjuden brought veiled accusations of his being ‘d’une lignée étrangère’, however, thereby poignantly exposing integration’s fragility, not least since Durkheim had just lost his own son in the defense of France. If this is one piece of evidence of the extent to which the

determination to enter could go, it is equally important to note another—and one which points immediately to the ability to hold seemingly different positions, including assimilation, at the same time. ‘Jewish patriotism was compatible with Zionism—indeed many of its leaders gave patriotism as a reason for their Zionism’ (Aberbach 2013: xxxiii).

If assimilation into a national state like France, Germany or England was easily imaginable, matters were more complex in the multinational empires. Gellner’s (1998) brilliant account of Wittgenstein’s philosophy makes this very clear. The early philosophy was formal and abstract, the world to which it belonged wholly lacking in ethnicity. What this means in practical terms can be seen in Popper’s account of an open society—one of pure cosmopolitanism, opposed to all nationalism, including that of Zionism, always insisting on the need to assimilate (Hacohen 1996). Gellner’s celebrated charge against Wittgenstein was of course that he moved from one unworldly position to another, its absolute opposite. His later philosophy did not seek to assimilate to the most obvious real alternative, that of high German culture, but instead to immersion in peasant communities—or, more particularly, going off to teach in a village school, armed with a philosophy that insisted that truth varies by locality. This is an extreme form of populism, and one that certainly ended badly in practical terms for Wittgenstein himself.

Therefore one way the complexities of the assimilationist position can be recognized is simple. To gain entry to a society requires two background conditions, release by the group to which one belongs and acceptance by the group one wishes to join. Berlin captured the difficulties that could result for Jews when seeking entry in two famous essays, ‘Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx and the Search for Identity’ and ‘Jewish Slavery and Emancipation’. In the first he noted that an outsider seeking entry gains such expertise on local rules as thereby to make him an object of suspicion. ‘The search for security seems to those who are secure a symptom of abnormality, and often irritates them’ (Berlin 1979: 256). The second essay continued the line of argument by considering Jews as hunchbacks—at times denying they had a hump, on other occasions celebrating it, with a further contortion in seeking to hide it altogether (Berlin 2000). Gellner made similar points in his private notes: ‘We mid European Jews—exactly like man according to existentialism—choosing attributes, being given none. Human situation, only somewhat more so. Unfortunately, it is of the essence of those attributes that they are not chosen but given. If chosen, are somehow false. Not surprisingly, a mainly descent-based society values givenness of attributes more than endeavour, contrary to Kant’ (quoted in Hall 2010: 87-8). Both thinkers accepted that these existential pressures could lead to self-hatred, to accepting the standards of others as part of a visceral desire to escape one’s past, whether real or ascribed. A minimal claim can be that of disloyalty to one’s cultural heritage, abandoning much of great value (Birnbaum 2008). But the charge can carry much more weight: it can be seen as the Jewish community condemning its own, making it hard for an individual to leave.

Choices and reactions--and the theoretical positions that could result--changed once an ethnic Jewishness and ‘normalized’ nationhood became viable attachments. These could imply a lack of loyalty because they challenged the social gains of generations of assimilationists. For one thing, the rise of organicist nationalisms combined with the

Western migration of the Ostjuden imposed on the assimilated Jews of Germany, Austria, France and Hungary a redefinition ‘from within’, challenging the hard-won assimilation of many who felt that they had left behind their Jewish backgrounds. For another, thinkers of Ostjuden background such as Bauer, Trotsky, or Namier could be particularly vulnerable to a very real—if often only silently acknowledged—sense of perceived inferiority in relation to co-ethnics in Vienna or Berlin or Prague, and this was reflected in their understandings of nationalism, to which we now turn.

Wider Worlds, Real and Imaginary

Europe’s political space at the turn of the nineteenth century was filled not just by national states slowly morphing into nation-states, but also by the great land empires of the Hapsburgs and Romanovs. Thinkers with Jewish backgrounds increasingly felt themselves attracted to such entities.

An old and rigid dynasty, long linked with hierarchy, authoritarianism, and obscurantist dogmatism did not exactly look like promising material for being the symbol of this new Open Society. But, comic though it might be, the logic of the situation made it so (Gellner 1998: 33).

The rise of ethnonationalism suggested that Jews were somehow defective in lacking roots. Anxieties with emerging unities were real. So a deep distrust of nationalism gave rise to imperial ideals that allowed for pluralism, that is for world where one could be both a full citizen and yet remain as Jewish as one wished. Five favorable views of a wider world resulted, each briefly considered in turn.

The first such general view is captured by considering those nationalists and accommodationists that sought Jewish autonomy within composite political frameworks. A very early such approach can be seen in Denmark. Meyer Goldschmidt took an active role in Danish politics at the time of the struggle between the National Liberals of Copenhagen and the German-speaking population of Holstein and of part of Schleswig (Jensen and Hall 2014). A dislike of the ethnonationalism of the National Liberals led Goldschmidt to create a federal plan designed to hold together the composite polity. This failed, perhaps indeed never had much chance. Nikolai Grundtvig, the Moses of modern Denmark, decisively rejected it, noting further that a Jew had no business interfering in Danish affairs. A slightly different approach was that of Joseph Samuel Bloch in Hapsburg Vienna (Reifowitz 2003; Rozenblit 2001). A defender of Jewish rights, Bloch challenged the integrationist assimilationism of the post-emancipation Jewish liberal middle classes. As a Hapsburg dynastic patriot, he opposed a Jewish separate political nation but asserted the possibility of Stamm Jewishness within a federal, decentralized Cisleithenia. He imagined the creation of a civic Austrian-ness that could retrieve Jewishness from its emancipationist relegation to confessional status and enable Jews to exist as an ethnicity within wider political frames. In the Tsarist Empire, Yiddishists’ attempts to gain official ‘national’ recognition represented a similar version of this kind of national accommodationism (Karlip 2014). Secular diasporic Jewish nationalism moved from its earlier liberal mooring toward more organicist, integral and even illiberal versions. Living

among small stateless nations of Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, Yiddishism embodied a populist version of Jewish cultural nationalism. This secular autonomism failed, though Bundist and Yiddishist ‘Jewish Jews’, tasked by the ‘non-Jewish Jews’ of the Bolshevik elite with designing early Soviet Jewish policies, later resurrected a version of it in the 1920s Soviet Union.

A second and slightly different attempt to deal with multiethnicity was proposed by Austrian socialists keen to reform the late Hapsburg Empire. Otto Bauer and Karl Renner thought large economic blocs represented the wave of the future. This led them to theorize the possibility of multinational states in which politics would be de-ethnicized and national consciousness could be detached from territory. In contrast to the forms of cultural autonomy discussed above, Renner and Bauer’s model was based on the ‘personality principle’, which held that autonomous communities could be organized as individualized autonomies, something contrasted with the ‘territorial principle’ characteristic of the modern nation-state (Nimni 2005). Prescriptively, therefore, large socialist states did not need to be homogeneous. Bauer and Renner defined the nation culturally, as a matter of choice, but ultimately diverged on Austria-Hungary: Renner remained in favor of the empire’s survival, whilst Bauer called for its dissolution. Bauer was ambivalent about his Ostjuden background and insecure about his own newly Germanized identity, resulting in an ambiguous and somewhat inconsistent rejection of an articulated sense of nationhood for Jews; Renner’s Christian background carried no such identity dilemmas, and he could feel secure in his German-ness in a way that few assimilated Jews could (Reifowitz 2009). Both contended that nationality was a matter of choice, but if Bauer’s theorization ‘became somewhat muddled when he discussed Jews’, then Renner’s was more consistent in viewing Jewish assimilation less problematically (Reifowitz 2009: 1-2).

A third position was that of Left-wing empire savers: the early Bolsheviks and, from a different set of conditions, Lukács. Slightly different from the Austro-Marxists, their theorizations and prescriptions involved a more thoroughgoing reshaping of the social conditions held to have given rise to nationalism. Given the constraining social and political conditions of Tsarist Jewry, the largely assimilated Jewish Bolshevik elite sought to radically redefine them: saving the empire was less a way of submerging nationalism and its attachments, than of relativizing it in a reconstructed universalist space (Riga 2012: chapter three). In theory, nationalist particularism would melt away as socialism advanced, though in the interim culture’s contents could be held in universalism’s socialist containers, that is, socialist in content but national in form (Lenin 1913). Marxist theory aside, however, the Bolsheviks had diagnosed nationalism as a product of political and cultural grievance—hence their generous nationality policies of the 1920s. But their own fragile assimilationism had created an intellectual blind spot, namely the failure to recognize the anti-Semitism within the very ethnicities into which they themselves were entering. In the end, socialist nation building resulted in disaster for Jews because in practice it meant only cultural autonomy in someone else’s territorial autonomy, and an eventual re-ethnicization of Jewishness (Bemporad 2013). Despite the theoretical rejection of Austro-Hungary and Tsarism, not least for their obscurantism and authoritarianism, there is nevertheless a good deal of difference between the Bolsheviks and Lukács. If

Bolshevik theorizations are best understood in structural terms, the Hungarian was part of the late nineteenth century world, of Jewish rootlessness in the face of Nietzschean demands for authenticity, for the creation of a meaningful soul. Kadarkay's brilliant biography described the links with Martin Buber, and with Georg Simmel and Max Weber (Kadarkay 1991). What is most striking is Lukács's fascination with Dostoyevsky and Kierkegaard in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of war. The desire to escape 'disenchantment', to be part of a heroic community, propelled Lukács to communism. Aesthetics led to political commitment (cf. Bell 1980: chapter 17).

A fourth position within these wider worlds was that of cosmopolitan dreams of empire. Perhaps the greatest theorist of this world was, as noted, Popper: his cosmopolitanism was so to speak total, privileging reason above all else. This makes him somewhat different from Elie Kedourie, his colleague at the London School of Economics for many years. Both felt that nationalism was the evil creation of a particular set of German intellectuals, and both had considerable nostalgia for the empires from which they came. But Popper's philosophy was positive, seeking to re-create a cosmopolitan world in a different guise. Kedourie stands poles apart from this position. The influence of Michael Oakeshott can be detected in his insistence that we should submerge ourselves in a tradition of political wisdom, repudiating abstract reason at all costs (O'Leary 2002).

The fifth and final position sought to create new kinds of world order so as to defang nationalism. Budapest produced not just Lukács but also Karl Polanyi whose sense of the 'need' for belonging was reinforced by the fact that his Russian mother had populist sympathies. His wonderful Great Transformation (2002) can be read in this light. Capitalism constantly causes disruptive change, as Schumpeter had also emphasized, though in a more positive vein when speaking of 'creative destruction'. This was potentially dangerous: societies understandably might seek to protect themselves from the market. Polanyi's interpretation of the twentieth century is that precisely this occurred, with protection being provided by the Nazis for Germans traumatized by war, inflation and the Great Depression. In his late years Polanyi moved towards positive prescriptions, urging the creation 'tamed empires' able to interact peacefully—together with hopes that small nations, the unhistoric nations, would slowly disappear (Dale forthcoming). The same intellectual drive can be seen in a subtly different form in the work of Karl Deutsch, a Germanized Czech of Jewish background. Reference here is not to his Nationalism and Social Communication (1953), an important book to which Gellner's work, as we shall see, is rather indebted. What matters in this context is the co-authored volume he organized dealing with what he termed security communities (Deutsch et al 1957). Although these came in slightly different forms, the basic idea is clear: a shared system of values would allow for high levels of co-operation between a set of states—the recreation of Austro-Hungary in a section of the world polity.

Liberalism and the Nation-State

The creation of new nation-states in Europe as the result of imperial collapse combined with the horrors of ethnic cleansing, population transfers and the Holocaust place at the center of attention the simplest of questions: how can the nation-state be made

safe from the horrors of nationalism. The positions examined here respond to the brutal implications of Gellner's celebrated definition of nationalism in which each nation has its own state, and each state its own nation. Might there be ways of imagining a loosening this tight, homogenizing formula so as to make life bearable for those with Jewish backgrounds and others similarly excluded?

The career of Hans Kohn is of especial interest (Gordon 2010). A Jewish background in Prague made Jewish concerns immediately central in the years before 1914 because a move towards the German community was more completely blocked than was in the case for Lukács in Budapest due to the rise of German ethnonationalism in Bohemia. Kohn's early membership in Bar Kochba stressed the need for spiritual renewal, considering Jews at that time in the most essentialist way imaginable. The experience of war and of the collapse of the empire led to political commitments replacing cultural longings, allowing him to leave behind his early essentialism. Kohn's greatest hope was for the survival of multinational states. Hence the creation of new nation-states led him to move to Palestine, to participate in the Zionist adventure. But by 1934 he had become deeply disillusioned. Zionism had held the ideological promise in his eyes of inclusion, the possibility of a bi-national state. As it became ever clear that a Jewish state would seek to be as homogeneous as new nation-states of Central Europe, he left for the United States. The rest of his career was devoted to the most famous distinction in the theory of nationalism, namely that between civic and ethnic nationalism. This stark opposition represents a Cold War warrior's commitment to liberal values, and the hope that these would be shared by new nations, combined with the fear that some political cultures would always think with their blood, and so were effectively irredeemable.

A rather different version of liberal nationalism came from Isaiah Berlin, as can be seen in his response to an interview in which Arthur Koestler claimed that the foundation of Israel meant that Jews should either go to Israel or totally assimilate in the countries in which they lived. Berlin was well aware of Jewish conditions, not least as he admired Lewis Namier, to whom we turn in a moment, and he certainly felt that the foundation of Israel made a huge difference to Jewish self-perception. But he wished to remain in the diaspora, and so argued for integration rather than assimilation—that is, for difference, the right to one's religion or ethnicity, the insistence on the right to hold multiple identities. This liberal nationalism was famously justified by Berlin by reference to Herder (Birnbaum 2008: chapter six; Hachohen 2012). Though there is much to admire here, his viewpoint has been subject to serious criticism. Malachi Hachohen's most recent work on Popper represents something of a change of heart on his part, stressing as it does elements of great moral merit.

In acculturation, Popper saw an opportunity, not a threat. The encounter with the Other, with the foreign and the new, with the different and unexpected, was often uncomfortable, but it was exciting, an opportunity to learn and expand—to change. Like scholarly criticism, it was the *sine qua non* for progress. At the height of Thomas Kuhn's popularity, when his incommensurable scientific paradigms—worldviews which made arbitrating evidence impossible because they spoke different languages—were used to

explain difficulties in cultural exchange, Popper insisted that paradigms were myths: Communication across cultures was always possible, although not easy. He preferred empires to nation states because they encouraged cross-cultural interaction, the litmus test of the Open Society. The cosmopolitan commonwealth opened up closed communities and loosened ethnocultural identities. To Berlin's Herderian mosaic of closed ethnic cultures, Popper counter-posed a dynamic Open Society, a liberal cosmopolitan alternative (Hacohen 2012: xx).

The charge against Berlin is then that of essentialism. Further, Popper's view is sociologically realistic given that so many Jews had made their contribution by assimilating to larger worlds.

Ernest Gellner's position was subtler. He differed from Popper personally and intellectually: a childhood in Prague had led him to like nationalism whose appearance he saw as a structural necessity rather than a reversion to the womb. But he agreed with and added to the charge of essentialism. Berlin's value pluralism was held to be incoherent: it was relativism, and relativism was in the end the last refuge of a scoundrel. Crucially, how can you insist on pluralism whilst wanting nation states, including Israel, to have distinct identities of their own? Gellner felt that Berlin had accepted far too much of the local culture in order to 'get in', becoming, to use his vicious expression, 'a Court Jew'. The charge, in other words, is of a sort of British populism held to be entirely reprehensible since Berlin, thanks to his own experience, ought to have known better. The customs of the country, a purported national style of pluralism and tolerance, provided no firm base for real philosophy. Critical monism was necessary (Gellner 1974).

Nonetheless, Gellner worried greatly about the dangers of nationalism within nation-states. He had rejected Popper's argument against the naturalistic fallacy, insisting that one could and should 'jump on the historical bandwagon', that is, read off one's morals from the historical process, at least in one careful and particular way (Gellner 1964). Industrial society was held to be transforming the world, making decent behavior possible where it had been scarcely imaginable in agrarian conditions of scarcity. This view most certainly affected his view of the condition of Jews in the advanced world—so much so that he irritated Anthony Smith in a lecture by suggesting that the worst was over, with growth papering over all cracks. The difference with Berlin really revolves around the fact that Gellner truly had no deep sense of belonging, to any culture, though felt sufficiently close to Czech culture to have some sense of the nature of belonging. If growth could contain nationalism, so too could 'ironic cultural nationalism'—a sense of belonging lightly held (Gellner 1974). But in last years of his life he was absolutely haunted by the horrors of the break-up of Yugoslavia, and fearful that the collapse of the Soviet Union might yet create chaos similar to that following the world wars. So his late thought entertained new prescriptive thoughts. The discovery of Malinowski's politics was correspondingly of great importance for him. Here is what Gellner hoped for:

The League commissioner, perhaps a minor Habsburg archduke, would work discreetly from some functional but unostentatious secretariat located in a

new edifice if some anonymous London suburb—say Neasden. An architect in the Bauhaus tradition would be commissioned to design it. All ritual and symbolic activities, on the other hand, would continue to be based in Buckingham Palace. Thus the English would be emotionally spared any visible, let alone conspicuous, externalization of expression of their diminished sovereignty (1998: 78).

History had shown, he added, that Franz Joseph was better than Joseph. Further, the ‘universal protection of cultural autonomy, combined with political restraint imposed by a benevolent center, must clearly appeal to an age like ours which suffers from the opposite condition—political independence combined with dreary cultural standardization’ (1998: 79). Here we have a measure of nostalgia for Austro-Hungary. But are not Malinowski’s prescriptions in the end close to Berlin’s preferences, despite his scorn for his Oxford contemporary?

There is a further similarity between Berlin and Gellner. It is of course the case that a main part of Gellner’s own view of nationalism is functionalist nonsense. But it is childishly jejune to say that this is all that there is in his theory of nationalism (Meadwell 2012). Two elements stand out, both of which involve human agency. The first view establishes agency by noting that political elites sought to homogenize a society so as to increase their own power. Here is Gellner describing the origins of ethnonationalism in Austro-Hungary:

It had all begun with the Empire trying to increase its own efficiency and effectiveness by centralizing and streamlining its bureaucracy. At first this provoked a hostile reaction from the old, initially quite non-ethnic regionalisms, from the local institutions and the nobility that manned them. But it also helped engender the new, non-regional, but ethnic nationalism: by making bureaucracy more important and pervasive, it underscored the importance of culture and language. Full effective citizenship now belonged to those who could deal with the bureaucracy in an idiom it respected, and who were masters of that idiom (1998: 31).

At various points Gellner went on to speak of the ‘humiliation’ felt by those who were turned into second class citizens by the actions of the state. Interestingly there is some similarity with Berlin’s occasional attempts to explain nationalism as a force driven by reaction to alien rule (Berlin 1972). The moral that one can draw from this is that multinational states might hold together if liberal accommodations of various sorts were to be made. But it should be emphasized that Gellner did not accept this, and his late prescriptive views are very different in character. The second strand is fundamentally that of Deutsch’s *Nationalism and Social Communication*, which Gellner dismissed too easily through a clever sleight of hand (Gellner 1983: 126-7). The entry of an ethnic majority into cities as the result of industrialization is potential social dynamite. A formerly dominant minority can resist; equally a newly educated majority—at least, its leaders—can establish quotas against that minority thereby causing it to turn to violence, as so

clearly happened in Sri Lanka (Lange 2012: cf. Gellner 1998: 23). There is a good deal of sense to this position.

Authenticity and Essentialism

The essentialist position has been noted in connection with Berlin and Kohn, but it is worth exploring further because it reflected differently animated theorizations of authenticity, something perhaps best seen through those who theorized Zionism as a form of nationalism. Viewed through the lens of Jewish conditions, an insistence on return to essentialized roots stood in opposition to the kinds of constructivist theorizations of assimilation described above. Jabotinsky, for instance, maintained that tribal essentialism was the only true response to the ‘tragic illusiveness of the assimilationist choice’ (Mogilner 2013: 37). One consequence of this essentialist theorization was that its identity implications could make assimilated Jews uncomfortable. But another was that it allowed release from difficult dilemmas because it removed the instrumentalism or opportunism implied in the assimilationist choice. The essentialist position required, in other words, not Popper’s total assimilation, or the Wittgensteinian erasure of Jewishness into someone else’s essentialism, but rather a complete submersion into one’s ‘own’.

And yet inconsistencies could be apparent. Kohn’s early cultural Zionist essentialism in Bar Kochba, Jabotinsky’s later essentialism in a revisionist Zionism, and Namier’s anti-Polish Zionism paradoxically had no theoretical space for their own actually existing assimilation. Their theoretical espousal of authenticity was itself a product of the mixing of assimilation. Of course Zionism was not incompatible with forms of assimilation, Namier’s simultaneous Zionist and British loyalties show (cf. Aberbach 2013). But it also emerged entwined with other late nineteenth century European nationalisms, not only in response to anti-Semitism, but also to disillusionment with the Haskalah, to the difficult lives of the *Ostjuden*, to the ethnicization of Jewishness, and to the intellectual contents of the *fin-de-siècle*, including organicism, secularism and spiritual renewal (Hroch 2007; Stanislawski 2001). Unlike those for whom wider worlds were appealing, here a shared aversion to empire—in all its forms—was evident. Jabotinsky and Kohn’s pre-Holocaust, pre-state Zionism envisioned binational arrangements in a Jewish and Arab Palestine, but these were nevertheless based on (two) essentialized cultures. Kohn’s early cultural and spiritual Zionism was rooted in the anti-assimilationist, anti-imperialism of a Hapsburg Prague generation (Gordon 2010: 277); Namier’s consistent anti-Polishness paralleled his anti-Habsburg stance (Colley 1989); and Jabotinsky rejected composite political frames precisely because they led to assimilation and cultural mixing (Mogilner 2013).

Theorizing origins and authenticity, in other words, could also be responses to experienced assimilation. This was the case for Namier: born in Catholic Eastern Galicia to highly Polonized parents—so Polonized indeed that he did not learn of his Jewishness until he was ten—he became a committed Zionist from his twenties. He rejected the radical assimilation of his upbringing only to later convert to Anglicanism to marry. In a life that was ‘marginal and deeply ambiguous’, Namier’s search of an identity that would ‘hold and endure’ caused him to suffer both real and imagined academic anti-Semitism in

Britain, a country he loved (Colley 1989: 7). He was a harsh critic of Poland's minority policies while working for the Foreign Office as Whitehall's Central European specialist at Versailles, an experience that found its way into his understanding of nationalism. Namier (1958) distinguished between 'territorial nationalities', which should be supported because they are conservative products of long historical developments, and 'linguistic nationalities', which should be opposed because they are destructive and unstable in seeking political states coextensive with linguistic nationality. So 1848 had unleashed an 'era of linguistic nationalisms' across Central Europe, challenging those liberties established by existing territorial nations. Namier (1958: 31-38, 53) explicitly adopted Kohn's distinction between western and eastern nationalisms, with essentialism assigned to those that came last. He approvingly cited Mill's idea that the boundaries of government are best if they coincide in the main with those of nationalities: freedom is best protected in self-contained homogenous communities of territorial nationalities. But German nationalism had an awkward and reviled place in his theorizing, being of the 'Eastern' ethnic variety. His view of Jewishness was similarly essentialized, though for different reasons: Jews were held together by an 'undefinable bond' so the answer was either 'national reintegration in Palestine' or 'deliberate dissolution' (Namier 1947: 145-148).

Jabotinsky went further: all patriotic integration was inherently untenable. The most important Zionist of Russia's aesthetic 'silver age', Jabotinsky epitomized the essentialist response to Jewish conditions in the most crystallized way. Like Trotsky, he was a product of the unique cultural pluralism of Odessa, perhaps the only city in the Empire where Jewishness had real possibilities for self-definition. But he argued that nationalism was a natural and positive form of social organization, not a social construction: nations were the biological essence of human collectives whose specificity and purity had to be preserved (Mogilner 2013; Halkin 2014: 77-78). Though his path from assimilated cosmopolitanism to essentialist nationalist is contested, Jabotinsky's latter nationalism may have been a modernist reconfiguration of Jewishness in the humanist and cultural aesthetic of the European fin de siècle with his earlier cosmopolitanism perhaps more 'Jewish' than the label 'assimilated' might connote (Stanislawski 2001; Halkin 2014). What mattered most was Jabotinsky's engagement with Odessa's imperial Russian cosmopolitanism, with Russia's distinctive fin de siècle (Mogilner 2013). Distant from the experiences of the shetl, and armed with Russian culture as a universal medium of modernity, Jabotinsky was less concerned with the material lives of shetl Jews than with the survival of modern urban Jews in imperial cities tempted to leave the isolation of closed communities. Jabotinsky therefore imagined a postimperial cosmopolitan world not free of cultural tribes, but constituted by them, by 'blood-land' communities and 'island utopias'. Indeed he rejected Russian-Jewish Yiddishist and Socialist autonomists and their Habsburg models on the grounds that cultural autonomy was the false choice of cultural hybridity. The future belonged to the homogenous nation-state (Mogilner 2013: 14-16).

Jabotinsky's most important novel, The Five, distills the disintegration of modern empires through the last decades of an Odessa comprised only of minorities. Assimilatory Russification had 'got even with us', he wrote: 'gradual, unwilling, dismal...but inevitable and irrevocable, with conversions, mixed marriages, and the complete annihilation of the

race'; its futility lay in the final recognition that 'old prejudices' are always nevertheless 'fragments of ancient truths' (Jabotinsky 2005: 1, 170-171, 194). The five 'deaths' embody the consequences the assimilationist choice, which is ultimately the spiritual and social destruction of authenticity (Mogilner (2013: 37-44). One such death was the suicide of a 'victim of assimilation', turned away from essentialist roots. But there are also metaphorical deaths: futile attempts to compensate for the emptiness inside with fin de siècle contents like conversion and revolutionary communism. To embrace the 'pure-blooded' reproduction of community was to make the most radical anti-assimilationist choice. Integral nationalism's exclusivity of origins offered Russia's Jews both a 'dignified perception of self' and a response to the meaninglessness and loss of subjectivity involved in assimilation. Himself a metaphorical embodiment of the loss of empire to a new world of nation-states, Jabotinsky experienced this 'self-reductionism', a sacrifice of his own cultural hybridity at the altar of nationalism (Mogilner 2013: 44). These were the costs and gains of authenticity over assimilation.

Conclusion

Reflection on the contextual origins of these thinkers' paradigms allows us to see why there may be disproportion in Jewish thinkers' contributions to theorizations of nationalism. Of course others faced similar dilemmas: Irish theorists and colonial subjects also experienced the marginalities and exclusions of empire; in the Ottoman case it was indeed outsiders—expelled from the Balkans—who thought most about nationalism. We suggest that the responses and theorizations of these excluded individuals might more clearly be seen in relation to those of Jewish social thinkers, just as we might better understand what the latter's cultural positioning made visible, and what it obscured.

The consequences of emancipation entangled with moves to indirect rule and the end of empires differentially affected Jewish intellectuals, occasioning particular identity dilemmas and ambiguities. The traumas involved in the deprivations of 'home', painful expulsions from states they had called their own, and forced retreats from the fruits of generations of hard-fought political entry were massive. This hints at a final suggestive image: the complete loss of empire—for those who could not manage at all—led to suicide, prefigured in the Jewish doctor in Roth's The Radetzsky March, and acted out by Stefan Zweig (Prochnik 2014: Zweig 1943). The melancholic nostalgia characteristic of Zweig's fin-de-siècle generation—the last to be 'free of all confinements' in 'the last century of assured values'—was deeply affected by the brutality of imperial disintegrations. The mood and its theorizations changed for the interwar generation. Captured by Améry (1980) as 'mimic German', deepest identities suddenly seemed 'invalid' on the realization that perhaps they had never been this one or that one. Gellner's austere theorization grasped something of the consequences of this with typical crispness: '[a] man without a nation defies the recognized categories and provokes revulsion' (Gellner 1983: 6).

These visceral experiences led to powerful theories of nationalism that—once detached from their original instantiations—created much of the grammar of nationalist studies. What might we say, therefore, about the 'accuracy' of their theories of

nationalism, and of their relationship to the conditions that produced them? A set of negative points forces itself upon us immediately. Neither assimilation nor linguistic/cultural autonomy worked in the world of emergent nation states. Empire saving visions, whether of the early Bloch or Bauer or the later Bolshevik experiment all came to nothing. Further once Jewishness had lost the historic confessional mooring that had enabled a certain kind of integration, assimilation dilemmas shifted because Jews had become an ethnic nation like others, though crucially one without territory. Of course, there was then little space for nations within nations. So dreams of wider non-ethnically homogeneous worlds, liberal or socialist, mostly fared badly. The visions of Popper and Kedourie amounted to little: they were too abstract for real human beings and descriptively either nostalgic or a rationalist misreading of how past empires actually worked. Kohn's final ethnic-civic distinction offered no more guidance largely because many civic nation-states have ethnic cores, something his own Zionism recognized experientially if not intellectually. Finally, essentialism precludes real understanding of the very pervasive social and historical fact of assimilation, weakening it as an accurate theory of nationalism.

Curiously, Berlin and Gellner do push the agenda of nationalism studies forward. Of course, they reveal each other's weaknesses—the toughness of Gellner's definition challenged by Berlin's concern with integration, the philosophical weakness of the historian ideas of ideas challenged by the philosophe. But both suggest, though neither fully theorizes, the possibility that liberal arrangements may allow for several nations to live under a shared political roof. The diminution of levels of geopolitical conflict gives one hope that stable geopolitical conditions may allow states to be less unitary and homogeneous. But liberal design is never easy. The Moravian Compromise of 1905 is often cited as showing that Cisleithenia was moving in that direction, but that view has been very effectively challenged (Kelly 2003). A huge agenda accordingly remains in front of us—that of turning hopes into realities.

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