Hermann Goldschmidt, Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Invention of Multiculturalism

Hermann Levin Goldschmidt Memorial Lecture, 2005

David Biale

The singular culture of the German Jews continues to hold an intense fascination for us. Like a brilliant star that has long since imploded in a super-nova, the legacy of this community continues to cast its illumination on us more than sixty years after its destruction. While there are many no longer living Jewish cultures that we, in our postmodern nostalgia, return to repeatedly, there is something ineffable about the German Jews that sets them apart from the Eastern European, French or Italian Jews, not to speak of the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East. Part of this fascination surely lies in the way they met their end after they had invested themselves heart, mind and soul in the *Deutschtum* that ultimately turned upon them. The tragedy of the German Jews, which Amos Elon famously dubbed *The Pity of All That*, appears infinitely more haunting than that of the *Ostjuden*, who never enjoyed the same degree of acculturation, or of those Western European Jews who never met quite the same degree of murderous rejection.

I think that there is yet another factor especially in the fascination of North American Jews with the German Jewish experience. Here was a community, not unlike our own, that fully identified with the majority culture and yet tried to preserve a distinctive identity for itself. With an intermarriage rate by the Weimar period of the same order of magnitude as our own, the German Jews faced a similar demographic challenge. At the same time that many were abandoning any Jewish connection, others were engaged in creating the vibrant renaissance chronicled so ably by Michael Brenner. We turn instinctively to these Jews for answers to the question of whether acculturation is possible without full assimilation. Was their belief in a cultural symbiosis or dialogue a delusion, as Gershom Scholem thought, or was there really a German Jewish culture beyond Judaism, in the formulation of George Mosse? The debate continues and it is a debate that is as much a projection of our own anxieties.

At times, we also turn to the German Jews out of a sense of our own intellectual shortcomings. I dare say that no North American Jewish thinker can begin to match the contributions of a Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber or Franz Rosenzweig. Nor can any North American scholar of Jewish Studies match the scope of a Heinrich Graetz or the originality and erudition of a Gershom Scholem. If the way they fused German letters with Jewish texts has yet to be fully matched in our own intellectual endeavors. Of course, even if we lack their *Bildungskultur*, we have our own distinctive style and approach. I hardly mean to disparage our own accomplishments. But the German Jewish hybrid that lasteed not much longer until its demise than North American Jewish culture has so far stands as a beacon that we can scarcely ignore as we navigate the waters of postmodernity.

In this talk, I wish to address a particular contemporary issue on which two German Jewish thinkers, Hermann Levin Goldschmidt and Hannah Arendt, made significant interventions, albeit *avant la lettre.* The issue is cultural diversity. As Canadians, who have been at the forefront of the theoretical debates, were among the first to recognize, the health of the modern polity frequently depends on negotiating the needs and demands of majority and

minority cultures. It would seem that as the Western European democracies come to resemble more and more their North American cousins, the question of ethnic, religious and cultural difference has come to take pride of place in contemporary political theory. Some distinguish between cultural diversity meaning the inclusion of multiple voices into a national culture and multiculturalism, which assumes, in some accounts, the fragmentation of a national culture into separate and perhaps autonomous parts. I will use the terms interchangeably, although what I have in mind is the first, namely, the diversity that contributes towards a universal culture in common.

Much of the debate over multiculturalism focuses on so-called third-world minorities: African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans in the case of the United States, Muslim North Africans and Middle Easterners in the case of Europe. What of the Jews, that paradigmatic minority from eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe? In a book that I edited some ten years ago together with Susannah Heschel and Michael Galchinsky entitled *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, my co-editors and I argued that the success of the Jews in acculturating and achieving economic prosperity in the United States has left them in a liminal zone: at once insiders and outsiders, considered by others part of the majority, but still feeling themselves a minority. The Jews in the American context complicate the often overly simplified binary distinctions between majorities and minorities. The various ways in which this hybrid, even paradoxical, identity has played itself out politically and culturally need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that little has changed over the last decade to suggest that the issue has gone away.

On the face of it, there would seem to be little in common between the German Jewish situation and that of North American Jews. In the contemporary case, Jews are part of a multicultural mix rather than a small minority in an ethnically homogeneous nation-state. But on closer inspection, things appear more complicated. Germany, after all, was not religiously homogeneous, even if Protestants and Catholics were both Christians. And German-speaking Jews up until World War I of course also inhabited the Austro-Hungarian empire, famously one of the most multicultural experiments in European history. So, the parallels are striking even if one should nevertheless say *l'havdil elef alfei havdalot*.

The pairing of Hermann Goldschmidt and Hannah Arendt will no doubt appear strange to those familiar with the work of both of them. Goldschmidt's understanding of German Jewish culture focused around the great thinkers: Moses Mendelssohn, Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and Leo Baeck. While not precisely religious in orientation, he certainly privileged the spiritual over the secular. Celebratory in tone, his recently translated 1957 book, *The Legacy of German Jewry*, tries to recuperate the German Jewish tradition as a struggle for equal rights and not as a delusion of assimilation.[1] Arendt, of course, was resolutely secular in her approach, focusing on the political rather than the religious dimensions of the German Jewish experience. Already in her early book on Rahel Varnhagen, she attacked the assimilationism of the German Jews. Rahel was a parade case for Arendt, deeply impressed by the Zionist thinker and leader Kurt Blumenfeld, for how even a German Jew intent on abandoning her Jewishness returned to it on her death-bed. Her book on Rahel, published the same year as Goldschmidt's, was hardly a celebration of German Jewish culture, but instead a frontal assault on its self-delusions.

Nonetheless, what I wish to argue tonight is that Goldschmidt and Arendt used the Jews as a paradigmatic minority whose thought and experience had a radically important message for the world as a whole. That message was the salience of diversity as the irreducible category of

what it means to be human and, more specifically, what it means to be modern. After examining each of them, I would like to reflect at the end of my remarks on where these matters stand today.

The operative word in Goldschmidt's vocabulary was *Dialogik*, the subject of his 1948 philosophical work. Partly under the influence of Martin Buber, he sought to understand the way ideas develop in the process of dialogue. It was this concept that he came to apply to the relationship between Jews and Germans. Although *The Legacy of German Jewry* was published some five years before the first of Gershom Scholem's famous attacks on the myth of a German-Jewish dialogue and although Scholem himself, to the best of my knowledge, never referred to Goldschmidt in any of these attacks, it was Goldschmidt who laid out perhaps the most coherent case for such a dialogue. Goldschmidt was certainly conscious of the failure of the German Jewish tradition to substantially transform German culture, even if it made significant contributions to it. His argument is that the legacy of the German Jews lies less in what was actually realized than in the utopian message of their tradition, "a past whose promise for the future lives on because the substance of its claim is yet to be achieved."[2]

Thus, the contribution of the German Jews was not so much an actual dialogue as the very existence of a counter-tradition of those who refused to give up their identity. Dialogue for Goldschmidt means a conversation of competing voices. Even if no one was really listening when the Jews were talking – the substance of Scholem's contention – the very fact that they were talking establishes a "promise for the future." The Jewish demand for equal rights, which is how Goldschmidt understands the tradition from Mendelssohn through Gabriel Riesser and beyond, challenged the very concept of a homogeneous nation-state, a state lacking diversity. Goldschmidt ranks Mendelssohn's Bible translation and *Jerusalem* as equal in their revolutionary implications to the American and French Revolutions (he notes that the Bible translation appeared in the same year as the victory of the Americans over the British). As he writes: "Mendelssohn's efforts made it possible for the Jews to enter the modern world, while at the same time introducing the world to the universal truth that a living Judaism would continue to exist."[3]

As I understand him, this is Goldschmidt's definition of the character and challenge of modernity: to reconcile the universal with the particular. The German Jewish Bible translations, from Mendelssohn's to Buber's and Rosenzweig's were evidence of this effort to translate what is particular to the Jews into the universal idiom (it is, of course, ironic that the universal is represented here by German and in this sense, Goldschmidt was still very much a creature of a certain German chauvinism). To translate the Bible from Hebrew to German was to challenge the Germans on the very ground of their culture, namely Luther's canonical translation and thus to insert the Jews into the very cultural matrix from which so many Germans sought to exclude them.

Thus, the Jews' peculiar contribution to modernity in general and to German modernity in particular was to inject an alternative voice, the voice of a minority whose particularity did not contradict claims on the universal. Indeed, Goldschmidt's position, drawn especially from Leo Baeck, is that Judaism is a world religion precisely because of its particularity. The universal is composed of the particular and therefore the Jews' own self-definition as a distinct people and religion, albeit one with a universal message, is exactly how the universal itself ought to be defined. And since Enlightenment modernity had claimed to be universal, then Judaism offered a different understanding of modernity, not as the age of homogenizing difference, but, on the contrary, the age of diversity.

Goldschmidt certainly understood that in the wake of the Holocaust, one could not speak of modernity in such optimistic terms. Modernity had produced the very opposite of the kind of respect for diversity that he believed that Judaism taught. So, this different definition of modernity had to be instead a utopian promise. As he wrote at the end of the *Legacy of German Jewry:* "It is precisely the universality of the message of the kingdom that today requires the persistence of Judaism's particularity … Because only a world and redemptive history that is accompanied by the testimony of living Judaism will never come to an end so as long as the kingdom has not come – until the kingdom will have come."[4]

We should not be misled by Goldschmidt's religious vocabulary. He understood that Jewish politics were just as important a contribution to the definition of modernity. Thus, he argues that German Jewish leaders, such as Gabriel Riesser, demanded equal rights rather than assimilation. And Theodor Herzl defined Zionism as a bridge between a nation-state and universal rights. Rejecting the name *Homeward* for the Zionist newspaper, he chose instead *Die Welt* (*The World*), thus symbolizing the universal meaning of Jewish nationalism.

It is this turn to politics that brings us to Hannah Arendt, a thinker whom one might otherwise not associate with Goldschmidt. Arendt's thought is, of course, much better known and is much more extensive than Goldschmidt's. Nevertheless, I want to highlight the feature of her work that I think reinforces Goldschmidt's definition of modernity. In response to the Nazi onslaught, Arendt came to identify as a Jew in purely political terms.[5] Not Judaism – the religion – but Jewishness – the identity into which one was irreducibly born – required a political response. That political response she found in Zionism, albeit a Zionism of a very particular sort. And out of her own experience as a stateless person in the 1930s, she developed a theory of how the modern nation-state, while proclaiming the universal rights of man, failed to extend these rights to its own minorities. For Arendt, the Jews served as a paradigmatic case challenging modernity and demanding a different political theory.

Although Arendt is best known as the author of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she was primarily a political theorist and, in fact, the Eichmann book itself must be understood in light of her larger political position. Here is not the place to give a full account of her theory of politics.[6] In brief, modernity, in creating the sphere of society separate from the political, had undermined the arena where people might meet as equals and undertake action (as opposed to mere labor, which belonged only to society).[7] In this, she embraced Aristotle's understanding of human beings as political animals and the polis as the site for the fulfillment of human nature (that most subjects of the polis were slaves and not equals need not detain us).

In her *magnum opus*, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argued that the modern nation-state, as invented by the French Revolution, appeared to reestablish the political by making everyone citizens, but its notion of equality was deeply flawed because the nation was understood to be homogeneous: it could not tolerate diversity.[8] Because the nation-state is based on ethnic homogeneity, its promise of equality is abstract and formal. Universal equality in which everyone is equal as an individual fails to recognize that human beings are characterized by difference. Although people are born as particular individuals, with their own unique histories and identities, Arendt argues that it is through the group – which also has its own unique history and identity -- that one should achieve equality in the political – as opposed to the private -- sphere.[9] The realm of the political should ideally be where people meet and act in a context that respects both individual and group difference. It is the problem of the ethnic and cultural minority within the modern state that challenges its claim to equality. In this theory, Arendt was a multiculturalist *avant la lettre*.[10]

The contradictions in modern nationalism became especially evident after World War I with the abject failure of treaties supposedly guaranteeing minority rights. By expelling their minorities and creating large groups of stateless persons, modern nations – and particularly Nazi Germany, of course – arrived at the dialectical endpoint of modernity. Having tied human identity to the state, modern nationalism stripped groups of people of their humanity by stripping them of their citizenship. Arendt sees this deprivation of statehood as a crime worse than enslavement, a kind of hyperbole that must reflect her own personal experience.[11] The slave belongs to a human community, even if deprived of his physical freedom. He has a home and he has his human dignity (all of these propositions are obviously debatable). The stateless person, on the other hand, by losing her polity has lost the most essential characteristic of her humanity, in the Aristotelian sense. She has lost her "right to have rights" and is thus literally expelled from humanity.

The crisis of stateless refugees in the 1930s was a prelude to the Holocaust. If statelessness meant expulsion from humanity, genocide was the culmination of the same logic: those who no longer belonged to a political community had no right to remain alive. Here Arendt's interpretation of the Eichmann trial becomes relevant. Eichmann's heinous crime was neither murder writ large nor was it a crime "against the Jewish people" (as the Israeli law read). The Holocaust was a new crime, a crime against humanity perpetrated "on the body of the Jewish people." It was a crime against humanity because the defendant sought to destroy the diversity that is essential to humanity: "it is an attack upon human diversity as such, that is, upon a characteristic of the 'human status' without which the very words 'mankind' or 'humanity' would be devoid of meaning."[12] This is a novel theory, but one that corresponds closely to the view that Arendt had already developed in 1951 in *Origins of Totalitarianism*.

It should by now be apparent that the Jews constituted for Arendt not just one example of the failure of modernity, but, as with Goldschmidt, the archetype. By beginning *The Origins of Totalitarianism* with antisemitism, she already signaled this intention. But she goes further, claiming that "Jewish mission [is] to achieve the establishment of mankind."[13] What might this vision, messianic by her own admission, mean? If the essence of mankind is diversity, then it is the Jews who serve historically to "establish" this principle both by what they do and by what has been done to them. Moreover, the Jews, as the only "non-national European people" were "a kind of symbol of the common interest of the European nations."[14] Just as their lack of national territory made them the most vulnerable to the collapse of the nation-state in the face of totalitarianism, so they could model a new type of Europe, a united commonwealth of peoples in which national rights were divorced from territory.[15]

The language of "mission" suggests that Arendt is borrowing from the traditional terminology of the chosen people. Indeed, she argues that with secularization, chosenness was separated from messianic hope and became pure chauvinism (the most extreme example being Benjamin Disraeli who advocated the superiority of the Jewish race).[16] Instead of returning to some religious framework in which to situate the chosenness of the Jews, Arendt creates a new secular framework: the political question of human diversity. The role of the Jews is to teach the world this elemental fact of human nature. Thus, like Spinoza, she finds a political meaning in the concept of the chosen people, but, unlike Spinoza, she believes that this meaning can only achieve fruition in modernity, or, more precisely, with the failure of modernity.[17]

In order for the Jews to fulfill this mission, they must become a political people. Like Spinoza and Mendelssohn – each for his own reasons – she too holds that the Jews in Diaspora have surrendered any political identity: "Jewish history offers the extraordinary spectacle of a

people … which began its history with a well-defined concept of history and an almost conscious resolution to achieve a well-circumscribed plan on earth and then, without giving up this concept, avoided all political action for two thousand years."[18] Only the Sabbatian movement, which she understood politically, represented an exception to this passivity.[19] Of course, this judgment is no more accurate than was Spinoza's or Mendelssohn's. If anything the Middle Ages offers an example of the Jews acting politically within partially autonomous communities, premodern precursors, one might argue, of Arendt's messianic vision for the modern world.

But, for Arendt, the ostensible lack of a Jewish political tradition meant that in the modern period as well, the Jews failed to act politically. As they had in earlier centuries, they hitched their star to Gentile authorities, which meant they could survive as a group as long as the state had some use for them. But now wealthy Jews attempted to assimilate into European society, thus creating the figure of the parvenu, who tries to escape the fate of his people by striking out on his own as an individual. As she had already discovered in her study of Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Arendt came to the conclusion that the fate of the parvenu was to become a pariah, just like the Jews themselves. Only the "conscious pariah," a term borrowed from Bernard Lazare, could find an escape from this fate by constructing a Jewish politics, a mobilization of the people against their enemies.

Arendt concludes Part I of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* on antisemitism with the Dreyfus Affair, which revealed once and for all the bankruptcy of the modern Jewish avoidance of politics: "The only visible result was that [the Affair] gave birth to the Zionist movement – the only political answer Jews have ever found to antisemitism and the only ideology in which they have ever taken seriously a hostility that would place them in the center of world events."[20] Like Lazare before her, Arendt came to see Zionism as the sole viable *political* response to antisemitism, but like Lazare too, she became a critic of Zionism for seeking salvation only in a nation-state. For if the modern European nation-state had failed to resolve the tension between majority and minority rights, a Jewish state conceived along the same lines would founder on similar shoals. Thus, a series of articles from the 1940s castigated the leaders of the Zionist movement for seeking what others have called an "ethno-nationalist state," that is, a state based on a single national group. The Zionist movement, she argued, had surrendered to the maximalist demands of the Revisionists. Moreover, by its alliance with British imperialism, it was making the same mistake as Herzl in depending on the major powers rather than on the Jews themselves. This form of Zionism, she implied, was a kind of parvenu nationalism. She also noted the irony that the Zionist solution to Jewish statelessness, the problem that gave it urgency in the first place, had resulted in statelessness for the Palestinians, proof that it was no better than European nationalism. Aligning herself with the Ichud group of Judah Magnes and Martin Buber that sought an Arab-Jewish confederation or binational state, she argued for "local self-government and mixed Jewish-Arab municipal and rural councils,"[21] a structure reminiscent of Lazare's anarchism and one which she identified elsewhere as representing the true revolutionary spirit.[22] She summarized her position in May, 1948: "This goal [i.e. mixed councils] must never be sacrificed to the pseudo-sovereignty of a Jewish state."[23]

Despite Arendt's critique of prestate Zionism and Ben-Gurion's government at the time of the Eichmann trial, she remained deeply sympathetic to Zionism in its utopian moments. She was neither a universalist nor a Diasporist (in the sense of someone who celebrates Diaspora as the ideal form of Jewish life). She believed that some of the elements of Zionist settlement in Palestine (the Yishuv) pointed in the right direction, although she held rather strangely that the kibbutz movement, which she otherwise applauded, should have been more political. And even

though her critique of the Eichmann trial was often unjustifiably harsh, she did not doubt Israel's right to try Eichmann in the name of his victims, even though they were not killed on its territory. On the contrary, Israel's right to do so rested on a highly original definition of territory:

> Israel could easily have claimed territorial jurisdiction if she had only explained that "territory" … is a political and legal concept and not merely a geographical term. It relates not so much, and not primarily, to a piece of land as to the space between individuals in a group whose members are bound to, and at the same time separated and protected from each other by all kinds of relationships, based on a common language, religion, a common, history, customs, and laws. Such relationships become spatially manifest insofar as they themselves constitute the space wherein the different members of a group relate to and have intercourse with each other. No State of Israel would ever have come into being if the Jewish people had not created and maintained its own specific in-between space throughout the long centuries of dispersion, that is, prior to the seizure of its old territory.[24]

The Jews have thus carried a "territory" with them wherever they went, much like Heine's portable religion. They were no less a nation in Diaspora than they are in their own land. Like Lazare, Arendt did not reject the importance of physical territory, but held it to be secondary to this non-territorial definition of the nation. She, too, comes close to Simon Dubnow's autonomism, a Jewish politics based not on geography but on cultural affinity.

It is not hard to find serious contradictions and even incoherence in Arendt's position. How exactly she thought the Jews could mount a different politics in the face of Nazism remains unclear. At times, she sounds like the Revisionists themselves, even though they remained her worst enemies. Thus, her criticism of the alliance between Zionism and British imperialism was often precisely their position. And she called urgently for the formation of a Jewish Army in the early years of World War II, a stance one associates with more militant nationalists. On a more philosophical level, basing politics on "Jewishness" – the fact of being born Jewish – contradicts her attack on Jewish parvenus for reducing their Jewishness to the same fact of their birth. If nationhood consists in history, customs, even religion, then Arendt scarcely allowed for any of these elements to characterize her version of Jewish identity.

On these grounds Gershom Scholem, an old friend of Arendt's, attacked her book on the Eichmann trial by charging that she wrote without *ahavat Yisrael* (love of Israel).[25] To which Arendt replied acidly that she could not love a people, but only her friends. Her Jewish identity, she stated, was a datum with which she was born, just as she was born a woman, and she was grateful for having been born as such.[26] This response fits quite well with her philosophical stance that one should embrace one's "natality," that is, that one was born into the world in a particular, rather than a general way. In stubbornly insisting on their particularity, the Jews were emblematic of this human condition. Given this position, it is hard to understand why Arendt was so insistent that she could not "love" the Jewish people, even if it makes sense that that one can only love specific people and not an abstract entity. Clearly, the animus aroused by the controversy drove her to take positions more extreme than she might have taken otherwise. In the end, though, her politics were not as far from Herzl's as she might have claimed: she too arrived at the need for a secular Jewish politics as a response to an antisemitism that refused to allow any Jewish difference, even the minimal difference of having been born to Jewish parents.

Like Goldschmidt, then, Arendt argued that the very exceptionalism of the Jews had something crucial to teach the modern world. Diversity is essential to the human condition and the rejection of diversity leads to genocide. Even if the religious idea of chosenness is no longer relevant, the Jews as Europe's paradigmatic minority represent a secular form of chosenness, chosen in the sense that they embody the principle of difference.

Now, one might question whether modernity in fact embodies this principle. In a sense, it was really the medieval world that privileged difference in the form of corporations, guilds and estates. At least on this issue, Goldschmidt and Arendt would appear to be pointing more towards postmodernity's attack on Enlightenment universalism, an attack that both, as children of German philosophy, would have otherwise found distasteful.

I want to conclude with some remarks about where these issues stand today. I have already alluded to the way the Jews complicate theories of multiculturalism or cultural diversity in the Western democracies and particularly in North America. Jews are no longer the paradigmatic minority as they had been – or were often perceived to have been -- in Europe up to World War II. They now straddle the categories of majority and minority, thus shattering the binary division between them. The fluidity with which Jews move between these two statuses suggests a permeable boundary between them. In this way, it is possible that they have something different to teach the modern world than the lesson adduced by Goldschmidt and Arendt.

The exception to this possibility lies, of course, in the Jewish state where the categories of majority and minority appear more fixed and rigid than anywhere else where Jews live. Complicating the picture is that, as Eli Rikhles has put it, Israel is a state where the minority thinks like a majority and the majority like a minority. Arendt's essays from the 1940s advocating some form of a binational state, although irrelevant in their particulars, continue to raise important questions of principle. Let me put the issue this way: some Israeli politicians, especially on the right, have suggested that if a Palestinian state is finally created, Israeli Palestinian towns, such as in the triangle, ought to be transferred to the new state. The goal of such politicians is a state of only Jews, which one presumes would be matched by a state of only Palestinians. Instead of struggling with the question of how to integrate an Arab minority, such politicians wish to draw the map so that it goes away. A majority of Israelis appear to favor such a resolution.

But, in light of the way Goldschmidt and Arendt have defined modernity, is such a solution desirable? Can one escape the modern condition of diversity by legislating it away? Just as we rightly recoil from the idea of a Palestinian state that is *Judenrein*, should we not recoil from a Jewish state that is *Arabrein*? From what these two thinkers have taught us, to address the question of minority rights is essential not only for the minority, but at least as much for the majority. Accepting, even institutionalizing diversity, means accepting the human condition. To be sure, the devil is in the details. How one actually accomplishes this is of the utmost difficulty. But just as the European states could not escape the question of what to do with their Jews, so the Jewish state can hardly escape the question of what to do with its minority.

In this respect, Goldschmidt and Arendt were not so far from their most vociferous opponent, Gershom Scholem. Scholem, we recall, was an active member of Brit Shalom in the 1920s, the organization that argued for a rapprochement with the Arabs and that served as a precursor to the binationalists of the 1940s. Scholem himself dropped out of the movement and never advocated binationalism. But he was clearly uncomfortable throughout his life with integralist nationalism, whether of the German or Jewish variety. Scholem's Zionist politics

grew directly out of this experience of German nationalism of the World War I period. Zionism could only succeed if it eschewed such militaristic chauvinism. If he rejected the claim that a Jewish-German dialogue had ever existed, he surely could not have rejected the belief that a Jewish-Arab dialogue was essential to the existence of a Jewish state.

The legacy of the German Jews, as expressed by Hermann Goldschmidt and Hannah Arendt, still has the power to shed light on the most pressing problem facing the Jewish people today, how to live as a majority with a not-so-compatible minority. This is an ironic legacy, to be sure, one anticipated less by Goldschmidt than by Arendt, yet it is, in its own way, a product of the very European dilemma that both of them analyzed. For, if Europe had responded to the alternative voice of the Jews, not by either assimilation or genocide, then a solution to the Jewish problem outside of Europe might never have seemed so necessary. That such a solution ran head-on into the very different reality of the Middle East is yet another story. But if the lesson of the Jews for European history has universal validity, then surely it must have some meaning when transplanted outside of Europe. Goldschmidt and Arendt are no longer here to tell us how to apply that legacy. It is now up to us, their spiritual and intellectual heirs.

---

[1] Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, *The Legacy of German Jewry,* trans. David Suchoff with an introduction by Will Goetschel and David Suchoff (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 1-20.
[2] David Suchoff, "Translating Goldschmidt: The German-Jewish Legacy in a Multicultural Age", Hermann Levin Goldschmidt Memorial Lecture 1999, http://www.dialogik.org/old/papers/suchoff99.htm
[3] Goldschmidt, *The Legacy of German Jewry*, 32.
[4] Goldschmidt, ibid,, 202.
[5] See Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).
[6] See Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996), esp. ch. 2, Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights* (Bloomington, IN, 2006), Dana R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton, 1995) and Margaret Canovan. *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (Cambridge, UK, 1992).
[7] Although much of this argument was already present in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951), she developed it more fully in *The Human Condition* (New York, date?)
[8] See Ronald Beiner, "Arendt and Nationalism" in Dana Villa (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge, UK, 2000), 44-64.
[9] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York, 1958?), 301
[10] Beiner in "Arendt and Nationalism" argues that Arendt's political philosophy was not communitarian, but he offers no argument to show how it was essentially different, even if arising from her own idiosyncratic theories of the state and the nation.
[11] Ibid, 296-97
[12] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York, ?), 268-69.
[13] Arendt, *Origins*, 240.
[14] Ibid, 22.
[15] See her 1940 essay "The Minority Question," in Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman (New York, 2007), 130
[16] Arendt, *Origins*, 68-79.
[17] On the question of Arendt's ambivalent relation to modernity, see Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*

[18] Arendt, *Origins*, 8.
[19] Arendt, "Jewish History, Revised" in *The Jewish Writings*, 377-78.
[20] Arendt, *Origins*, 120
[21] Arendt, "To Save the Jewish Homeland," in *Jewish Writings,* 400-401
[22] See Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York, 1965).
[23] Arendt, "To Save the Jewish Homeland," *The Jewish Writings*, 401.
[24] Arendt, *Eichmann*, 262-63
[25] See David Suchoff, "Gershom Scholem, Hannah Arendt and the Scandal of Jewish Particularity," *The Germanic Review* (January, 1997): 57-77.
[26] *Encounter*, 22:1 (January, 1964): 53-54. The exchange was republished in Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York, 1978), 240-251.