

Back to the Future: History as Memory in Hermann Levin Goldschmidt's Work

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In the post-war period that was dominated by reconstruction, remilitarization and the establishment of the state of Israel, Leo Baeck claimed in New York in 1945: “For us children from Germany a historical epoch has come to an end.” Without disputing Leo Baeck’s assertion, Hermann Levin Goldschmidt could look at the situation in a different manner. He was born in Berlin in 1914 and emigrated to Switzerland in 1938 where he was eventually granted citizenship. In Zurich, Goldschmidt was part of one of the largest German-speaking post-war Jewish communities in Europe. It was the city where, for example, Margarete Susman published *Das Buch Hiob und das Schicksal des jüdischen Volkes* (1946). This particular environment shaped Goldschmidt’s perception of German-Jewish history as well as his educational work with the foundation of the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* in Zurich, which he led from 1951 to 1961. He could still point to Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Hannah Arendt, Erich Fromm, Nahum Glatzer, Gershom Scholem and Leo Baeck himself as examples of the continuous cultural productivity of German Jewry. Moreover, the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible translation that had begun in 1924 was completed only in 1962 and Selma Stern continued her source collection that detailed the politics of the Prussian State toward the Jews.

In comparison to these more or less well-known scholars and philosophers, the philosopher and historian Goldschmidt’s work on Judaism and German Jewish history has received much less attention. He attempted to recover the legacy of German Jewry without being nostalgic and or simplistically forward-looking, and without illusions.

Moreover, he wrote from a nationalist perspective without adopting a Zionist platform.

For Goldschmidt, the emigrant from Berlin, the Holocaust created a new situation that demanded the recovery of the traces of Jewish tradition. As the director of the *Lehrhaus*, he carried out this work of recovery, which led to the trilogy entitled *Das Vermächtnis des Judentums* (1957), *Die Botschaft des Judentums* (1960), and *Dialogik – Philosophie auf dem Boden der Neuzeit* (1964), as well as numerous articles that have been republished in his collected works.

The fact that Goldschmidt responded to the radical new situation of the post-Holocaust period does not mean that the Holocaust shaped his perception of Jewish history. The underpinnings of his historical conception of Jewish history indicate that he wrote his accounts from the perspective of the future, while the present as well as the immediate past held little importance. Already his remarks in respect to the foundation of the *Lehrhaus* indicate that Goldschmidt thought of his work not simply in respect to a lost world. He emphasized that the “present was only one foundation” of the *Lehrhaus* and posited that the *Lehrhaus* was most profoundly based on the past and an uncertain but open future. It was, as he stated, “the work of the *Lehrhaus* that enabled, in opposition to the abyss of the present, to build upon the future” insofar as modern Jewish historical thinking had provided the tools for a recovery of the past.

Historical studies thus provided the path back to a future, and therefore, Goldschmidt also opposed the idea of a historical divide between a lost world of the past and the future. Despite his insistence on continuity, he nevertheless drew a clear line between the past and his present, regarding the Holocaust as another example of the thousand-year-long martyrdom of the Jewish people. In the tradition of nineteenth-century Jewish historiography, Goldschmidt viewed martyrdom as a

Jewish creation in which Jews had often validated their faith from antiquity to the Crusades, the Khmelnytsky uprising of the seventeenth-century, the Kishinev pogrom at the beginning of the twentieth century and, ultimately, the Holocaust.

Nevertheless, while Goldschmidt did not neglect the Holocaust, we would be wrong to assume that his emphasis on legacy was only occasioned by the Holocaust. Goldschmidt, I would like to argue, neither presented a Jewish theological response to the Holocaust, nor simply postulated the existence of an unbroken and continuous German-Jewish culture. Rather, as he constantly emphasized, he worked from the perspective of German-Jews' ability to put their hopes in the future. Indeed, Goldschmidt may not have been wrong in assuming the particular in-rootedness of hope and expectation as a key feature of German Jewry. From the end of the eighteenth century and commencing with the period of Enlightenment, German-Jewish history was shaped and driven by particular hopes and anticipations that framed debates over emancipation, reform, cultural transformation, and internal politics.

By casting the German-Jewish past from the perspective of an unknown but endlessly open future, Goldschmidt testified to his indebtedness to a particular type of speculative historical thinking that emerged most clearly at the beginning of the twentieth century in several German-Jewish thinkers. Thus, while he wrote on Jews in antiquity, medieval and early modern Jewish philosophy, Goldschmidt's thoughts constantly oriented themselves toward the works of the German-Jewish philosophers and theologians, Hermann Cohen and Leo Baeck. With Cohen and Baeck, Goldschmidt shared in particular the idea of the exceptional quality of Judaism as the juncture of particularism and universalism. For these three scholars, the continuous existence of Judaism represented an insistence of particularism for the sake of

universalism, a dynamic contradiction and irreducible difference. Accordingly, Jews and Judaism served as a marker of difference in Goldschmidt's narrative, a central notion in his dialogical philosophy, which unlike Buber's *I and Thou*, centered around the idea of contradictions.

Goldschmidt's recovery of Jewish tradition was based on the premise that the future depended on the past. Precisely because of this future orientation, his work is neither imbued with nostalgic rhetoric nor does it display an antiquarian interest. His many contributions strike a different chord if compared to the research culture that disseminated from the Leo Baeck Institutes in Jerusalem, London, and New York, where great energy was devoted to the historical research on German Jewry. By comparison, Goldschmidt's writings on Jews and Judaism seem rather untimely. In contrast to the relentless energy of post-war scholarship in the collection of documents, Hermann Levin Goldschmidt was much less concerned with gathering minute historical details.

His writings are not only untimely if compared to many of the studies that explored the importance of anti-Semitism and appeared immediately in the post-Holocaust period. Unlike several contemporaries, he did not study the history of anti-Semitism in order to comprehend the destruction of modern Jewry at the hands of Nazi Germany like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Karl Jaspers and Jean-Paul Sartre. Negating any significance of anti-Semitism to a critical Jewish self-understanding, Goldschmidt regarded anti-Semitism as the problem of anti-Semites. Yet his work also displayed a particular lateness. By lateness I do not mean to describe Goldschmidt's work as outdated, which would be governed by a perception of the end of German-Jewish history, an idea that Goldschmidt rejected. Rather lateness constitutes, as Adorno wrote in respect to Beethoven, an event, a moment in

which a writer is fully in command of his medium but nevertheless abandons communication with an established order of which he is part and achieves a contradictory, alienated relationship with it. It is the apparent carelessness about style, conventions, and historical explanation that strikes one about Goldschmidt, who displayed in general a rather hostile attitude toward the academic world.

Yet his lateness only exists within a certain historically ordered world in which historical time moves along a linear chart. Goldschmidt's insistence on Diaspora Judaism, his adherence to nineteenth-century concepts of the mission of the Jews, the insertion of theology into historical and philosophical arguments, as well as his opposition to Zionism can be understood as such a lateness. Insofar as one follows this way of thinking, lateness is a coming after, and surviving beyond, what is generally accepted. However, it is precisely this type of historical thinking that places Goldschmidt within the context of twentieth-century German-Jewish intellectual thinking.

His own account of German-Jewish history published as *Das Vermächtnis des deutschen Judentums* (The Legacy of German Jewry), in 1957, can only be partially understood as a historical account, or, a documentation, of the German Jews' past. He did not perceive of history as a chronicle of horror, persecution, and destruction dominated by Church prejudices, as his contemporary James Parkes in England stressed, nor did he denounce German-Jews' alleged blindness as Gershom Scholem did. Already the title indicates Goldschmidt's distance from the established pattern of modern Jewish historiography. *Vermächtnis* – legacy - signals right away a very particular interest that Goldschmidt set apart from “heritage” (*Nachlass*) or “inheritance” (*Hinterlassenschaft*).

As Goldschmidt stated in his introduction to the third edition of *The Legacy of German Jewry*, it was not his intention to write an “*eigentliche Geschichte*.” Taking up the well-known Rankean notion of historical objectivity established Goldschmidt in opposition to a discipline to which he overtly belonged. For Goldschmidt, as he asserted, it was still the task to follow the example of German Jewry. Seen from the perspective of German Jews’ still unfulfilled potential, German Jewish history is not simply a record of the past but rather a legacy for the surviving German Jews and the world in general. *Vermächtnis* is therefore not a self-contained entity but rather constructed in the present and pointing forward, or, to use a formulation that Goldschmidt picked up from Ernst Bloch, the legacy is at the same time a “blueprint of a better world” (*Grundriss einer besseren Welt*).

Moreover, Goldschmidt’s devotion to the particular German-Jewish legacy hints already at his indebtedness to Simon Dubnow. As Goldschmidt described in detail in his contribution to a Dubnow *Festschrift*, he regarded German Jewry up to the Holocaust as a center of Western Jewry. The Eastern-European historian Simon Dubnow stated in the epilogue to his *World History of the Jews* that “within the Western European Jews, the hegemony still belongs to the center in Germany.” Yet Goldschmidt sided with Dubnow possibly for reasons that seem at first rather surprising. It was not only the centrality ascribed to German Jewry that appealed to Goldschmidt, but also the reason that Dubnow gave for this assertion: German Jewry had remained a cultural religious center because of the tireless national energies that it displayed. Goldschmidt is thus a representative of Jewish diaspora nationalism, comparable only to Ravidowitz.

Finally, the last word in Goldschmidt’s title *The Legacy of German Jewry*, “*Judentum*” is equally complicated. From the inception of modern Jewish

historiography during the 1820s, scholars of the *Verein für die Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (Society for the Culture and Science of the Jews) tried to address the relationship between Jews and Judaism, both terms being represented in the German word *Judentum*. While the members of the *Verein* left the issue unresolved, Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz turned this ambiguity into a polemical issue insofar as they insisted that Judaism's universal teaching became validated within the historical account of the Jewish people. In contrast, Christianity's universalism lacked this authentication within the particular. Goldschmidt was no longer interested in the polemical nature of this question, but the ambiguity enabled him to state at the outset that German Jewry's cultural and religious productivity was framed within the larger Jewish religious tradition. Since the legacy of German *Judentum* means both German Jews and German Judaism, Goldschmidt presented the history of German Jewry as a juncture of particularism and universalism. He crossed notions of diaspora nationalism with the concept of Judaism as a light onto the nations, or the so-called mission theory. According to this concept, dispersion was in fact a blessing and not a curse.

Instead of authoring a comprehensive history of German Jewry, Goldschmidt carefully selected only some of its elements. Similar to Hermann Cohen, Goldschmidt believed that the meaning of history lay beyond the narration of facts and details. He stated that the task is to “gather those moments that are more important than the numerous single cases” (“*jene Momente zu versammeln, die als solche wichtiger seien als die Fülle der Einzelheiten*”).

The book *Legacy of German Judaism* therefore presents the path of German Jewry into modernity in a highly selective fashion, commencing with Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (*Jerusalem or On Religious*

Power and Judaism) in 1783. From here, Goldschmidt proceeded to the emerging *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the fight over emancipation, and the formation of Reform and neo-Orthodox Judaism. After this brief historical survey, he approached the question of German Jews' historical vocation. Guided rather by the work of Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz, Goldschmidt, in contrast to late nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholars like Moritz Lazarus, insisted on the existence of national and religious Jewish history.

The difference is quite striking. Moritz Lazarus's programmatic and influential speech "*Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man jüdische Geschichte u. Litteratur?*" (What Is and to What End do We Study Jewish History and Literature?) attempted to address the purpose of the study of the Jewish past. Alluding to Schiller's lecture *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte* (What is and to What End do We Study Universal History?) at Jena in 1789, Lazarus, however, did not engage in a debate regarding the universal significance of the history of the Jews. For him, Jewish history had ended with the destruction of Bethar, the last Jewish stronghold in the war against Rome, and thereafter, only Prussian, German, or French history existed. Lazarus posited that instead of the history of the Jews, only a history of Judaism continued to exist.

In sharp contrast to this contention, Goldschmidt conceived of Jews as a nation that originated out of the covenant at Sinai; their culture intertwined religion and nation. In line with Hermann Cohen's famous article *Deutschtum und Judentum*, Goldschmidt claimed that nation is only a political-legal term. Whereas state and nationality are not identical, the political-legal entities, state and nation, are united. Jewish nationality is thus a category that is both below the state and nation and also beyond it insofar as Jews form a trans-national group. At the same time, according to

Goldschmidt, “Jews are a nation among the nations” (*Die Juden sind unter den Völkern Volk*), that is they are German, French etc. While maintaining their nationality, Jews are part of other nations. This involvement in various national cultures thus enriches Jewish nationality but allows them to actively participate in history.

This is a crucial turn against Rosenzweig that emerged in Goldschmidt’s work out of his close reading of Dubnow’s *World History of the Jews*. Whereas Rosenzweig followed Hegel in denying Jews and Judaism an active role in history because only states can act as historical agents within world history, Goldschmidt conceived of the Jews as subjects with their own history. Whereas Rosenzweig asserted that Jews and Judaism were not interested in historical agency, Goldschmidt saw Jews as the harbingers of a just and better society.

In a highly original fashion, Goldschmidt addressed a sequence of events that otherwise seemed unrelated. To him, Moses Hess, the author of *Rom and Jerusalem*, is not simply a forerunner of Zionism, but rather a thinker who reclaimed first of all Judaism and Jews’ role as historical subjects, who act within the realm of world history. Consequently, Goldschmidt related Hess to Jewish organizations like the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, Zionism, the *Bund* and various German-Jewish historical associations that emerged at the end of the nineteenth-century under the auspices of Gustav Karpeles. With Theodor Herzl, Goldschmidt contended, the nationality of the Jews in the Diaspora was strengthened and not effaced. Similarly, Goldschmidt was able to see that in Hermann Cohen’s public exchange with Martin Buber during 1916, the debate did not concern the issue of messianism as such, but rather the interpretation of Jewish nationalism. They differed sharply on the supremacy of nation and religion, but agreed on the centrality of messianism as the

driving force of Jewish history. While this development, which Goldschmidt calls the external unfolding, had a central function in the self-recognition of Jews, even more important was the internal development that Goldschmidt describes in a chapter entitled “Internal Unfolding” (*Innere Entfaltung*), reminiscent of Graetz. In this chapter, Goldschmidt describes the Jewish historical vocation as it manifested itself in figures like Moses Mendelssohn, Franz Rosenzweig, Heinrich Heine and Else Lasker-Schüler. Goldschmidt detects a genuine Jewish contribution of writers like Heine, Tucholsky, and Toller, and even more so in the various German Bible translations from Mendelssohn to Rosenzweig and Buber. Not unlike Heinrich Graetz, Goldschmidt saw the historical vocation of Judaism manifesting itself not simply in religious concepts of a higher moral order, but in the works and writings of philosophers and poets who carried out their work in the Diaspora. Particular attention was given to Karpeles, Leo Baeck, and Simon Dubnow in this respect because they brought the world-encompassing dimension of Jewish creativity to the fore.

Aside from individual contributions, Goldschmidt saw the work of German-Jewish thinkers and writers culminate in the work of Karpeles, Simon Dubnow and Baeck. By the end of the nineteenth century, Karpeles, a student of Heinrich Graetz, brought together various studies of Jewish literature in a two-volume survey entitled *History of Jewish Literature* (1886). Adopting a wide definition of what constitutes Jewish literature, Karpeles conceived of Jewish literature as an essential element of world literature. Moreover, like Goldschmidt, Karpeles regarded Jewish literature as a religious-national literature and non-theological. Leo Baeck, who responded to Adolf von Harnack’s lectures on the essence of Christianity at the beginning of the twentieth century in which he branded Judaism an outdated religion, emphasized that Judaism was a world religion. Finally, Simon Dubnow, while living in Germany and

expressing his gratitude to German-Jewish historiography, similarly regarded Jewish history as world history in his multi-volume work *Weltgeschichte des Judentums* (World History of the Jews). These three scholars served Goldschmidt to argue that the Diaspora and even the entire world had become a field of Jewish activity.

While traditional Jewish historiography would hardly dare name these three radically different thinkers in one sentence, Goldschmidt saw in them the essential component of German Jewry. Quite characteristic of his work in general, this reconstruction of a vital aspect of German-Jewish history establishes phenomenological similarities rather than historical causal relations. Goldschmidt shared, therefore, with Leopold Zunz a certain obsession with years, when he emphasized that Karpeles expressed his concept of world Jewish literature in 1886, “two decades” before Baeck asserted that Judaism is a world religion and “four decades” before Dubnow conceptualized Jewish history as world history. Goldschmidt did not link them in a causal relation; rather, time functioned here as a spatial metaphor that underscored the progressive nature of Jewish internal development.

Focusing on these three expressions of universalism that emerged out of German Jewry enabled Goldschmidt to conceive of the particularity of German Jewry and the universalism of Judaism simultaneously. Bringing the two meanings of the word *Judentum* – Jews and Judaism – together illustrates Goldschmidt’s contention that German Jews played a key role in modernity as the witness to the Jewish religious tradition. Maintaining the duality of Jews and Judaism served Goldschmidt as it did Hermann Cohen, that is, to regard nationality as the vehicle of religious teachings of universal significance and not vice versa. Goldschmidt argued that within the particularity of the history of German Jewry the ideals of Judaism were not simply

symbolized but actualized and thereby historically validated. Moreover, it established Jewish difference as an irreducible difference in the modern world.

In light of the duality of *Judentum* as a religion and a people, Goldschmidt reiterated Heinrich Graetz's concluding remarks in his *Geschichte der Juden* and regarded the acceptance of Judaism as a world religion as the important legacy. Moreover, he postulated the dialogical philosophy with his acceptance of *Widerspruch* (contradiction) as it was developed by Buber, Rosenzweig, and himself as another major part of German Jewry's legacy. With his insistence on this legacy, Goldschmidt also demanded the inclusion of German Jews into the major narrative of German history as an essential component in the development of German history and not simply as a minority.

Despite his insistence on the continuing legacy and his recognition of the reconstitution of Jewish communities in Germany, Goldschmidt did not succumb to the assertion of continuity precisely because his historical understanding did not follow a simple linear development, but was rather predicated on key moments. Goldschmidt, too, postulated that German-Jewish history came to an end even though its legacy was still preserved among German Jews in Israel and America. While he devoted himself in this study to the history of German Jewry, his considerations were embedded in a far wider perspective that has been described in detail in his *Botschaft des Judentums* (Message of Judaism), which originally appeared in 1960. Within Goldschmidt's account of Judaism, he detected something that he called a *Hoffnungsgewissheit* (certainty of hope) that he also pinpointed in Leo Baeck's *The Essence of Judaism*. The certainty of hope is not illusionary, following along a misunderstood nostalgic perception of German Jewry, but is rather embedded in the assurance that is offered both by the Jewish past as a whole and by an open future.

Insofar as Goldschmidt's thinking was shaped by a still unachieved future, the Holocaust did not take center stage in his historical construction. It was rather that he, like Adorno, wrote history from the perspective of redemption, or, to use a frequently quoted proverb from Schlegel, his reconstruction of the German-Jewish past was a backward-looking prophecy. Accordingly, history did not come to an end, since the present ultimately is only a pathway to an unknown future. Even German-Jewish history has not come to end because at any time in the future it can be continued. Thus it is the radical otherness of the future that can also open up new avenues for the past.

Even in respect to this future-oriented type of thinking we were wrong in assuming it was a response to the Holocaust. Here, too, Goldschmidt followed a fairly well-established tradition within Jewish historiography that had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century when German-Jewish experiences of time underwent a radical transformation. As the various German-Jewish newspapers indicated in their contributions to the turn-of-the-century debate, the future was outside of history and no longer linked by a progressive understanding of time that combined past, present and future. Moreover, past and future no longer intersected in the present as a linear progression, and Jewish historians like Gustav Karpeles asserted that Jewish history would have to be observed from the perspective of eternity. Therefore, the increasing internal Jewish fragmentation, the decline of Jewish religiosity, as well as the rise of anti-Semitism contributed to this new perception of modernity.

In light of the growing apprehension of the present and critical distance to the fortunes of modernity, a new qualitative and non-evolutionary perception of Jewish history linked past and future. This line of thinking became particularly associated with the work of German-Jewish philosophers like Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig. For Hermann Cohen, the concept of time in Judaism referred only to the

future, while Franz Rosenzweig posited that Jews and Judaism lived “outside a bellicose temporality” (*ausserhalb einer kriegerischen Zeitlichkeit*).

The dialectical tension that emerged between the breakdown of a linear concept of time, which still governed the work of Heinrich Graetz, and the new emphasis placed on a vague and distant future, gave rise to the messianism found in the works of Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, and Gershom Scholem. I emphasize this historical background simply to indicate that Goldschmidt’s underlying conception of time came out of a tradition of German-Jewish thinkers and can therefore not simply be regarded as an expression of disillusionment, frustration, and flight into theology in light of the Holocaust. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the works of various German-Jewish thinkers exhibited a marked shift toward new perspectives that provided the framework for the post-Holocaust situation. Thus even Margarete Susman, who functioned in many ways as the central figure among German-Jewish intellectuals in Zurich, was not intrigued by the figure of Job in response to the Holocaust. In Susman’s article *Das Hiob-Problem bei Franz Kafka* (1929), as well as Döblin’s conversation with Job in his *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and Joseph Roth’s *Hiob. Roman eines einfachen Mannes*, indicated a fundamental shift away from nineteenth-century enchantment with the prospects of modernity.

The renewed importance of messianic thinking manifested itself in Goldschmidt, particularly in his attempt to write history from the perspective of the future. In his insistence with Leo Baeck on the continuous promise of Judaism and its vision of a just future, Goldschmidt simultaneously participated in larger discussions that took shape in the aftermath of the 17-century Jewish messianic movement. In the ensuing debates during the Enlightenment as well as the nineteenth century, Protestant

scholarship upbraided Jewish messianic hopes as outdated, parochial, political, and lacking in elements of ethical universalism. Kant, for example, faulted the Jews as having “sought to create a political and not a moral concept of the Messiah.” For Kant, only the *Kirchenglaube* created evidence for a “universal history of humanity” (*Universalhistorie des menschlichen Geschlechts*).

This line of thought led Karl Löwith several decades ago to argue that an intimate connection between all modern philosophy of history and Christian thought existed. Löwith noted that the belief in progress is “a sort of religion, derived from the Christian faith in a future goal, though substituting an indefinite and immanent *eschaton* for a definite and transcendent one.” Put differently, the modern idea of progress is the transformed successor to Christian religious messianic expectations. Against these currents that were widely accepted in nineteenth-century Protestant scholarship, Hermann Cohen, for example, posited that the concept of a progressing history is a creation of the biblical prophets. Together with Jewish thinkers from Mendelssohn to Cohen and Baeck, Goldschmidt insisted on the vital Jewish messianic vision and promise of a just future.

It might be tempting to dismiss Goldschmidt’s work as outdated and displaying illusionary hopes or to fault him for a selective account of German Jewry. Yet Goldschmidt did not write from the perspective of false hope in the recovery of German-Jews’ legacy. Rather he presented first of all a rigorous working through of the Jewish past that is essential for the idea of legacy. Moreover, Goldschmidt’s works, while directed at contemporary readers, receive consolation from the future and its potential possibilities. His thinking is thus inscribed in future-oriented discourse. Like Walter Benjamin, who in his historical philosophical thesis demanded the kindling of the sparks of hope in the past, Goldschmidt searched through Jewish

history for its still unfulfilled potential. Between the past that Goldschmidt celebrated and the future, many possible correspondences exist that can come into being at any moment.

Keeping the past alive through a critical reworking thus creates possible pathways to the future, or, to put it differently, history as memory keeps certain futures possible. Based on his understanding of history that constantly invoked the presence of the Jewish past as memory, Goldschmidt asserted that “if we speak of the question of the Jewish presence, we will have to include the thousand years of Judaism.” The past, as Goldschmidt insisted, “... has time, no future will elude her, but the present can miss the future” (*Die Vergangenheit hat Zeit, keine Zukunft wird ihr entgehen. Die Gegenwart aber kann die Zukunft verfehlen*).

Goldschmidt reached his understanding of German-Jewish history from a highly eclectic yet innovative combination of various texts, most notably those by German-Jewish philosophers and theologians, as well as Simon Dubnow. From this perspective, however, it becomes obvious that for Goldschmidt, the existing bodies of literature provided sufficient grounding to address the post-Holocaust situation. Instead of a collapse of the basic premises and concepts of German-Jewish intellectual production, the legacy of German-Jewish history provided a vibrant response and was not simply washed out as inadequate and outdated. In the end, the vitality of Goldschmidt’s own reading testifies to his insistence that from possible moments in the future, German-Jewish history had still not ended. In order to comprehend the radicalism of this faith, we have to remember that Goldschmidt’s writings appeared during the 1950s and 1960s and not more recently, when several historians and pundits began speaking of a Renaissance of German Jewry. If Goldschmidt had been pressed to address the likelihood of his imagined future, he probably would have

quoted Franz Rosenzweig's epigraph to his translation of Jehuda Halevi: "The false Messiah is as old as the hope for the true Messiah. He is the changing form of the changeless hope. He separates every Jewish generation into those, whose faith is strong enough to give them up to an illusion, and those whose hope is so strong they do not allow themselves to be deluded. The former are the better, the latter the stronger. The former bleed as victims on the altar of eternity of the people, the latter are the priests who perform the service at this altar. And this goes on until the day when all will be reversed, when the belief of the believers will become truth, and the hope of the hoping a lie. Then – and no one knows whether this "then" will not be this very day – the task of the hoping will come to an end ..."

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