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The Frankfurt *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*' Impact on its Prominent Jewish Thinkers: Religious  
Action, Responses to Modernity, and Thinking Beyond Movements

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THE FRANKFURT *FREIES JÜDISCHES LEHRHAUS*' IMPACT ON ITS PROMINENT  
JEWISH THINKERS: RELIGIOUS ACTION, RESPONSES TO MODERNITY, AND  
THINKING BEYOND MOVEMENTS

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## Abstract

This thesis analyzes the works of multiple prominent figures who attended the Frankfurt *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* in order to find recurring themes indicating a common influence of the Lehrhaus upon these figures. The first chapter discusses Lehrhaus figures considering faith motivated action in the world was a spiritual requirement of a person of faith. The second chapter observes these figures' tendency to demonstrate dissatisfaction with modernity and a need to propose modifications on and/or progressions beyond modernity. The third chapter demonstrates these figures inclination to think outside the boundaries of the movements of their times pursuing intellectual honesty and individual thought.

## Introduction

In the early twentieth century, many movements in the German Jewish community sought to revitalize Jewish culture and combat the trend of assimilation and apostasy that characterized the nineteenth century in Germany. Whether they pointed to changes in Jewish life as a result of Jewish emancipation in 1812 or Jewish cultural issues preceding emancipation that led to later estrangement, these movements proposed something had to change to restore the cultural health of the German Jewish community and end the trend of estrangement from the Jewish community and Judaism. One such movement was the *Lehrhaus* movement, started and centered around the Frankfurt *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* founded by Franz Rosenzweig in 1920.

The Frankfurt Lehrhaus evolved out of the Frankfurt *Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volksbildung*, an institution started by Liberal rabbi Georg Salzberger who, disturbed by Jewish soldiers' lack of Jewish knowledge in the First World War, aimed to acquaint assimilated Jews with Judaism and Jewish culture with popular lectures and excursions to historic sites, similar to other Jewish institutions at the time.<sup>1</sup> Rosenzweig innovated on this concept shifting the focus to familiarizing Jews with the foundational texts of Judaism and revealing how Judaism could be relevant to modern life.

Rosenzweig's address at the opening of the Lehrhaus revolves around a concept of the "center and periphery." The center in this concept is the Torah, while the periphery is the experience and learning of life.<sup>2</sup> Rosenzweig describes the old way of Jewish learning began in

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, "Upon Opening the Jüdisches Lehrhaus," *On Jewish Learning*, Ed. Nahum. N. Glatzer, (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 98.

the center and could encompass all Jewish life, but with emancipation and the end of the ghetto, the boundaries of life expanded with a rapidity and magnitude with which the “old learning” could not keep up. Rosenzweig proposes a “New Learning,” “a learning in reverse order. A learning that no longer starts from the Torah and leads into life, but the other way round: from life, from a world that knows nothing of the Law, or pretends to know nothing, back to the Torah.”<sup>3</sup> The Torah was not the starting place for Rosenzweig’s students or instructors.

Rosenzweig points out the diverse walks of life represented among the faculty saying,

You will find, listed among others, a chemist, a physician, a historian, an artist, a politician. Two-thirds of the teachers are persons who, twenty or thirty years ago, in the only century when Jewish learning had become the monopoly of specialists, would have been denied the right of teaching in a Jewish House of Study.<sup>4</sup>

All who were learning at the Lehrhaus, which Rosenzweig considered the instructors to be learning too, came from different points on the periphery, each with their own journey to the center. This returning to Judaism and Jewish community did not have to come at the expense of one’s connection to their host nation. Rosenzweig believed that “in being Jews we must not give up anything, not renounce anything, but lead everything back to Judaism,” so one did not have to shed their Germanness and instead was encouraged to contextualize their whole life within Judaism.<sup>5</sup>

This desire to make Judaism relevant to everyday life resonates with the German philosophy of *Lebensphilosophie* which advocated learning being applicable to everyday life. *Lebensphilosophie* guided educational approaches both at the Lehrhaus and in German society at

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<sup>3</sup> Rosenzweig, “Upon Opening the Lehrhaus,” 98.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenzweig, “Upon Opening the Lehrhaus,” 99.

<sup>5</sup> Rosenzweig, “Upon Opening the Lehrhaus,” 98.

large, being a guiding philosophy in *Volkshochschulen*. Rosenzweig certainly incorporated this philosophy into his educational endeavors, as indicated by his “center and periphery” philosophy and his abandoning of his academic career to focus on education more oriented toward community enrichment and applying Judaism to life.<sup>6</sup> Two other key Lehrhaus figures, Martin Buber, one of the foremost figures in Cultural Zionist thought and the study of Jewish mysticism and the highest profile teacher and eventual leader of the Lehrhaus, and Margarete Susman, a versatile mind known for her poetry, feminist activism, political and theological philosophy and one of most respected students and instructors at the Lehrhaus, studied in the private salon of Georg Simmel, one of the founders of sociology in Germany whose thought was based around *Lebensphilosophie*.<sup>7</sup> Simmel even used the “center and periphery” construction to describe Susman calling her “a center without a periphery” further demonstrating the connection between the “center and periphery” concept and Jewish application of *Lebensphilosophie*.<sup>8</sup>

Franz Rosenzweig himself began his journey to the center from far on the periphery. Rosenzweig came from a middle-class family with only low levels of Jewish religious observance.<sup>9</sup> The lack of deep commitment to Judaism in his household made the religion seem obsolete and meaningless to Rosenzweig.<sup>10</sup> Rosenzweig went as far as to nearly convert to Christianity, an event that has taken on a mythical aspect as a key story of return to Judaism. His mother Adele vehemently scolded him when he disclosed this idea and after attending Rabbi

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<sup>6</sup> Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 73-74.

<sup>7</sup> Elisa Klapheck, “Margarete Susman: An Introduction,” *Margarete Susman: Religious-political Essays on Judaism*, ed. Elisa Klapheck, trans. Laura Radosh, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Klapheck, “Margarete Susman,” 9.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Levenson, “Franz Rosenzweig: From Alienated Existentialist to *Ba'al Teshuvah*,” *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thinkers: From Spinoza to Soloveitchik. 2nd ed.* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Nahum N. Glatzer, “Franz Rosenzweig: The Story of a Conversion,” *Essays in Jewish Thought. Judaic Studies Series ; 8.* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 230.



Marcus Petuchowski's Orthodox *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year's Day) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) services Rosenzweig decided to commit himself to Judaism.<sup>11</sup>

After returning from serving in the First World War, during which he wrote his signature theological work *The Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig committed himself to Jewish education to restore the German Jewish community and bring others along with him on the journey from the periphery to the center.

Martin Buber served as the most prominent instructor of the original Lehrhaus staff, and after the Lehrhaus' initial closure in 1926, Buber revived the Lehrhaus in 1933, leading this second iteration until passing his position to Abraham Joshua Heschel in 1937 who would oversee its final days until his deportation from Germany to Poland in 1938.<sup>12</sup> Martin Buber was the foremost scholar of Jewish mysticism at the time and continued to hold a position of prominence after moving to Palestine in 1937. In addition to his influence as a theological thinker, Buber was also one of the most influential figures in the cultural Zionist movement.

This study will observe the writings of many figures who studied and taught at the Lehrhaus searching for common themes in their thought that may indicate a common impact the Lehrhaus and its key leaders had on their perspectives or at least a common kind of person who was drawn to the Lehrhaus. This thesis will not comprehensively discuss all teachers, much less the general student body of the Lehrhaus. At this point in my career, my understanding of German is not extensive enough to study intellectual texts in the original German, so my focus in this iteration of this project lies upon a select few prominent members of the Lehrhaus who have easily accessible English translations of their works or works originally published in English. I

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<sup>11</sup> Levenson, "Franz Rosenzweig," 90.

<sup>12</sup> Nahum N. Glatzer, *Essays in Jewish Thought*. Judaic Studies Series ; 8. (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 271.

have aimed to primarily use sources from between 1900 and 1940 to observe these figures intellectual development before and after their involvement in the Lehrhaus and before the Holocaust influenced their perspective on key issues of Judaism and coexistence within a non-Jewish nation-state, but I had to rely on post-Holocaust sources in certain cases.

Three prominent themes recurred in the thought of these Lehrhaus figures, with all figures at least connecting with two of these themes if not all of them. While the scholarly literature on the Lehrhaus is considerable, these three themes have not received the attention they are due and constitute my contribution to this institution. Michael Brenner's *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* discusses the importance of *Lebensphilosophie* to the German education trends at the time and as an aspect of the Lehrhaus, but this is mentioned only briefly in Brenner's effort to explain the Lehrhaus as a combination of aspects of the German *Volkshochschule* and the traditional Jewish *beth midrash*.<sup>13</sup> This thesis expands beyond Brenner's light discussion of *Lebensphilosophie*, demonstrating how one of the key elements of Lehrhaus figures' thought is the application of faith to real world actions in a way that resonates strongly with *Lebensphilosophie*. Nahum Glatzer's "Faith and Action" reveals the importance to this idea of faith motivated action among the Lehrhaus' founding leaders and the impact that had on Glatzer, and I aim to demonstrate with my broader discussion of multiple Lehrhaus figures that this is a very apparent key impact of the Lehrhaus. Glatzer's "The Frankfort Lehrhaus" gives a brief semester by semester history of the Lehrhaus while also repeatedly demonstrating how the Lehrhaus was a place for participants to think freely, without concern of factional doctrine. I provide extensive additional support for this conclusion demonstrating the intellectual diversity of Lehrhaus figures and their conflicts even with the spiritual and political movements with

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<sup>13</sup> Brenner, *Renaissance of Jewish Culture*, 73-74.

which they affiliated. Paul Mendes-Flohr's brief discussion of the Lehrhaus in *German Jews: A Dual Identity* demonstrates a trajectory between these ideas saying, "The 'and' was to be fostered simply by tacitly respecting the culture of the participants at Rosenzweig's house of study while giving them the opportunity to 'know Judaism as Judaism,' to encounter Judaism as a living reality."<sup>14</sup> The "and" refers to one's ability to be Jewish AND German rather than Jewish OR German, and by respecting everyone's outside background, Rosenzweig allowed all to exchange ideas while connecting Judaism to their experience of reality. Through this method, the Lehrhaus united a diverse set of people around the idea of applying Judaism to their reality.

The first of the themes is a perspective that religious belief and knowledge should lead one to action. Pious study and ritual observance fail to fulfill the obligations of a person of faith. Faith must compel one to take action in everyday life. This theme most clearly connects to *Lebensphilosophie*. For these Lehrhaus thinkers knowledge was meaningless without application to real life, and religion, perhaps more so than anything else, should be relevant to life.

Second among these themes is a dissatisfaction with modernity. In this case, I mean modernity in the sense of the historical time period, starting with the Renaissance and ending somewhere between the late nineteenth century and the First World War, and that time period's conceptual products such as race, nations, the economic systems of capitalism and communism, religious experience existing in the private sphere, and modern religious movements like Orthodox and Reform Judaism. Lehrhaus figures display this dissatisfaction in different ways. Some display this in a longing for when Jewish communities were kept together and separate in ghettos or otherwise see Jewish emancipation and integration into non-Jewish society as the cause of Jewish communal degradation and religious apostasy. Other figures display their

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews : A Dual Identity*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 87.

dissatisfaction by seeking to move on from modernity, sometimes displaying this in small ways like critiquing modern religious movements and other times in radical ways like advocating the abandonment of modern economic systems and nations.

These Lehrhaus figures also display a third theme of thinking beyond the contemporary political and religious movements of their times. Many of these thinkers did not fit neatly into one of the main Jewish movements, and those who were inclined more toward one movement than others often had a complex relationship with that movement, often drawing criticism from others in that circle. This also reflects upon the Lehrhaus. While the Lehrhaus' mission was inclined toward enriching a Jewish German community as part of the German nation, instructors at the Lehrhaus had connections to various Jewish religious movements. Even among the two main leaders of the Lehrhaus, there was the contrast of the Liberal, Jewish-German, Rosenzweig and the cultural Zionist, mystic Buber, and beyond them was a faculty with ties to Orthodox Judaism, Reform Judaism, various understanding of Jewish mysticism, atheism, Zionism of all sub-factions, and Liberal German politics.

The figures being studied have been organized in relation to these three themes. This does not mean these figures only exhibit that one theme, only that they emphasize that theme relatively more than others.

The first chapter, "Faith and Action," will discuss two Lehrhaus figures, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) and Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936), whose faith compelled them to involve themselves deeply in ground level activism opposing the oppression of disadvantaged peoples. Abraham Joshua Heschel was a rabbi, scholar of Jewish mysticism, and activist born into a Hasidic community in Warsaw before studying academically in Berlin and eventually succeeding Martin Buber as the last leader of the Lehrhaus. After being deported from Germany

in 1938, he fled to the United Kingdom and from there to the United States where he would continue his career as an academic and theologian and become involved in American postwar activist movements. Born into a Viennese, bourgeois, Orthodox family, Bertha Pappenheim devoted her life to social work and feminist activism, opening women's shelters, orphanages, and schools for girls throughout Germany and Eastern Europe, and raising awareness of human trafficking in Eastern Europe particularly in the Jewish communities of the region.

The second chapter, "Alternatives to Modernity," will discuss Erich Fromm (1900-1980) and Margarete Susman (1872-1966) who both propose radical abandonment of modern concepts as a means to improving human life and in Susman's case preparing the world for the Messiah. Erich Fromm practiced psychology in the tradition of psychoanalysis and like Sigmund Freud was an atheist, though was much more outwardly supportive of religion than Freud. Margarete Susman's memoir "Ich Habe Viele Leben Gelebt" (I Have Lived Many Lives) properly describes how multifaceted Susman was. Susman is best known for her poetry and criticism of modern literature but is also gaining increasing recognition for her activities as a feminist and political and theological philosopher. Originally born into an assimilated family who did not even discuss their Jewish heritage, Susman eventually made Judaism the center of all facets of her life.

The third chapter, "Thinking Beyond Movements," discusses Nahum Norbert Glatzer's (1903-1990) description of the diverse thought in the Lehrhaus as a key theme of his writings on the Lehrhaus, and Leo Strauss (1899-1973) and Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) as figures who did not fit comfortably into any one intellectual or theological movement, often being at odds with the movements with which they most closely associated. Nahum N. Glatzer was a scholar of Jewish history and philosophy and a prolific compiler and editor of Jewish scholarship, originally hailing from Austrian controlled Galicia. He was a close associate of Buber and

Rosenzweig committing much of his career in the United States to compiling and presenting their work for English speaking audiences. Leo Strauss was born in Germany and began his influential career as a political scientist around the same time he began teaching at the Lehrhaus. Though a Zionist in his youth, he slowly distanced himself from the movement and became better known for inspiring the “Straussian” school of conservative American politics. Gershom Scholem was a Zionist and scholar of Jewish mysticism from an assimilated and zealously patriotic German Jewish family. Scholem’s work on Jewish mysticism would lead to a whole school of thought on Jewish mysticism revolving around him.

The writings of these figures suggest that the Frankfurt *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* fostered a belief that religious Jews should be compelled to applying their faith to action and significant changes from modern life were needed to restore the Jewish community and religious experience, while also creating an environment where diverse solutions to modern religious and societal problems could be discussed unburdened by restrictions of factional affiliations in contemporary Jewish movements.

## Faith and Action

### Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972)

Abraham Joshua Heschel was the last leader of the Frankfurt Lehrhaus, taking Martin Buber's position in 1937 after Buber moved to Palestine and serving until his deportation to Poland in 1938.<sup>15</sup> After he arrived in the United States, he continued to spend the rest of his life as an educator and embodied most of the traits that many of the prominent Lehrhaus teachers and students possessed. Heschel's most defining trait had to be his spiritually motivated activism. Heschel's life in America exemplified "faith and action" constantly participating in activist movements for social and political reform like the American Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam protests. He found dissent to be a critical element to all areas of life, criticizing the spiritual and social status of the world, and never fully binding himself to any one approach to Jewish theology. Heschel clearly demonstrated a drive to apply his faith with action, a critical perspective on modernity, and a simultaneous theological openness and criticalness that did not land him in just one camp of Jewish religious thought.

A "sense of ultimate embarrassment" guided Heschel's approach to faith and motivated his inclination to activism. Heschel believed "Religion depends upon what man does with his ultimate embarrassment," and describes this "sense of ultimate embarrassment," saying, "How embarrassing for man to live in the shadow of greatness and to ignore it, to be a contemporary of God and not to sense it... It is the awareness that the world is too great for him, the awareness of

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<sup>15</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Abraham Joshua Heschel Essential Writings*. ed. Susannah Heschel, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011), 23. Further citations of Abraham Joshua Heschel's works in this book will be attributed to the abbreviated "Heschel." Editorial comments by Susannah Heschel will be attributed to the unabbreviated "Susannah Heschel" for clarity.

the grandeur and mystery of being, the awareness of being present at the unfolding of an inconceivable eternal saga.”<sup>16</sup> This embarrassment lies both in one’s awe of the scale, complexity, and beauty of creation as well as humanity’s acknowledgment of their imperfection and potential for improvement in the face of the awesomeness of existence.<sup>17</sup> Heschel even perceives awe as the root of faith saying, “*Awe precedes faith; it is at the root of faith. We must grow in awe in order to reach faith.*”<sup>18</sup>

Faith often is discussed in terms of finding comfort, but Heschel’s faith was defined by discomfort rooted in embarrassment. Faith purely for comfort, psychological health, or a sense of community is not enough for Heschel. Heschel demonstrates this when he says, “The prophet disdains those for whom God’s presence is comfort and security; to him it is a challenge, an incessant demand.”<sup>19</sup> Heschel uses the biblical prophets as an example of faith and embarrassment motivating action. Heschel’s prophet “is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden on his soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man’s fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony. A voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world.”<sup>20</sup> The prophet does not take comfort in their faith but is called to action by their faith, compelled to right the wrongs of the world. Heschel uses the prophets to represent Judaism as a revolutionary force. Facing a world where people are allowed to starve while others have plenty, where various peoples are held down by many mechanisms of oppression, and where many people ignore these

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<sup>16</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 54.

<sup>17</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 56.

<sup>18</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 63.

<sup>20</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 62.



things to avoid discomfort and collective embarrassment, “the purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history.”<sup>21</sup>

This embarrassment and demand for action can be seen in Heschel’s writings for the various causes in which he was involved. In a telegram to President John F. Kennedy preceding a summit on race and civil rights, Heschel expresses his embarrassment from racism saying, “We forfeit right to worship God as long as we continue to humiliate negroes. Church synagogue have failed, they must repent,” and also demands action on the part of all involved saying,

Ask religious leaders to call for national repentance and personal sacrifice. Let religious leaders donate one month's salary toward fund for negro housing and education...I propose that you Mr. President declare state of moral emergency. A Marshal Plan for aid to Negroes is becoming a necessity. The hour calls for moral grandeur and for spiritual audacity.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, when introducing Martin Luther King at Riverside, protesting the Vietnam War, Heschel said, “Our thoughts on Vietnam are sores, destroying our trust, ruining our most cherished commitments with burdens of shame...it is our duty as citizens to say no to the subversiveness of our government, which is ruining the values we cherish.”<sup>23</sup>

For Heschel, faith motivated action defines the experience of someone truly religious, someone who possesses a sense of ultimate embarrassment. He considered this the task of his generation, the generation of Jews who witnessed the loss of loved ones and the death of millions of their people during the Holocaust. He expresses this by saying, “We will not fulfill our obligation by reciting lamentations... Our task is to find an answer to a crucial question: What is

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<sup>21</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 63.

<sup>22</sup> Heschel, “Telegram to President John F. Kennedy,” *Essential Writings*, 64-65.

<sup>23</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 82.

our generation's obligation? What is the task? Not to forget, never to be indifferent to other people's suffering.”<sup>24</sup>

The fact humans perpetrated an act like the Holocaust serves as perhaps the ultimate example of cause for collective embarrassment for humanity. Many demanded theodicy after the Holocaust and for the many other atrocities of the world, but Heschel instead believed the burden should be to produce an anthropodicy. Humans use their free will to commit genocides. Humans use their free will to oppress their fellow human beings. Humans use their free will to hoard wealth while others starve. Heschel did not believe that God had abandoned humanity, but rather, humanity had closed the door on God. Heschel explains the apparent absence of God in his time saying, “The prophets do not speak of the *hidden* God but of *hiding* God. His hiding is a function not His essence, an act, not a permanent state. It is when the people forsake Him, breaking the Covenant which He has made with them, that He forsakes them and hides His face from them (Deuteronomy 31:16-17),” or as he puts more concisely, “God is not silent. He has been silenced.”<sup>25</sup> Heschel thinks humanity seeks to blame someone else rather than accept their own guilt, so they pretend God is “a watchman hired to prevent us from using our loaded guns” and when humanity causes harm to each other, God becomes “the ultimate Scapegoat.”<sup>26</sup> God is hiding because humanity is in an embarrassing state, blaming God for their evil instead of accepting their guilt.

Humanity embarrasses itself in more than its active participation in evil acts though. Heschel defines sin as “The abuse of freedom. A failure in depth, failure to respond to God's challenge. The root of sin is callousness, hardness of heart, lack of understanding what is at stake

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<sup>24</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 82.

<sup>25</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 90-91.

<sup>26</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 90.

in being alive.”<sup>27</sup> Sin is to not answer the prophetic call to action mentioned earlier, to not be motivated by one’s embarrassment to revolutionize the world and help those who are suffering. In general, Heschel believes, “What the world needs is a sense of embarrassment. Modern man has the power and the wealth to overcome poverty and disease, but he has no wisdom to overcome suspicion. We are guilty of misunderstanding the meaning of existence; we are guilty of distorting our goals and misrepresenting our souls.”<sup>28</sup> Heschel critiques humanity for, rather than seeking to eliminate suffering and achieve unity, aiming to achieve such lowly goals as individual comfort and wealth; “The ceiling of aspiration is too low: a car, color television, and life insurance. Modern man has royal power and plebian ideals.”<sup>29</sup>

Heschel also echoes the core issue the Lehrhaus took with modernity, the loss of identity. As the Lehrhaus responded to Jewish assimilation in Germany in the nineteenth century, Heschel responded to the postwar state of religion and another wave of Jewish assimilation in America. Once again, Jews and other minorities in America faced pressure to align their identity with the national image, the suburban “American Dream,” and Heschel decried this pressure to conform, echoing the importance of identity and rootedness to the Lehrhaus and German *Volkshochschule*, saying, “The tyranny of conformity tends to deprive man of his inner identity... to remain a person in the midst of a crowd. Thus the threat to modern man is loss of personhood, vanishing of identity, sinking into anonymity, not knowing who he is, whence he comes and where he goes.”<sup>30</sup>

However, for Heschel, a Jew is one who cannot give in to this pressure to conform, and this comfortable failure to challenge the wrongs of the world. Heschel claims, “Being a Jew

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<sup>27</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 85.

<sup>28</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 56.

<sup>29</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 109

<sup>30</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 110.

makes anonymity impossible. A Jew represents, stands for, proclaims - even in spite of himself. The world never sees the Jew as an individual but rather as a representative of a whole tradition, of a whole people.”<sup>31</sup> This invokes both the significance of a Jew’s cultural and spiritual roots to Heschel, but also in saying, “the world never sees the Jew as an individual,” points out how difficult it has been for Jews to be accepted as part of host nations even despite concerted efforts to integrate and assimilate at times. He goes on to define “Who is a Jew?” in a way incompatible with the comfortable, materialistic way of modern life. Heschel’s Jew is “A person whose integrity decays when unmoved by the knowledge of wrong done to other people,” “A person in travail with God's dreams and designs, a person to whom God is a challenge, not an abstraction,” and, “A person who knows how to recall and to keep alive what is holy in our people's past and to cherish the promise and the vision of redemption in the days to come.”<sup>32</sup> Heschel’s Jew remains rooted the history and future of their people, unable to disconnect from the tradition they exist within. Additionally, a Jew in Heschel’s definition cannot accept modern comfort while other people suffer, in fact, they must challenge modern life, demand aid for those who are suffering, and unite humanity rather than dividing with concepts like nation and race.

Heschel’s spiritual compulsion to critique the world also applied to the state of Judaism and religion in general. Like many who studied and taught at the Lehrhaus, Heschel dwelt between religious schools of thought, in conversation with all, with critiques for all. Susannah Heschel describes her father’s concern both with Judaism’s blind clinging to tradition and defenses of religion based on religion being a sociological tool to foster community or a psychological tool for mental wellbeing and comfort.<sup>33</sup> Heschel believed that “Inherent to all

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<sup>31</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 110.

<sup>32</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 110.

<sup>33</sup> Susannah Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 102.

traditional religion is the peril of stagnation. What becomes settled and established may easily turn foul,” and “Acts of dissent prove to be acts of renewal.”<sup>34</sup> To simply adhere to one vision of religious practice like the modern Jewish Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox movements without question or critique, threatens to allow religion to stagnate, to become entrenched in a previous time, disconnected from the issues of today. This applies to one’s individual understanding of faith as well as collective understanding. Heschel believed spiritual authenticity required one to challenge understanding of religion, including their own understanding, and constantly evolving one’s religious ideas saying, “In the realm of the spirit only he who is a pioneer is able to be an heir... Authentic faith is more than an echo of tradition. It is a creative situation, an event.”<sup>35</sup>

Among his critiques of Jewish religious practice, Heschel lamented inclination to understand religion in historical and mundane ways, rather than ways that led to awe and spiritual experience. He found that sermons too often dwelt on historical conditions around the creation of a reading, analysis of a verse’s literary form, and other worldly, scientific analysis instead of how the service could lead the congregation to inspiration for prayer and spiritual thought. Heschel presents his vision of the purpose of preaching saying, “Preach in order to pray. Preach in order to inspire others to pray. The test of a true sermon is that it can be converted to prayer.”<sup>36</sup> Heschel asserts, “the synagogue is not a house of lectureship but a house of worship. The purpose of such comments is to inspire ‘outpouring of the heart’ rather than to satisfy historical curiosity.”<sup>37</sup> This seems a mystical echo of Martin Buber’s position that one should approach the Hebrew Bible without compartmentalizing it and without preconceived notions and

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<sup>34</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 105.

<sup>35</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 105.

<sup>36</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 168.

<sup>37</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 168.

reservations; rather than encouraging the congregation to approach prayer and the Bible with openness and readiness for spiritual experience, such historical and mundane sermons lead people into their spiritual life with notions that serve as a barrier to spontaneous religious experience.<sup>38</sup>

Abraham Joshua Heschel's life and writings make it apparent how fitting of a final leader of the Lehrhaus he was. Though his peak involvement with the Lehrhaus was long after Franz Rosenzweig's passing, Heschel deeply embodied the nature of the Lehrhaus and the tendencies of a thinker from the Lehrhaus. Heschel valued spiritual and cultural rootedness while demanding that religion be relevant to life. He did not feel comfortable in just acquiring religious knowledge, and let his faith compel him to societal action. He refused to accept the modern state of the world and Judaism, and in doing so, found himself in conversation with, yet outside, modern Jewish schools of religious and political thought.

### **Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936)**

Martin Buber opens *Bertha Pappenheim: Freud's Anna O.* with a foreword saying, "There are people of spirit and there are people of passion, both less common than one might think. Much rarer are people of spirit and passion. But the rarest is passion of the spirit. Bertha Pappenheim was a woman of passion of the spirit."<sup>39</sup> Pappenheim devoted her life to social work and feminist action, particularly focused on women's education and combating human trafficking and sex abuse in Eastern Europe and the Near East.<sup>40</sup> Pappenheim was compelled to take action against suffering, and someone to whom Judaism and Jewishness were extremely important while found herself at odds with most Jewish movements of her time.

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Buber, *On the Bible; Eighteen Studies*, Ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Buber, *Bertha Pappenheim: Freud's Anna O.*, Ed. Dora Edinger, (Highland Park, IL: Congregation Solel, 1968), Foreword.

<sup>40</sup> In Pappenheim's time, these issues were often referred to as "white slavery".

In a letter to one of her former orphanage wards, Sophie Mamelok, Pappenheim attested, "...for me, work and you children are my entire life, a life I had to conquer."<sup>41</sup> Pappenheim was constantly involved in the creation of women's social work and education institutions, and also constantly attempting to spur other women into action. A great many letters to her Mamelok offer her jobs at newly opened schools and orphanages, like one dated July 5, 1908, saying, "Here in Kolomea a kindergarten is to be opened October 7 for the children of the poorest of the poor... I have... suggested that you start it and work here for six months...".<sup>42</sup> Pappenheim took great pride in the children that she had helped raise and educate going on to live lives of service also saying to Mamelok, "I am deeply proud that some of my 'children' are in positions where they can carry on what I started years ago, to work as social educators and consider this work part of their own life."<sup>43</sup>

Beyond those Pappenheim impacted as children, she sought to spur many others into action. Her *Weibliche Fursorge* group organized women to participate in social work and that group formed the core of another organization of her creation for Jewish women's activism on a German national scale called the *Jüdischer Frauenbund*.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps Pappenheim's most well-known activist endeavor were her reports on the state of human trafficking and sex work in Eastern Europe and the Near East. Pappenheim sent letters to a group of "subscribers" hoping to encourage their involvement in protecting women and children from human trafficking and sex abuse in those areas.<sup>45</sup> In a massive undertaking, she traveled as far as Istanbul (still officially called Constantinople then), Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Moscow. Her letters also document the

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<sup>41</sup> Bertha Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 28. Kolomea is today known as Kolomyia in western Ukraine.

<sup>43</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Dora Edinger, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 37.

real risks she took in directly observing the situations of sex work and human trafficking and challenging authorities with the ability to shut down human trafficking rings. For example, in Constantinople, Pappenheim describes confronting an influential rabbi about human trafficking within his community saying, “He knows, for instance, that there is a synagogue of white slavers in Constantinople. Prostitutes purchase honors for their procurers. He has enough power to close this ‘House of God’ but does not do so.”<sup>46</sup> She put herself at significant risk directly interacting with people complicit or directly involved in criminal activity she was attempting to combat. Unfortunately, this journey was not particularly fruitful in generating action among her subscribers. Pappenheim laments the lack of real response to her efforts saying, “Nobody is allowed to remain quiet if he knows that somewhere wrong is being done. Neither sex nor age nor religion nor party can be an excuse to remain quiet. To know of wrong and to remain quiet makes one partly guilty.”<sup>47</sup>

While at the Lehrhaus, Pappenheim lead study groups on the ethics of social work, a continuation of her lifelong effort to encourage people to engage in social work. It seems likely that Rosenzweig and Buber wanted her to serve as an example of faithful action that recurs as a theme in the thought of Lehrhaus figures all the way to Heschel.

Pappenheim repeatedly expressed distaste for the conflict between Jewish movements and generally positioned herself outside these various movements. Pappenheim was raised in a bourgeois Orthodox family of particular prestige in the Orthodox community, but she did not align herself with Orthodoxy as an adult. Pappenheim summarized her tenuous, sometimes adversarial, relationships with the Orthodox movement and other Jewish movements quite

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<sup>46</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 37.



humorously in self-written obituaries each lamenting her antagonism with that paper's associated Jewish movement.

For the Orthodox *Israelite*, she wrote, "She was by descent and training an Orthodox woman, she believed herself separated from her roots - obviously under revolutionary feminist influence - She was often hostile - but did not defy her origins. With her descent she should have done more for Orthodoxy...What a pity!", for the patriotic German-Jewish *C.V. Journal*, "A woman of real fights indebted both to Jewish essence and German civilization; yet she remained consciously outside our ranks because she sternly rejected ideas she did not like. What a pity!", and for the Zionist *Jewish Review*, "An old and active enemy of our movement, though one cannot deny that she had Jewish consciousness, and strength. She believed herself a German, but she was an assimilationist. What a pity!"<sup>48</sup> Pappenheim's obituaries, with her biting wit, encapsulate her frustrations with Jewish politics, contradicting each other and showing an impossibility to please everyone or really anyone.

Pappenheim displays a combination of national, ethnic, and religious consciousness resonant with Franz Rosenzweig's vision of a Jewish German. In 1935, she proposed a motto for her signature organization the *Jüdischer Frauenbund*, "A Universal Jewish-ethical mission combined with German civilization."<sup>49</sup> Even after the rise of the Nazi party, she still found German civilization a central aspect of her Jewish feminist group.

Additionally, she displays a consideration of the value of national consciousness of other national identities. In the letter mentioned earlier where Pappenheim invites Sophie Mamelok to work in Kolomea, Pappenheim says, "your whole being and talent will be a living example of what civilization means and what education can do," which could be taken as advocating

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<sup>48</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 99.

<sup>49</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 96.

bringing “German civilization” to Kolomea, but late Pappenheim continues, “You must always stress that you are there only temporarily and that Polish children are to speak Polish, not German.”<sup>50</sup> So, if Mamelok was to be an example of civilization, but respect the local national identity, Pappenheim seems to be advocating in particular the proliferation of modern education and modern advances in quality of life.

Pappenheim, in fact, does not long for a better past or propose a postmodernity like other Lehrhaus thinkers, but instead strove to bring people into modernity. As indicated by her discussions of being an “example of what civilization means,” Pappenheim possessed a paternalistic perspective toward Eastern Europe. Pappenheim suggested Mamelok work in Kolomea because, “There is no qualified Polish person here to start it,” and her most positive statement on Eastern Europe comes from a letter from Stanislaw, Galicia in 1912 saying,

I have watched certain changes in Galicia in the last ten years, at least in the larger cities. Houses are three and four stories high, one plans running water. Quite a few people have gold filled teeth, the children of the poor want to wear shoes, the children of the rich people go barefoot or wear sandals. Polish is well and more frequently spoken by Jews. All these are signs of progress, though the moral and ethical level is falling.<sup>51</sup>

From Pappenheim’s perspective, Eastern Europe was behind the times and needed help being brought into modernity. Pappenheim believed Eastern European Jews’ existence as “pauperized and proletarian masses” led Jewish girls to completely break ties with their Jewish roots or turn to revolutionary movements like Zionism which Pappenheim viewed with

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<sup>50</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 28.

<sup>51</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 28, 54.

skepticism.<sup>52</sup> Pappenheim envisions that educating and modernizing these communities would encourage women to stay in these communities and become greater conveyers of religion and culture to their children, leading to spiritual and cultural revival.

Pappenheim does not blame emancipation for assimilation and people disconnecting with their Jewish roots. She considers women's exclusion from religious practice and understanding the key cause of this and their inclusion the key to Jewish revival. Pappenheim describes how women having to practice without understanding led to Judaism seeming burdensome and unattractive saying, "What people do not know - or know only as unattractive or a burden - without ethical value is not esteemed, and I see the logical and tragic consequence in that women and mothers of the recent past were not able to raise their children with respect for the spirit of tradition. The thread had been torn and the house was emptied which today is completely blamed on emancipation."<sup>53</sup> Pappenheim believed that women being educated and able to understand Judaism would mean they would happily pass their tradition to their children. Pappenheim thought that reform of liturgy was not necessary saying in regard to liturgical changes by the Reform movement, "It would have been more sensible, if women - and of course, not only women - had been educated to understand the service than later to construct a service which was unhistoric and without tradition adjusted to the lagging understanding of the congregation."<sup>54</sup>

As shown here, Pappenheim viewed education as a way for women to better serve as mothers and conveyers of culture to the next generation rather than a means for a postmodern woman outside the home that would be seen in feminist movements later in the twentieth century. While Lehrhaus attendees of later generations like Margarete Susman (1872-1966) and

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<sup>52</sup> Pappenheim, "The Jewish Girl," *Bertha Pappenheim*, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Pappenheim, "The Jewish Woman," *Bertha Pappenheim*, 78.

<sup>54</sup> Pappenheim, "The Jewish Woman," 79.

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) proposed more radical solutions to the world's problems, Pappenheim was a reformer of the nineteenth century presenting modern solutions to the world's issues.

Education was a way for women to better understand their religion and culture and to pass on the value of those traditions. In her description of a proper study plan for girls, Pappenheim says,

“Why not tell the children seriously: ‘You have to prove yourselves as homemakers.

Homemaking is a test of ability, character, dependability, service for you and for all.

Homemaking is not words and phrases; it has to be carried on ethically’ (one may use a less pathetic expression with younger children).”<sup>55</sup> Pappenheim’s study plan revolves around leaving time to practice homemaking as she puts it,

Practically speaking: school should not begin before nine o’clock in the morning and there must be an ample recess at noon. (The same is true for boys). Mothers and their substitutes must see that it is understood that only those who loyally perform their small duties can later on take care of larger duties. Therefore, pre-apprenticeship and similar plans must allow time to the girls to fulfill their tasks in their own homes. It is wrong if mothers say “I can do it better and faster myself”. It is the duty of mothers to teach what they know (and truly, they know very little) even if things run badly, and unpleasantly for a while.<sup>56</sup>

Pappenheim’s feminism was thoroughly modern, a feminism intended to make better modern mothers who would serve as more effective custodians of tradition, passing on a value for the modern nation and an informed appreciation of religion.

As Pappenheim made apparent in her *Jewish Review* obituary, she had no inclination toward Zionism. She describes her feelings regarding Zionism in a letter from her visit to

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<sup>55</sup> Pappenheim, “Remarks About a Study Plan,” *Bertha Pappenheim*, 91.

<sup>56</sup> Pappenheim, “Remarks About a Study Plan,” 92.

Jerusalem on her anti-human trafficking journey saying, “I am in despair about these Zionist discussions. Is there nothing else, nothing wider, nothing bigger in the entire world? In addition, I feel the more I understand this material, the more I see the mistakes, the dangers of the movement and I am more sure of myself in discussing it.”<sup>57</sup> She does not discuss the “mistakes” and “dangers” in that letter, but the question, “Is there nothing else, nothing wider, nothing bigger in the entire world?”, seems significant considering Pappenheim’s transnational activism. Pappenheim addressed Jewish issues among various nationalities, but as seen in her approach to Kolomea, still considered Jews as members of their host nations.

In “The Jewish Woman,” Pappenheim expresses doubt that Zionism could be a solution for the repression of women and Jewish cultural renewal saying, “I could watch Zionist women slowly accepted by Zionist men for special duties, especially financial drives; Zionist women’s organization were completely dependent spiritually and economically and developed very slowly.”<sup>58</sup> If women were hesitantly accepted in the movement and delegated only certain duties and dependent roles, that was not promising for an end to women’s repression. Pappenheim believed that “colonization cannot do without mature, conscious women to guarantee its existence;” education and spiritual renewal of Jewish women needed to come first for Zionism to have a chance at succeeding rather than women’s empowerment being a result of Zionism.<sup>59</sup>

Almost two decades older than Buber and more than two and a half decades older than Rosenzweig, Pappenheim should not be considered as much from an angle of “how did the Lehrhaus impact their thought” like this paper considers most of the other figures discussed but rather “how did she impact the other thought of others at the Lehrhaus.” Most of the other figures

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<sup>57</sup> Pappenheim, *Bertha Pappenheim*, 41.

<sup>58</sup> Pappenheim, “The Jewish Woman,” 82.

<sup>59</sup> Pappenheim, “The Jewish Woman,” 82.

attended the Lehrhaus in their formative years, but Pappenheim instead was an elder conveying her life's knowledge to later generations. While bringing a perspective more rooted in modernity than others at the Lehrhaus, Pappenheim just as clearly demonstrates the inclination to faith motivated action and thinking outside the restraints of particular intellectual and political movements, and her more modern perspective contributed to the diversity of ideas within the Lehrhaus.

## Alternatives to Modernity

### Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

Erich Fromm stands out from the other Lehrhaus figures discussed here as being the only atheist of the lot. Though, as indicated by his attending and teaching at the Frankfurt Lehrhaus, Fromm was not averse to gaining understanding religion. Fromm frames *Psychoanalysis and Religion* as an exploration of the relationship between the two titular topics and whether psychoanalysis poses a threat to religion.<sup>60</sup> To be clear, Fromm uses a particularly broad definition of religion saying, “I understand by religion *any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion,*” so his discussion of religion is not restricted only to Jewish texts or religious texts in general, though he does use multiple Jewish religious sources that give perspective on his view of Judaism.<sup>61</sup> While Fromm thinks psychoanalysis and science threaten certain aspects of religion, he also argues that psychoanalysis can deepen one’s appreciation of other aspects of religion and that both psychoanalysis and religion can be used to renew the ailing soul of a modern person.

Fromm divides religion into two types: authoritarian and humanistic. He defines authoritarian religion using the entry from the *Oxford Dictionary* at the time quoting, “[Religion is] recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being *entitled* to obedience, reverence, and worship,” and he claims the key element of authoritarian religion is “the surrender to a power transcending man. Just as the deity is

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<sup>60</sup> Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1950), 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 21.

conceived as omnipotent or omniscient, man is conceived as being powerless and insignificant. Only as he can gain grace or help from the deity by complete surrender can he feel strength.”<sup>62</sup>

Fromm then describes humanistic religion as,

centered around man and his strength. Man must develop his power of reason in order to understand himself, his relationship to his fellow men and his position in the universe. He must recognize the truth, both with regard to his limitations and his potentialities. He must develop his powers of love for others as well as for himself and experience of solidarity of all living beings.<sup>63</sup>

While Fromm seems to be attempting to not explicitly make merit judgements about his categories of religion, in the definitions themselves, Fromm seems to frame humanistic religion favorably relative to authoritarian religion. Fromm uses Nazism as the secular example of authoritarian religion, creating as awful an association as a concept possibly could have.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand he lists examples of humanistic religions as, “early Buddhism, Taoism, the teachings of Isaiah, Jesus, Socrates, Spinoza, certain trends in the Jewish and Christian religions (particularly mysticism), the religion of Reason of the French Revolution.”<sup>65</sup> Multiple other figures from the Lehrhaus affiliated themselves with and studied Jewish mysticism, often involving a falling out with Orthodox Judaism, and Fromm might have developed a fondness for humanist mysticism of figures like Martin Buber.

Fromm separates out different aspects of religion to avoid a general, imprecise statement that psychoanalysis threatens religion. He divides religion into the experiential aspect, the

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<sup>62</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 34.

<sup>63</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 37.

<sup>64</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 36.

<sup>65</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 37.



scientific-magical aspect, the ritualistic aspect, and the semantic aspect.<sup>66</sup> He finds no threat to the experiential aspect, which he describes as “religious feeling and devotion,” saying,

The attitude common to... religions is one in which the supreme aim of living is a concern with man's soul and the unfolding of his powers of love and reason.

Psychoanalysis, far from being a threat to this aim, can on the contrary contribute a great deal to its realization. Nor can this aspect be threatened by any other science.<sup>67</sup>

Likewise, Fromm finds that psychoanalysis can aid the ritualistic and semantic aspects of religion saying, “The contribution which psychoanalysis can make toward the understanding of rituals is in showing the psychological roots for the need of ritualistic action and in differentiating those rituals which are compulsive and irrational from those which are expressions of common devotion to our ideals,” and Freud’s interpretation of dreams and myths “laid the foundations for a new understanding of religious symbols in myth, dogma, and ritual. The comprehension of the language of symbols does not lead to a return to religion but it does lead to a new appreciation of the profound and significant wisdom expressed by religion in symbolic language.”<sup>68</sup> The only aspect Fromm thinks psychoanalysis and science threatens is the scientific-magical aspect of religion used to understand the world around them saying, “The more man understands and masters nature the less he needs to use religion as a scientific explanation and as a magical device for controlling nature.”<sup>69</sup>

With psychoanalysis and religion not being in conflict, a different opponent to the now allied concepts becomes apparent in Fromm’s narrative. Modern idols and authoritarian systems

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<sup>66</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 99

<sup>67</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 99.

<sup>68</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 109-110, 112.

<sup>69</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 104.

bring people away from the goals of religion and psychoanalysis such as “knowledge (reason, truth, logos), brotherly love, reduction of suffering, independence, and responsibility.”<sup>70</sup> Fromm frames authoritarian religion as opposing the concepts of brotherly love and independence saying,

this alienation from his own powers not only makes man feel slavishly dependent on God, it makes him bad too. He becomes a man without faith in his fellow men or in himself, without the experience of his own love, of his own power of reason. As a result the separation between the "holy" and the "secular" occurs. In his worldly activities man acts without love, in that sector of his life which is reserved to religion he feels himself a sinner (which he actually is, since to live without love is to live in sin) and tries to recover some of his lost humanity by being in touch with God.<sup>71</sup>

This criticism of the division between the holy and the secular can also be seen in the introduction of the book when Fromm says, “People go to churches and listen to sermons in which the principles of love and charity are preached, and the very same people would consider themselves fools or worse if they hesitated to sell a commodity which they knew the customer could not afford.”<sup>72</sup> Fromm’s critiques of modernity often have an anti-capitalist angle to them as seen in the prior quote. This can also be seen in his description of modern idolatry using as an example, “a collective and potent form of modern idolatry we find the worship of power, of success and the authority of the market.”<sup>73</sup> Fromm describes a threat to religious attitude that also inhibits the growth of the soul that quite clearly is meant to refer to capitalism saying,

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<sup>70</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 51

<sup>72</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 29.

The threat to the religious attitude lies not in science but in the predominant practices of daily life. Here man has ceased to seek in himself the supreme purpose of living and has made himself an instrument serving the economic machine his own hands have built. He is concerned with efficiency and success rather than with his happiness and the growth of his soul.<sup>74</sup>

However, capitalism is not the only opponent to the health of the human soul in Fromm's narrative. Worship of nation, race, and the nation-state all contribute to the belittling of human beings and the erection of barriers to brotherly love and love of the self, and in this theme of modern ideas harming the human soul. Fromm sees damage done to human souls by modern worship of the market, the modern division of the holy and secular, and authoritarian systems and seeks to heal that damage. Likewise, the Lehrhaus saw damage to the German Jewish community by the separation of religious practice and secular life and the pursuit of assimilation into the German nation.

### **Margarete Susman (1872-1966)**

Margarete Susman grew up so disconnected from Judaism that she only learned she was Jewish through her nanny.<sup>75</sup> Susman had a conversion narrative where she agreed to convert to Christianity before her marriage to please the parents of her fiancé and then before the baptism “declared that it was impossible for her to denounce the fact that she was a Jew.”<sup>76</sup> She was not allowed access to formal Jewish religious education until the death of her father in 1894 when she was 22 years of age and was heavily pressured toward a German bourgeois woman's

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<sup>74</sup> Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, 100.

<sup>75</sup> Elisa Klapheck, *Margarete Susman: Religious-Political Essays on Judaism*, Ed. Elisa Klapheck, Trans. Laura Radosh, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 7.

<sup>76</sup> Klapheck, *Religious-Political Essays*, 7.

lifestyle.<sup>77</sup> Once she had access to Jewish religious instruction, Susman centered all aspects of her life around it. Considering the way Judaism permeated all her endeavors from poetry, feminist activism, to political and sociological writings, philosopher Georg Simmel (whose school of thought centered around *Lebensphilosophie* and whose favorite students included Susman and Martin Buber) described her as “a center without a periphery.”<sup>78</sup> Susman’s writings before the rise of the Nazi party reflect the way Judaism permeated all aspects of her own life in the suggestion that Judaism is a world religion and Judaism’s power as a revolutionary influence that would prepare the world for the Messiah.

Susman viewed Jews as a people beyond nations and Judaism as a world religion. Susman describes the Jewish soldier “who has remained Jewish at heart and does not fight against his Judaism: He is the one, who, knowing that every enemy soldier might be his brother, can never erase the horror of fratricide from his soul,” understanding that his people are among all nations as well as all humanity is his brother.<sup>79</sup> Susman connects the difference between Jews and other nations to the prohibition to create divine images in Judaism and “Hear O’ Israel.” Susman describes the command of “Hear O’ Israel!”<sup>80</sup> as a demand to devote one’s entire being to God, to form oneself in God’s image and nothing else as, “Only when humans form nothing but themselves in the image of God are they serving God alone.”<sup>81</sup> For other nations, “the relation to the divine is different, because for them, the realization of God is linked to their national self-realization”; they form the nation as an image of God outside themselves where Jews simply

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<sup>77</sup> Klapheck, *Religious-Political Essays*, 7-8.

<sup>78</sup> Klapheck, *Religious-Political Essays*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Susman, “The Revolution and the Jews (1919),” *Religious-Political Essays*, 36-37.

<sup>80</sup> “Hear O’ Israel!” is the beginning of the *Shema* the most foundation prayer of Judaism and centerpiece of Jewish religious services. The *Shema* acknowledges God’s supreme sovereignty and reminds Jews of their obligations to God.

<sup>81</sup> Susman, “Judaism: A World Religion (1932),” *Religious-Political Essays*, 79.

seek to form themselves into the image of God through submission and devotion to him.<sup>82</sup> This aversion to divine images and modeling oneself in the image of God not only sets Jews apart from other nations, but is supposed to be an example for other nations. As Susman puts it,

The aim is not a particular image of humanity to parade before all peoples as God's image and humanity's role model. For Israel was not chosen to be, but to herald, just as it was not chosen to see, but to hear. It should be not itself, but that which it has heard and heralded: one united humanity, in which alone man in God's image will be realized.<sup>83</sup>

This concept of being the herald of a united humanity ties into Susman's vision of Judaism as a messianic revolutionary force. With the end of the First World War and the Balfour Declaration, Susman raises the question of where German Jews' loyalty would lie when torn between two homelands. However, Susman reframes the concept of Zion as not the earthly homeland in Palestine, but a spiritual homeland saying,

It is the eternal meaning of the holy place, as Solomon spoke at the end of his dedication of the temple: "Thus all the people of the earth will know Your name and revere Your, as does Your people Israel; and they will recognize that Your name is attached to this house that I have built (I Kings 8:43)." That then is the distinctive meaning of Zion: a homeland too small to take in its people as an earthly home, out of which however, as its eternal meaning, the temple ascends, gathering all the world around the one God-the temple of humanity, humanness itself.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Susman, "Judaism: A World Religion (1932)," 82.

<sup>83</sup> Susman, "Judaism: A World Religion (1932), 82-83.

<sup>84</sup> Susman, "The Revolution and the Jews," 44-45.

This does not mean that Palestine is insignificant to Judaism's potential to unite and revolutionize the world. Susman considers the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine on purely political grounds inviable. With Palestine being quite small geographically and the new state being a newcomer to the area inexperienced in both the politics of the region and the practical aspects of dealing with the living conditions of the region, it would be considerably checked in its political power and influence.<sup>85</sup> However, Susman believes socialist cultural Zionism has made Zionism a viable movement saying, "the national movement has come together with the clear goal of helping to birth, at this one particular place, a new world of rights that forcefully pushes aside our whole world, directly and without the cramps and convulsions of a transition from an old to a new order."<sup>86</sup> Susman describes this movement bringing salvation to the world saying, "the new movement aims to join homeland and exile in a new, vital spirit around the focal point of Zion and so, through the living example of a new socialist community... to once again bring salvation to a reluctant world-something it perhaps needs more than ever before."<sup>87</sup> Palestine would be the example to center Jewish life in the secular homeland and the lands of exile around the spiritual concept of Zion, "gathering all the world around the one God."<sup>88</sup> Susman's vision for Zionism requires Jews to live in exile, both for the simple fact that not every single Jew could move to Palestine, and the fact that Jews in exile have a critical role in the movement. The Jewish communities in exile serve as the heralds of the new world. Susman's endorsement of cultural Zionism is not a rejection of living among other nations in exile, but a call for those living in exile to guide their host nations beyond the concept of nation

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<sup>85</sup> Susman, "The Revolution and the Jews," 45.

<sup>86</sup> Susman, "The Revolution and the Jews," 46.

<sup>87</sup> Susman, "The Revolution and the Jews," 46.

<sup>88</sup> Susman, "The Revolution and the Jews," 45.

and toward one humanity. Zion is “the symbol for humanity’s path to salvation” and Jewish socialist cultural revolution is Susman’s vision for Zionism.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Susman, “The Revolution and the Jews,” 47.

## Thinking Beyond Movements

### Nahum Glatzer (1903-1990)

One need only look at Nahum N. Glatzer's bibliography to understand how much Buber, Rosenzweig, and the Lehrhaus impacted him. Most of the collections of Buber and Rosenzweig's work consulted in this thesis are edited by Glatzer. Glatzer found a second family at the Lehrhaus, becoming extremely close with the Rosenzweig family. Franz Rosenzweig applied to the German government for Glatzer to take an examination to receive credit for finishing Gymnasium, allowing him to formally advance his doctoral studies, and when Glatzer passed said exam, he stopped in Cassel on the way home to "visit Mrs. (Adele) Rosenzweig to receive her good wishes and to be 'spoiled' for a day or two."<sup>90</sup> This closeness even extended beyond Franz Rosenzweig's death. When Glatzer married his wife Anne, none of his biological family attended, yet Adele Rosenzweig and Edith Rosenzweig both attended, and Adele Rosenzweig even called him her great grandson.<sup>91</sup> Through Franz Rosenzweig, Glatzer found more than a mentor, but an entire additional family.

Glatzer's relationship with Martin Buber reflects a bit more of the complexity of family experience. Glatzer had great admiration and respect for Buber but that came with disappointments and painful transgressions that only a person with whom one is close can cause. Buber receives the largest share of Glatzer's memoir's second chapter "Encounters" where his impact is quite apparent, but also Glatzer demonstrates a large amount of personal baggage between the two of them.

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<sup>90</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 52-53.

<sup>91</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 51-52.



Buber had a massive influence on Glatzer as an intellectual. Glatzer studied in Frankfurt with the specific intent to study under Buber, to his Orthodox father's distaste, who distrusted Buber's free-thinking influence.<sup>92</sup> Glatzer recalls his first encounter with Buber in which the starstruck Glatzer coarsely blurted out a critique of Buber saying, "I asked whether his retelling of Hasidic stories are not too far removed from the often crude, inelegant originals. In other words (which I did not use): Don't you introduce the aesthetic element and thus distort the literature you wish to present to the public?"<sup>93</sup> Buber defended his approach in a way convincing to Glatzer which Glatzer described he "learned to appreciate and even to imitate in my attempts to present Midrashic materials to the modern reader."<sup>94</sup> Despite the awkward first encounter, Buber would later serve as Glatzer's key mentor as a PhD candidate, and Glatzer devotedly spread Buber's works in the United States later in his career.<sup>95</sup>

Glatzer's personal relationship with Buber was far more complicated. Glatzer describes the offense he took at Buber expressing his condolences regarding Glatzer's father's death through Rosenzweig saying, "I was sad that the man of 'I and Thou' who knew me well did not think of writing to me but used Rosenzweig as his messenger. I never forgot that."<sup>96</sup> Also, Glatzer took deep offense to what he perceived as Buber underplaying Rosenzweig's contributions to their Bible translation finding it especially callous in the immediate wake of Rosenzweig's death.<sup>97</sup>

Glatzer was not without personal admiration of Buber though. In particular, Buber's positive outlook in the most trying of times amazed Glatzer. He expresses his awe at Buber's

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<sup>92</sup> Michael Fishbane, *Memoirs*, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 83.

<sup>94</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 83.

<sup>95</sup> Fishbane, *Memoirs*, 12.

<sup>96</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 86.

<sup>97</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 91-92.

optimism in the face of the Nazi party's escalating anti-Jewish policy and violence. Even being a leading Zionist figure, Buber remained in Germany until 1937 believing that there would be a limit on the escalation of Nazi violence.<sup>98</sup> His admiration of Buber simply left him more vulnerable when such an exceptional man had such human failings.

As a key chronicler of the lives of Buber and Rosenzweig, and the Lehrhaus itself, Glatzer illuminates some of the key themes of Lehrhaus thought clearly. Glatzer serves as another example of a Lehrhaus thinker who had a complex relationship with the movement with whom they most affiliated and discusses the diversity of thought at the Lehrhaus in depth. Additionally, the title of the first chapter of this thesis was taken from Glatzer's essay, "Faith and Action," which was what initially revealed the significance of applying faith to real world action in Lehrhaus thought.

During Glatzer's youth and time at the Lehrhaus, he most strongly affiliated himself with the Zionist movement. Glatzer's childhood set him on a clear course toward a dissatisfaction with European Jewish life and an inclination toward Zionism. Nahum Glatzer's father raised him in a Zionist environment, and his experience outside his home only reinforced his affiliation.<sup>99</sup> Glatzer faced significant discrimination in *Gymnasium* from his classmates and teachers after fleeing Galicia to escape the encroaching warzone of the First World War.<sup>100</sup> As an *Österjude*, Glatzer faced even harsher discrimination than his other Jewish classmate.

By the time Glatzer was involved in the Lehrhaus, his affiliations with other Jewish movements had eroded while his Zionist affiliation stayed strong. Unexpectedly, his affiliation

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<sup>98</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 86-87.

<sup>99</sup> Nahum N. Glatzer, *The Memoirs of Nahum N. Glatzer*, Edited and Presented by Michael Fishbane and Judith Glatzer Wechsler, (Cincinnati : Michigan: Hebrew Union College Press ; Wayne State University Press, 1997), 43-44.

<sup>100</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 46.

with Zionism led to him to establishing his relationship with the anti-Zionist Rosenzweig. His Zionist inclination combined with his developing disagreements with Orthodox Judaism led to him falling out with Rabbi Solomon Breuer's Yeshivah in Frankfurt and joining the Talmud study group of Rabbi N.A. Nobel where he would meet Franz Rosenzweig and through that connection begin teaching and studying at the Lehrhaus.<sup>101</sup> Even after becoming close with Rosenzweig, Glatzer was still heavily affiliated in Zionism being involved in the Blau-Weiss Zionist Youth movement.<sup>102</sup>

When the Nazi Party rose to power, Glatzer looked for opportunities to flee the country nearly immediately, leaving Germany in 1933 after being dismissed from his position teaching Jewish Religious Philosophy and Ethics, the first position of its kind in Germany, originally held by Martin Buber, at the Goethe University Frankfurt.<sup>103</sup> Glatzer chose the immediate escape to London, but turned down opportunities in Britain to move to Palestine due to his Zionist ideology. While in Palestine, anxiety and practical barriers led him to reconsider residing in Palestine. Glatzer's father was killed in an attack by Palestinian Arabs on the Jewish settlement in which his father resided, and the memory of this and continued tensions in the region kept him in fear of being killed by a sniper on a treacherous section of his commute to work.<sup>104</sup> After struggling to find opportunities to advance his career and his anxiety from potential violence, Glatzer reluctantly concluded that it would be best to look for opportunity elsewhere saying, "It became clear that the best for us would be to leave the country. I hated to realize that and to

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<sup>101</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 47-48.

<sup>102</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 51.

<sup>103</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 58.

<sup>104</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 62.

admit it to myself.”<sup>105</sup> Glatzer practicality and desire to protect himself and his family ultimately led him away from the Zionist goal of returning to Palestine and establishing a Jewish state.

His reservations about Zionism later on seem even more substantial as his daughter, Judith Glatzer Wechsler, reported him saying,

On your discussion of *golah* (diaspora) and Israel: I see again how difficult, even impossible it is for an Israeli to understand the position of Diaspora. Reason: lack of knowledge, or rather, direct experience. The issue cannot be decided from a mere Israeli theory of what Judaism is.<sup>106</sup>

Wechsler interprets this as meaning those “not in exile are in spiritual exile.”<sup>107</sup> Ultimately, Glatzer did not go to live in the Jewish state that he advocated for in his youth and instead continued to live in physical exile by choice.

Glatzer’s drifting away from the Zionist movement seems much more tied to his lived experience of attempting to settle in Palestine than his time at the Lehrhaus, but his willingness to reexamine his own thought seems somewhat reflective of Abraham Joshua Heschel warning that “spiritual plagiarism is the loss of integrity; self-aggrandizement is self-betrayal” in both a political and spiritual manner.<sup>108</sup> Glatzer over time went from an ardent supporter of Zionism, to reluctantly abandoning his role in the movement, to spiritually and intellectually disagreeing with Zionism, just as earlier in his life, he left behind the Orthodox movement for spiritual learning under Buber and at the Lehrhaus. Glatzer’s willingness to question the movements he affiliated with lead to him existing beyond the movements of his time much like other Lehrhaus thinkers.

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<sup>105</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 62.

<sup>106</sup> Glatzer, *Memoirs*, 7.

<sup>107</sup> Judith Glatzer Wechsler, *Memoirs*, 7.

<sup>108</sup> Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 105.

One of the key themes of Glatzer's essay, "The Frankfort Lehrhaus," which he wrote for the first *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, was the diversity of thought at the Lehrhaus. Glatzer reports how Franz Rosenzweig actively attempted to recruit from all varieties of Jewish youth movements saying,

The Jewish youth of Frankfort-as in any other German community-was split into many different organizations, orthodox, liberal, Zionist, neutral. At the outset of his Frankfort activity, Rosenzweig had to convince the various associations of the need to take a broader view, and, without giving up their particular policies, to unite in the pursuit of Jewish learning.<sup>109</sup>

Sometimes participants at the Lehrhaus drew criticism from their movements specifically because of the diversity of thought at the Lehrhaus. Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937), who himself experienced one of the most dramatic journeys through Jewish movements as a key figure in atheist political Zionism turned Orthodox anti-Zionist, experienced backlash from the Orthodox movement that he was affiliated with at that point in his life for speaking at "an institution at which (among others) Buber 'the heretic' taught."<sup>110</sup> As indicated by this, the very participation of Lehrhaus could put someone at odds with the movements of the time reflecting a willingness to draw criticism from and criticize the movements one affiliated with.

Glatzer asserts that combating divisions, political, spiritual, and regional, in the Jewish community was an explicit goal Rosenzweig sought to achieve with the Lehrhaus saying, "Furthermore, knowledge, or learning, will break down the particularism and regionalism so dangerous to the community of Israel. Out of this remembrance of the common ground

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<sup>109</sup> Nahum N. Glatzer, *Essays in Jewish Thought*. Judaic Studies Series ; 8. (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 257.

<sup>110</sup> Glatzer, *Essays*, 265.

Rosenzweig expected a change of mind toward the thoroughly misunderstood East-European Jew.”<sup>111</sup> This is by no means a groundbreaking realization, but important to consider as a basis for the diversity of thought and pursuit of intellectual and spiritual authenticity in the Lehrhaus. The fact Glatzer emphasizes this aspect of the Lehrhaus in his recollection of it, indicates the significance of that aspect to Rosenzweig and the Lehrhaus community.

As mentioned earlier, Glatzer also valued the concept of “Faith and Action” which he describes in an essay bearing that title. “Faith and Action” primarily consists of a history of the relationship between Jewish faith and acquisition of religious knowledge and religiously motivated acts in the world. Glatzer frames this history within what he saw as a separation of the two concepts in the late modern era as a result of intellectual and spiritual misunderstandings of Moses Mendelssohn’s portrayal of Judaism as “not revealed faith but a revealed order of life, revealed legislation.”<sup>112</sup>

Glatzer approaches the premodern sections of “Faith and Action” with an intellectual distance and attempted impartiality, but he makes his perspective on the matter clear discussing the modern situation. He even explicitly states his stance on the matter saying, “If Judaism is to remain a view of God, world, and man, then the fundamental concept of a relationship between faith and action, newly defined, would have to be revitalized; what Mendelssohn had separated would have to be reunited.”<sup>113</sup> Glatzer lists two men who already pushed against the separation of faith and action saying, “To be sure, there is traditional Judaism that perpetuates the pre-Mendelssohnian trends; there is Franz Rosenzweig's call to return to the classical purity of faith; there is Marin Buber who demands that all deeds be done in the conscious presence of the divine

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<sup>111</sup> Glatzer, *Essays*, 269.

<sup>112</sup> Nahum N. Glatzer, *Essays in Jewish Thought*. Judaic Studies Series ; 8. (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 72.

<sup>113</sup> Glatzer, *Essays*, 80.

Thou.”<sup>114</sup> Indeed, the Lehrhaus itself quite perfectly fits this advocacy for the connection of faith and action. Rosenzweig left academia to take the knowledge and concept of faith he had acquired and create a change in the Jewish community, and he did so by creating an institution that would reacquaint Jews with their faith in a way they could use that faith in their life. In “Faith and Action,” Glatzer also references Rosenzweig’s philosophy of learning evoking both this concept of Faith and Action and the related concept of *Lebensphilosophie* saying, “Knowledge, gained in an atmosphere of freedom, should lead to an active participation in a life in which many different peoples share. Education, thus, is not an accumulation of skills or materials, but the ability to understand the diversified world we live in and the power to translate this understanding into action.”<sup>115</sup> It is quite likely that the Lehrhaus and Glatzer’s relationship with Rosenzweig influenced Glatzer’s view on this topic and made it so important to him that he would include this essay in his self-selected collection of his works.

As the key chronicler of the Lehrhaus and its leaders, Nahum Glatzer provides a strong examples of the concepts of “Faith and Action” and intellectual openness and critique within the Lehrhaus as well as in his own thought. His description of these trends in the Lehrhaus make it apparent how the Lehrhaus left an impression on him.

### **Leo Strauss (1899-1973)**

Leo Strauss’ career as an intellectual began largely in parallel with the creation of the Lehrhaus. Strauss’s early writings convey an image of Strauss between all movements in the German Jewish community. He shares a collection of critiques for all factions while only losing aligning himself with political Zionism as the most intellectually honest flawed option in his perspective.

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<sup>114</sup> Glatzer, *Essays*, 79.

<sup>115</sup> Glatzer, *Essays*, 254.

Strauss criticizes Jewish emancipation and liberal attempts to integrate into German culture saying that liberalism split Jewish life with a “separation of the religious and the profane, according to which the former was elevated to the distant sphere of the sermon and the divine sphere-in short, of ceremonies-while the sphere of the latter was flooded by German currents.”<sup>116</sup> While the non-religious parts of Jewish life were Germanized, “the Jewish religion had only the negative function of being a steady source of a certain tension and of a feeling of foreignness” leading to apostasy and conversion.<sup>117</sup> This argument that emancipation is contingent upon the abandonment of Jewish culture and religion is stated perhaps most directly when Strauss says, “We German Jews received the rights of citizens only on the basis of repeated express assurances given by the protagonists of our emancipation that we maintain no national connection other than to the German nation.”<sup>118</sup> This argument demonstrates a concern for cultural and spiritual degradation of European Jews under modern liberalism and a clear leaning toward Zionism, but does not mean that he was a proponent of cultural or religious Zionism.

Strauss continued to produce arguments skeptical of Jews and non-Jews coexisting, critiquing liberal democracy’s ability to truly combat discrimination by a state’s people. In his introduction to *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, Strauss asserts,

To recognize a private sphere in the sense indicated means to permit private "discrimination," to protect it, and thus in fact to foster it. The liberal state cannot provide a solution to the Jewish problem, for such a solution would require the legal prohibition against every kind of "discrimination," i.e., the abolition of the

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<sup>116</sup> Leo Strauss, “Response to Frankfurt’s ‘Word of Principle’ (1923),” *Leo Strauss : The Early Writings (1921-1932)*, trans. and ed. by Michael Zank, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>117</sup> Strauss, “Response to Frankfurt,” 68.

<sup>118</sup> Strauss, “A Note on the Discussion on ‘Zionism and Anti-Semitism’ (1923),” *Early Writings*, 80.



private sphere, the denial of the difference between state and society, the destruction of the liberal state.<sup>119</sup>

Not only did the liberal state demand Jews sacrifice their Jewishness to integrate into the nation, but Strauss asserts that liberal democracy is structurally incapable of ensuring true equality rather than just legal equality.

Strauss's criticism of cultural Zionism shares some common concerns with his criticism of emancipation. Strauss perceived the cultural content that cultural Zionism desired to bring to Palestine as tainted by liberalism and *galut* saying, "One simply cannot absorb somewhat deeper German things without absorbing along with them, among other things, a dose of specifically Christian spirit."<sup>120</sup> As a result of this cultural hybridization in cultural Zionism's "Jewish content," Strauss asserted,

This "content" cannot simply be adopted, not only because the content is conditioned by, and supportive of, *galut* and therefore endangers our Zionism but also because inherent in this content as religious content is a definite claim to truth that is not satisfied by the fulfillment of national demands. The distinction we make here between "religious" and "national" undoubtedly contradicts ancient Jewish reality; it is the legacy of the liberal Judaism of the previous century.<sup>121</sup>

Strauss opposed cultural Zionism on the grounds that it carried the cultural hybridization resulting from emancipation while claiming to be a liberation from European culture.

Strauss critiques religious Zionism in a similar way, focusing on modern approaches to Judaism, in particular Orthodox Judaism. Strauss finds that modern Judaism is removed from

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<sup>119</sup> Leo Strauss, "Preface to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 144.

<sup>120</sup> Strauss, "Response to Frankfurt," 69.

<sup>121</sup> Strauss, "Response to Frankfurt," 69.

biblical and pre-modern Judaism by its attempts to adapt to modernity and scientific critique saying,

a tradition that, because of a critique launched against it, has relinquished certain claims (claims that presumably arose from it not without inner necessity), indeed, a tradition that has reconstructed itself so that it is no longer even able to make those claims—such a tradition, if it is honest, will have to admit that it is no longer the old, unbroken tradition.<sup>122</sup>

The religious community comprising religious Zionism practiced a form of Judaism transformed by European thinking and also deemphasized certain elements of Jewish theology such as the return from exile being facilitated by God rather than man. Strauss found this similarly intellectually dishonest to cultural Zionism.

Having observed Strauss's aversion to emancipation, cultural Zionism, and religious Zionism, Strauss apparently aligned himself primarily with political Zionism in his early years; however, his affiliation was not uncomplicated. Strauss thought political Zionism had an "emptiness in substance."<sup>123</sup> There was less of a clear vision for cultural revival in his faction than others, though, as seen earlier, he finds the other factions equally empty in substance, just less honest about that situation. Strauss finds, "It is still self-evident that it is impossible to extricate oneself from modern life without employing modern means," so a national political movement and creation of a nation state is required, and political Zionism made fewer illusions about being specifically Jewish and untouched by European influence.<sup>124</sup> Strauss proposed liberalism as a more viable ally to Zionism.<sup>125</sup> Strauss's solution does not demand a cultural or

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<sup>122</sup> Strauss, "On the Argument with European Science (1924)," *Early Writings*, 108.

<sup>123</sup> Strauss, "Response to Frankfurt," 66.

<sup>124</sup> Strauss, "Response to Frankfurt," 66.

<sup>125</sup> Strauss, "Comment on Winberg's Critique (1925)," *Early Writings*, 118.

religious content to Zionism but instead characterizes his political Zionism as “liberal, that is, it rejects the absolute submission to the Law and instead makes individual acceptance of traditional contents dependent on one's own deliberation.”<sup>126</sup>

As a political Zionist, Strauss breaks both from Rosenzweig’s school of Jewish German identity and Buber’s cultural Zionist philosophy. While Strauss certainly did not share Rosenzweig’s optimism regarding Jewish cultural existence in exile, the time period Strauss taught at the Lehrhaus was a critical time in his intellectual development and professional foundation. The beginnings of Strauss’ career as an intellectual aligns almost exactly in the period that Strauss was teaching at the Lehrhaus. Rosenzweig’s philosophy is not the foundation of Strauss’s thinking by any means, but it seems Strauss built his own intellectual foundation while at the Frankfurt Lehrhaus.

### **Gershom (Gerhard) Scholem (1897-1982)**

Gershom Scholem, from an early age, expressed his position on the movements of his time firmly and without much equivocation, often drawing the frustration and ire of others. Scholem would not have his thought directed by the movements of his time, expressing a radical commitment to intellectual originality and honesty saying to his brother Werner, “An organization is like a murky sea that collects the lovely flowing streams of thoughts, which are never allowed to escape again. ‘Organization’ is a synonym for death...”<sup>127</sup> Scholem had particular positions in regard to the movements with which he associated, and in many ways reflected just how wide a range of instructors served at the Lehrhaus, strongly contrasting with both of the key Lehrhaus leaders. Scholem completely disagreed with Franz Rosenzweig’s

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<sup>126</sup> Strauss, “Comment on Winberg,” 118.

<sup>127</sup> Gershom Scholem, *A Life in Letters, 1914-1982*, Ed. and Trans. by Anthony David Skinner, (Cambridge, Mass. [USA]: Harvard University Press, 2002), 22.

concept of a Jewish-German, and while being an observant, socialist Zionist, Scholem heavily critiqued both Buber's Zionism and portrayal of mysticism even before arriving at the Lehrhaus.

Growing up in an extremely patriotic assimilated German-Jewish household, Gershom Scholem bemoaned his family's disconnection from Jewish practice and meaningful cultural experience saying, "There's obviously nothing left of the Jewish family with us."<sup>128</sup> He found the observance of his immediate and extended family lacking seen in another diary entry so clearly conveying teenaged frustration saying, "I'm supposed to go to Uncle George's for dinner, but I'd like to get out of it! The way we conduct these Friday evenings is nothing short of purest blasphemy!"<sup>129</sup>

Conflict with his father Arthur over his Zionism and lack of German patriotism permeated Scholem's youth and young adulthood. While still attending *Gymnasium*, Gershom wrote his brother Werner, who also faced their father's ire for being a socialist, saying, "Orders from above require that all students over the age of sixteen be "pre-drilled" for the military...It's bleak. Father can't stop sneering at me because I've shown myself to be such a "coward," lacking even the slightest noble stirrings of the heart. I have arrived at the famous end of the road with him-something you should be familiar with."<sup>130</sup> This foreshadowed Gershom truly reaching the end of the road with his father once he was of age to enlist in the military. Gershom actively attempted to avoid military service, an unforgivably unpatriotic act from his father's perspective. Arthur Scholem banished Gershom from his home in a letter saying,

I have decided to cut off all support to you. Bear in mind the following: you have until the first of March to leave my house, and you will be forbidden to enter

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<sup>128</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, ed. and trans. Anthony David Skinner, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 23.

<sup>129</sup> Scholem, *Lamentations*, 24.

<sup>130</sup> Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 26.

again without my permission. On March first, I will transfer 100 marks to your account so that you will not be left without means. Anything more than this you cannot expect from me. It would therefore be a good idea for you to turn to the officials in charge of civilian service. They can offer you paid employment commensurate with your abilities. Whether I will agree to finance your further studies after the war depends on your future behavior.<sup>131</sup>

Gershom had little faith in the potential for a resumption of relations with his father, even as family members urged him to mend the bridge, saying to his aunt, “The main condition... is the repression of my Zionist activities. As things stand now, I do not believe there’s any hope of an *honest* agreement with my father (which would be merely a reconciliation that still bore the germ of the old disease).<sup>132</sup> Mending relations with his father seemed to require an abandonment of a cause that for Gershom was “a structure strong enough so that I can erect my entire life upon it without any fear that it could collapse.”<sup>133</sup>

Even after relations between Gershom and Arthur thawed somewhat, the tension never relented. Gershom’s letters to his family asking for financial support during his studies sometimes read like grant applications giving detailed descriptions of his current academic projects and including samples of his recent work.<sup>134</sup> Arthur Scholem took issue not only with Gershom’s lack of German patriotism but also a perception that his son lived in an ivory tower. Shortly after expelling Gershom from his home, Arthur wrote, “What you call work is nothing more than a game. No doubt the people who must come up with money to support your literary activities and discussion groups are secretly angry about it. Money is something very concrete,

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<sup>131</sup> Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 41.

<sup>132</sup> Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 42.

<sup>133</sup> Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 28.

<sup>134</sup> Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 103.

and those people who busy themselves merely with abstractions consider earning it indecent.”<sup>135</sup> Gershom’s dwelling in the space of ideas rather than something more clearly applicable to the real world frustrated Arthur. In a letter acknowledging Gershom’s birthday in 1921, Arthur expresses his hope the next year of his son’s life that “during the coming year you may finally grasp how important it is, in these difficult times, to have both feet planted solidly on the ground. This would prevent you from being driven about aimlessly by every wind in the sky of ideas. Three cheers for Hebraica and Jewish studies-but not as a career!”<sup>136</sup> Gershom Scholem, the Zionist intellectual, was simply inherently incompatible with Arthur Scholem, the patriotic German printer.

Around the same time the young Gershom Scholem declared, ““Organization is a synonym for death,”” in 1914, Scholem resigned from all his youth organizations and left behind the Orthodox movement.<sup>137</sup> For a while, Scholem turned to Martin Buber’s Zionism and mysticism as a basis for his thought saying, “I preach Hasidism, mysticism, Buber, and socialism as a new religion.”<sup>138</sup> This affinity did not last long. In a letter to his friend Edgar Blum from October 26, 1916, Scholem radically states opposition to Buber saying,

I am and must be *against* him from the very essence of my being. It has become utterly transparent to me that Buber, despite all of his Jewishness, is ultimately not a Jewish figure but a modern one. Not only is his philosophy of history wrong, it's even *demonstrably* so. Since returning to Berlin, I've had "experiences" with a

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<sup>135</sup> Arthur Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 41.

<sup>136</sup> Arthur Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 119.

<sup>137</sup> Scholem, *Lamentations*, 26.

<sup>138</sup> Scholem, *Lamentations*, 31.

number of "Buberians" that have shown me quite clearly how dangerous and ruinous this way is. Instead of Zion, it leads to *Prague*.<sup>139</sup>

Eventually, Scholem would become the figurehead of a rival school of thought on Jewish mysticism to Buber's school.

Scholem's intellectual disagreement with Rosenzweig's Jewish German concept was equally as clear. The fact Scholem wrote an essay entitled, "Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue," could serve as evidence enough that being a Jewish-German did not seem viable to Scholem. This essay is a response to being invited to contribute to a volume about dialogue between Germans and German Jews. Scholem emphatically rejects this entire concept saying,

the *Festschrift* "is to be understood not only as homage but also as testimony to a German-Jewish dialogue, the core of which is indestructible." No one could be more dismayed by such an announcement than I... I decline an invitation to provide nourishment to that illusion, unintelligible to me of "a German-Jewish dialogue, the core of which is indestructible,"<sup>140</sup>

Scholem continues to describe how there is no dialogue by definition saying, "It takes two to have a dialogue, who listen to each other, who are prepared to perceive the other as what he is and represents, and to respond to him. Nothing can be more misleading than to apply such a concept to the discussions between Germans and Jews during the last 200 years."<sup>141</sup> For Scholem, Jews had attempted to engage in a dialogue with Germans, but Germans were never willing to truly listen and reciprocate. The grounds on which German leaders even considered the

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<sup>139</sup> Scholem, *Life in Letters*, 38.

<sup>140</sup> Gersholm Scholem, "Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue," *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis : Selected Essays*, Ed. Werner J. Dannhauser, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 61.

<sup>141</sup> Scholem, "Against the Myth," 61-62.

acceptance and emancipation of Jews in Germany was completely dependent on the dissolution of Jewish identity and community, as Scholem puts it, “Where Germans ventured on a discussion with Jews... was always based on the... self-denial of the Jews, on the progressive atomization of the Jews as a *community* in a state of dissolution, from which in the best case only the *individuals* could be received...”<sup>142</sup>

This idea of emancipation, acceptance, and inclusion being based on Jewish self-denial serves as the core theme in Scholem’s essay, “Jews and Germans,” where he discusses how Jews should approach relations with Germans after the Shoah and the history of Jews in Germany. From the beginning of his historical narrative to the issues at the time of writing, German attempts to erode Jewish identity and community permeate the narrative. Scholem portrays pre-emancipation Jewry as a people with a strong and defined identity and culture.<sup>143</sup> Scholem claims that the German Jewish community began to lose its identity after Moses Mendelssohn, and those who proceeded from his efforts, pushed for emancipation saying, “there began among Jews a conscious process of turning toward the Germans... There began a propaganda campaign for the Jews' resolute absorption by German culture.”<sup>144</sup> In return for emancipation, Scholem says the Germans, “demanded a resolute disavowal of Jewish nationality- a price the leading writers and spokesmen of the Jewish avant-garde were only too happy to pay.”<sup>145</sup> This is certainly a core aspect of German leaders’ goals in allowing emancipation, but it’s clear that this idea is central to Scholem’s view of German Jewish existence and clearly demonstrates how

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<sup>142</sup> Scholem, “Against the Myth,” 62-63

<sup>143</sup> Gersholm Scholem, “Jews and Germans,” *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis : Selected Essays*, Ed. Werner J. Dannhauser, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 73.

<sup>144</sup> Scholem, “Jews and Germans,” 74-75.

<sup>145</sup> Scholem, “Jews and Germans,” 75.



impossible Scholem thought integration into German culture was without the loss of national, religious, and personal identity.

Gershom Scholem's concerns about collective homogenization of ideas by movements and his significant disagreements with the key leaders of the Lehrhaus indicate just how important it was to Buber and Rosenzweig to bring in diverse thinkers, even those who explicitly disagreed with their own thought. Additionally, Scholem's arguments against German and Jewish coexistence based the erosion of Jewish community and culture by modern emancipation continue the theme of desiring to move away from modern existence, glorifying pre-emancipation Jewish existence and hoping for postmodern Jewish renewal in a Jewish state.

## Conclusion

The writings by these Lehrhaus thinkers indicate that all of them represented some combination of faith motivated action as a key element of religious experience, rejection of some modern ideas or ways of living, and an openness of thought and desire for intellectual and spiritual authenticity that made it difficult to neatly place them within a movement of their time.

Abraham Joshua Heschel and Bertha Pappenheim most exemplified the concept of faith motivated action. Bertha Pappenheim in particular devoted her entire life to aiding those in need while providing education to empower Jewish women and create mothers more capable of preserving and renewing Jewish culture by passing it to their children. Abraham Joshua Heschel also prominently devoted himself to improving the embarrassing state of humanity by involving himself heavily in American social movements like the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam protests, but also provided a detailed spiritual argument for why a Jew should be motivated to action. For Heschel, religious experience inherently carried a challenge to improve the state of humanity and not to take comfort in ignoring the injustices of the world. Nahum N. Glatzer not only asserts the importance of this concept, but portrays Buber and Rosenzweig as the critical figures pushing for the renewal of faith and action in the twentieth century. Margarete Susman reflected this in her activism but also in her advocacy of a form of Zionism that would bring an improvement of life for all peoples.

Erich Fromm and Margarete Susman represent the most radical challenges to modernity among Lehrhaus thought but also represent a larger trend. Fromm, from a non-religious perspective, proposes capitalism and other modern concepts like race and nation as threats to the health of the individual soul and forces of division within humanity as a whole. Likewise,

Susman points to the abandonment of capitalism as critical for the societal betterment of Jews and non-Jews and the dissolution of divisive concepts like nation as critical to uniting the whole world around God, but also this moving on from modern ideas as part of the path to salvation and the coming of the messiah. Heschel criticizes homogenizing pressures that threaten individual and ethnic identity in the modern nation-state and wealth hoarding and materialist excess while certain people do not have the resources to survive associated with modern market economies. Nahum Glatzer and Gershom Scholem both point to Jewish emancipation and attempted integration into the modern nation-state as the primary cause of German Jewish cultural degradation. Leo Strauss contributes to this perspective the additional point that liberal democracy is structurally incapable of protecting minorities from discrimination, and therefore it is impossible for a liberal nation-state to create true equality for Jews.

The theme of open-mindedness and pursuing spiritual and intellectual authenticity permeates these thinkers writings most universally, admittedly partly because of the nebulousness of the concept itself. Nahum Glatzer brings to attention the Rosenzweig's desire to create a diverse intellectual community beyond the boundaries of contemporary movements and demonstrates an open-mindedness as Glatzer's relationship with the movements of his time changed throughout his life. Leo Strauss brought a unique perspective critical of all movements and the perspectives of the Lehrhaus' leaders themselves. Gershom Scholem likewise brought his own perspective on Jewish mysticism that would eventually grow into an entire school of thought and a take on cultural Zionism that still contrasted with Buber's. Abraham Joshua Heschel asserted constant re-examination of one's own ideas was necessary for spiritual authenticity and allowing a particular religious movement to define one's thought would also threaten spiritual stagnation and loss of authentic experience. Bertha Pappenheim expressed an

irritation with Jewish factionalism throughout her life even ensuring that she posthumously got one more opportunity to express her lack of true affiliation with any large Jewish movement.

Erich Fromm brought an atheist perspective to the Lehrhaus while also displaying a considerable openness for religious understanding, both Jewish and otherwise. Margarete Susman provides a vision of cultural Zionism that is not an escape from exile, but rather a means to provide a model of societal reform for those still in exile and for the non-Jews among whom Jews live.

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