

the rural priest, for example, who teaches the catechism and the Crucifixion, play in the spreading of this image of the Jew? It would be my feeling that his influence may prove to be as central as that of Freytag or Dahn.

All in all, the stereotype Jew that emerged from this segment of popular culture provided one of the most important roots of German anti-Semitism. It was an ominous image, the more so as it was in all instances associated not only with contempt but with actual cruelty. It became a reality in the early days of National Socialism with the pictures of caftaned Eastern Jews sweeping the streets or having their beards pulled amid the hilarity of the mob.

This image of the Jew provided an escape valve from serious social and political problems. It is typical that Freytag never concerned himself with social problems; he believed the analysis of "material" interests to be beyond his scope. The image of the Jew was outside the range of serious political and social analysis, and that was its strength. In this way it provided the emotional basis for a totalitarian solution of these problems. There must have been many who, like Hitler, when faced with real problems, first awakened to the stereotype of the "Jew" and then built their ideology around it. To be sure, anti-Jewish feeling only acquires particular relevance when it is combined with political issues or when Jewish group interests conflict with other powerful interests, but none of this would be of significance in an age of mass politics without the support and preconditioning of popular culture. That is why we must direct our attention to cultural investigation. Only in this way will we be able to understand fully the continued influence of anti-Semitism, which, distressingly, seems to predate and to outlast its immediate political or social relevance.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE
VOLKISH IDEA ON GERMAN JEWRY

I

THE TITLE OF this chapter may at first seem presumptuous, for the Volkish movement laid the groundwork for the Jewish catastrophe of our times. Thus it has been assumed, almost a priori, that the adherents of the Volkish ideology were, from the beginning, opposed to anything and everything Jewish, and that the Jews in turn found themselves confronted by a world view that was in essence repugnant to all that Jews stood for. Consequently, German Jewish history has usually been described either as the failure of Jewish emancipation or as the story of a separate people living on German soil. The former view reads history backwards; the latter applies to German history a criterion taken from the quite different history of East European Jewry.

After the triumph of Hitler many of the younger generation, seeking to reject Europe and all that it stood for, sought a new and specifically Jewish ethos. But this had not always been the case; indeed, there was a period in which Jews sought to describe their own situation in the same terms as those used by their fellow Germans. Robert

Weltsch, who played a major role in Zionism, has recently reminded us that early in the twentieth century his generation felt that "what was important . . . was not the farewell to Europe, but instead a greedy acceptance of all that Europe had to give us." Even more significantly, he adds that for a German Jew, even for a Zionist, "Europe inevitably meant Germanness."¹

For many of that generation such "Germanness" was equivalent to an empathy with the Volkish longings which were capturing their non-Jewish German contemporaries. For the youth of the bourgeois classes the Volkish movement was primarily a revolt which, starting in the last decades of the nineteenth century, took the form of a deepened feeling toward the Volk of which they felt themselves a part. This was the response of many young people to the crisis of modernity. Racist ideas, which in retrospect immediately come to mind, were often but by no means inevitably an ingredient of such enthusiasm. This is especially true of the Youth Movement, which was Volkish but *not* overtly racist in the majority of its *Bünde*. This has a heightened significance for our theme, for it was this movement which affected Jewish youth more than any other.

The question we must ask is whether this general atmosphere penetrated into Jewish life as it did into German life, and if so, what special problems were involved and what differences can be noted. In posing such questions we come to grips with a German Jewish history which is part of the history of German and Jew alike, however much we would want to deny such a connection today. Only by confronting this fact and the problems it raises can we ever begin to write the modern history of German Jewry.

The atmosphere of the *fin de siècle* is basic to an understanding of the Volkish movement and especially the part

of it that had an influence on Jewish youth. All over Europe the young generation felt the urge to break with the bourgeois world, to revitalize a culture which seemed to have lost its vitality. The young Siegfried Bernfeld echoed the general feeling of his time when in 1914 he called upon Jewish youth to build a new life for itself separate from the straitjackets of school and parents.² The Youth Movement had already attempted to do just that even as he wrote. The first journal edited by high-school students in defiance of adult supervision summed up the hope of the generation by calling itself "The Beginning" (*Der Anfang*).

What sort of beginning was this to be? In Germany, the revolt by bourgeois youth against society turned into neo-romantic channels. The Youth Movement sought to express its freedom through contact with nature, defined as the landscape of the Volk. These students thought they had found in the unspoiled native countryside that genuineness which they missed in home and school. Moreover, the nature to whose tune their souls could "swing" (as they put it) was viewed as a historical landscape. Thus, not only woods and fields but also villages, small towns, and ancient castles were integrated into their concept of nature. The landscape stood not merely for an escape from hated modernity but also for a past which reminded them of the natural genuineness of their German roots. Frank Fischer, an important leader of the early Wandervögel (as the members of the Youth Movement were called), put it thus: "Can there exist a vital connection between the Volk and rambling? That which is formed in tune with nature, which has lasted of man's creations and which through its form still exemplifies that creativity, speaks to everyone who learns to listen. Not only churches and castles speak in this fashion, but also [small] towns, paths, landscapes . . .

woods, and even rivers."³ Thus youth sought to establish a connection between their own souls and the "genuineness" which the landscape embodied. Siegfried Copalle, a leading Wandervögel, wrote that "the demon money has not yet taken possession" of the inhabitants of a town which has retained its medieval form. "The new buildings do not jar, nor are they misplaced . . . the son does not yet want to rise higher than the father, the craftsman still enjoys the work of his hands."⁴

It must be stressed that this was far more than a mere "back to nature" movement, for youth was seeking a way to go forward. These students felt that their own strivings could be based on such genuineness and consequently transform their world. "We do not want to go back *à la* Rousseau, but to go forward to overcome the world. Become a man of the times, through rambling become an organic man."⁵ Youth was seeking an end to the alienation produced by industrial society; it thirsted for firm ground from which such a change could be effected. In short, the revolt against society, parents, and school swelled into a revolt against the bourgeois age. Romanticism was used to bolster a nostalgia for preindustrial times, when in place of alienation from society there had been a fusion of the individual with nature, with the Volk, and with the *Bund*.

Such ideas were part of a general climate of opinion which was crystallized by the Youth Movement in the first decade of the twentieth century. This line of thought had special significance for young Jews growing to maturity within German culture. They also wanted to go forward into the future and, as we shall see, many of them wanted to find a new point of departure. The immediate past was the world of the ghetto, while the present represented the status quo within a society that painted Jews in terms of

unflattering stereotypes. The turn of the century was marked by a new and deep-seated wave of anti-Semitism and Jewish exclusion, a reflection of the increased impetus of German Volkish thought. The stereotype of the Jew was presented as the antithesis of that genuineness for which Germans longed. Jews were described as intellectual, and therefore artificial. They lacked roots, and thus rejected nature. They were urban people, possessed of special aptitudes for expanding even more the hated capitalist society. Many Jews felt this was a just image, and many of the young people, especially, thought they saw it exemplified by their parents.

Out of this complex of ideas, sensitive Jews formulated their own doctrine of revolt, not so much out of self-hate but rather because the Jewish stereotype seemed to typify a character which all youth, Jewish and Gentile, despised. If one reads through the many analyses of the "sickness of Judaism" written by Jews at the turn of the century, the same themes recur. Judaism is sick because Jews have lost contact with the genuine realities of life. They have been cut off from the strength of nature, from the non-intellectual, non-competitive sides of human existence. Young Germans talked about the "new German"; young Jews spoke of the "new Jew" in exactly the same terms. Jews also wanted to opt out of bourgeois society, to escape from the alienation which industrialism had brought. At the same time, they wanted to be rid of any association with a stereotype that might link them with the very capitalist and urban society against which they were fighting.

In this growing revolt, materialism was painted as an evil by young Germans and young Jews alike. This held true for those young Jews who became socialists as well as for those whose revolt took on a Volkish direction. The Jews who joined the socialist movement wanted to infuse it with a

new spirit of moral concern, a new humanism, which derived from Kant.⁶ Both the young socialist Jews and those who followed a Volkish inspiration rejected materialism in favor of an emphasis on the spirit of man: his consciousness of his own true nature. They rediscovered the emotional base of human nature, though the consequences they drew from their discovery differed. Among non-socialist Jewish youth, the German Zionists pioneered the revolt against bourgeois society. As early as 1901, speakers at a Berlin Zionist meeting called upon Jews to "cut loose from Liberalism."⁷ The liberal political parties of the bourgeoisie for which the masses of German Jews had cast and were casting their votes must be repudiated. The rationalism and materialism for which they stood must be rejected.

This is the leading theme of the volume *Vom Judentum* issued in 1913 by the Bar Kochba of Prague, a germinal group in the intellectual history of modern Jewry. The Jews of Prague were in the forefront of German cultural activity within that city, but for some of them the ever present tension between German and Czech served to heighten their own Jewish self-awareness. The Bar Kochba circle of young people was Zionist and included among its members some of the best minds of the younger Jewish generation—in deed, Franz Kafka himself was close to this group, for some intimate friends of his were among the members.

The book which the group published reiterates ideas that were general among such youth: the Enlightenment, as one contributor claimed, wanted to know the world, but what is important is to intuit and to re-form it. The introduction speaks of the excessive emphasis on individualism in all culture and calls its readers to battle against a mechanical, soulless utilitarianism.⁸ In another context, Robert Weltsch wrote about the Jewish people sickening from a

soul torn by rationalism and enslavement. Thus the Jews could not understand nationalism, which was not a mere program but the unfolding of life itself.⁹ Members of the Bar Kochba circle, like the future philosopher Hugo Bergmann, made a sharp distinction between a formalized patriotism utilizing propaganda and centered in patriotic clubs, and a nationalism that would fashion a "new man," would infuse the whole individual.¹⁰ Here these men were in accord with the German Youth Movement, which rejected the saber-rattling patriotism of its elders and refused to attend the official anniversary celebration of the Battle of Leipzig (1913), meeting instead on the Meissner Mountain, where groups of the Youth Movement declared their love for truth and sincerity.

It should be stressed that in spite of its overt denial of politics, the Meissner declaration (as this came to be called) was meant to constitute a program, however vague. What was rejected were the rationalizations of patriots and political parties. Instead, this Youth Movement emphasized the more genuine links of intuition, nature, and *Bund*, the "Germanic faith" about which men like Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn had written. This was indeed a faith which consciously rejected the need for a rationale, at least in the beginning. Moses Calvary, a leader of the new Jewish generation, called participation in the nature ramblings of the Youth Movement "a simple form of reaffirming our Judaism" (1916). Whether or not this was specifically "Jewish" he held to be beside the point.¹¹ Small wonder that at this juncture of his life Calvary rejected all religious orthodoxy, since "orthodoxy and rationalism climax in the Enlightenment."¹² He was not alone. Just as Germans accused religious orthodoxy of imprisoning the German spirit, so young Jews condemned Judaism as it had been traditionally practiced.

Robert Weltsch has written in retrospect of how Judaism as an intellectual force had ceased to exist, how it meant only a fossilized tradition for that young generation. He calls it an empirical Judaism,¹³ and for him it must have been a part of the Jewish "frivolity of materialism."¹⁴ Jews and Germans regarded their received religious heritage in a similar light. So too their urge to substitute for it a more vital and genuine world view must be regarded as a common cultural phenomenon.

Perhaps here again young Jews had been impressed by a stereotype of Judaism. Since the middle of the nineteenth century Judaism as a religion had been symbolized in the West by the Eastern European ghetto—a quarter which, as we have seen in two previous chapters of this book, was widely regarded as ritualized, fossilized, strange, and, what was just as important, urbanized. For the new Germanism and these young Jews, the city typified the essence of rationalism and lack of genuineness. A Zionist journal charged (1910) that Jews who lounged in city cafés typified the neurasthenia and lack of ideals which had served to create the Jewish stereotype. It must be emphasized that it was from prewar times that such feelings reached out into the postwar age. And during the First World War, when many Germans and Jews came into firsthand contact with the world of the ghetto in the German-occupied sections of Poland, this view of Jews and Judaism was intensified.¹⁵ Zionists, moreover, had a special impetus for their rejection of the ghetto. Non-Zionist Jews, and they were the vast majority, accused them of seeking to push all Jews back to a ghetto civilization. The Zionists desired to accept German culture all the more because of this accusation. It was unwarranted in any case, for they opposed the recent Jewish past with as much vigor as any assimilationist Jew.

Against this background, Martin Buber, in close contact with the Bar Kochba circle, attempted to revitalize Judaism. In one sense he played the same role in the Jewish context of the *fin de siècle* that Paul de Lagarde played in the German context, but with a significant difference: whereas Lagarde exalted the specifically Germanic, Buber sought to transcend the specific Volk in order to bring into being an all-embracing humanism.

Yet the similarity between Buber's rediscovery of the Hasidim and the contemporary German revival of mystics like Meister Eckhart and Jacob Böhme is too striking to be ignored. Germans also wanted to go beyond "liberal" or "orthodox" Protestantism to an earlier heritage which seemed more dynamic because it was less rationalistic, less fossilized. A mystic like Böhme had posited a definitive and emotional starting point, rooted in nature, for the "overcoming" of the present world. Such German mystics seemed to intuit cosmic forces linked to the German Volk and to nature as well. The soul was seen as a bridge between these two regions, just as it formed the link between them in the ideology of the Youth Movement. Buber's Hasidim performed a similar function by embodying a Judaism which was not rationalized, not fossilized, and surely not quiescent. Moreover, the dynamic nature of the Hasidim arose from a mysticism linked to a revived love for the Volk. The Hasidim represented a heritage with which modern Jews could forge a meaningful link.

This connection between the Hasidic heritage and modern Jews was of the utmost significance for Buber, for he believed that a peaceful and genuine relationship of the individual to the Volk could be maintained only if there were an unbroken growth of Volk feeling, in which the individual did not have to choose between his inner self

and his environment. Buber's Hasidim provided a means by which Jews could identify with the past while at the same time they continued developing in their own unique way.

This formulation was strikingly similar to the attitudes which Germans manifested toward their mystics. For both Jew and German, such historic identification was meant to signal the end of the alienation of modern man. The modern Jew was to be "uprooted" only to become rooted again in a neo-romantic mysticism. This solution to the crisis of modernity was anchored in the contemporary ethos to such an extent that it is hardly surprising that Buber's doctoral thesis (1901) should deal with the thought of Jacob Böhme. For Buber, Böhme was relevant to the modern age, for he expressed the unity of all living matter in God. Man longs for a deeper link with the world in which he lives, and he can find this by giving free play to his inner experience, "for everything grows outward from man's inner spirit." The soul has received an accurate picture of the world from God. The trees, birds, and stars are our brothers and sisters. Man, then, carries within him a picture of the God-given harmony of the world, whose many-sided splendors he can grasp through such a mystical intuition. Buber summarized and fully approved the theology of the Silesian mystic; it penetrated deeply into his own religiosity and undoubtedly influenced his interpretation of the mystical sources of Judaism which are central to his thought.¹⁶

Buber expressed this mystical element through a definition of *Mythos* as an eternal function of the soul, through which concrete events are transformed by the soul into divine and absolute experiences. *Mythos* for Buber is an elemental state of being from which the soul surges forth in quest of unity beyond itself. This *Mythos* finds its outward expression in the account of legends which deal either with

actions performed by God, or with the centrality of man's inner experiences. Hasidic literature concentrates upon such legends, which demonstrate an intuitive understanding of the unity of God and the world and, as a result of this understanding, a love for the world which Buber also saw reflected in Böhme's theology. The *Mythos* expresses a true religiosity, opposed to all organized religion, and gives a picture of human creativity which according to Buber Nietzsche had also glimpsed.¹⁷

Buber links the *Mythos* to mysticism, but mysticism can also express itself directly, without recourse to legend. Mystical experience can project itself directly in its moments of ecstasy when man's inner life of the soul emerges, for an instant, in its purest form. For Buber this was not a specifically Jewish phenomenon but common to all mystical experience. In his *Ecstatic Confessions (Ekstatische Konfessionen, 1909)* he collected the descriptions by past mystics of their own experiences. Christian mystics provided the majority of his examples; their souls, in this stage of tension, received the "grace of unity."

Buber's emphasis on this mysticism and his praise for the inner experience are closely linked to the contemporary revival of interest in German mystics. Just as the Germans attempted to root this mystical tradition in their national mystique, so Buber eventually attempted to embody this *Mythos* in the Jewish Volk, exemplified by the Hasidim. Their legends are a genuine expression of the spirit of the Jewish people in their relationship to God and the world. The Jews as a Volk are opposed to the superficial forces of traditional religion and politics so characteristic of the modern age.

Buber's use of *Mythos*, his mysticism, closely paralleled important German writers of his times. We shall see in the

next chapter how the important German conservative, Möller van den Bruck, used the concept of *Mythos* in the same manner, to express the organic unity of the German Volk. Eugen Diederichs—a friend of Buber's and publisher of Arthur Bonus, whose idea of *Mythos* is again close to that of the Jewish philosopher—summarized the feeling so prevalent at the time: that the world picture must again be grasped by an intuition that is close to the sources of nature. From this, man's spirit must flow and bring his soul into unity with the community of his Volk.¹⁸ Significantly, Meister Eckhardt typified this "new romanticism" for Diederichs, who himself was not only an influential publisher, but also played an important role in developing both the Volkish and the Youth Movement.

Buber attempted to translate the emphasis on the irrational cosmos into Jewish terms by employing the concept of the individual soul's proximity to the shared inner experiences of the Volk as a vehicle for the transformation of modern man. However, he broadened this concept by making Yahweh, the national deity, into the God of "all," the God of humanity, the Lord of the soul. Indeed, Buber was always in quest of a community that was not bound by laws and regulations, but instead was based upon the affinity of kindred souls. Such a community was formed by that mystic bond which Buber called the "community of one's blood," expressed through the Volk. But in the last resort, the values which such a community represents transcend the individual Volk, for to sacrifice oneself on behalf of the Volk was an act of divine revelation—and a revelation not confined merely to one segment of humanity.¹⁹ This longing for a true community runs through most of the thought discussed in this book; it is shared by Germans and Jews alike. Both sought to overcome a liberalism that seemed to stifle

the humanity within the individual. In an approach that was typical of the Jewish interpretation of this ideology, the Volk becomes part of a larger entity which includes all mankind. Yet the similarities between Buber's thought and that of the advocates of a new German self-consciousness are so startling at this point that they imply a common root in the general Volkish surge of the times.

Small wonder that even the vocabulary of the Volkish renaissance made its appearance here. Buber was apt, in his early lectures (1909–11), to equate the historically and intuitively centered growth of the Volk with the instincts of its "blood." But this rhetoric, as well as Robert Weltsch's call that every Jew must become a "little Fichte," can be misleading if viewed in terms of a narrow and aggressive nationalism.²⁰ Both Buber and Weltsch looked upon the Volk as a stepping stone to a general European culture. Only by first becoming a member of the Volk could the individual Jew truly become part of humanity. As one young Jew put it early in the century, every Volk is held together by a "national religion" (in Lagarde's mystical sense) but in the end all mankind flows together.²¹

Two problems arose from this ideology, and neither one of them was ever satisfactorily solved. How could one claim that there was something uniquely Jewish in this call to the Volk? What precisely was the European humanistic tradition within which all mankind would flow together? All these men rejected the legacy of the Enlightenment; what could they offer in its stead? In Buber's case mysticism took the place of a rationalistic approach to the problem.

To be sure, Buber derived much of his inspiration from a tradition of Jewish literature and Jewish thought. It remains for scholars to disentangle the specific Jewish tradition of

mysticism and neo-romanticism from the German impetus within which he worked. Undoubtedly Jewish intellectuals of this tradition existed in Eastern Europe, and some did reach their conclusions independent of Germanic influence. Buber, though he spent most of his adult life in Germany, came from a background rooted in East European Jewry. However, the parallelism between his interpretation of the Jewish tradition and the Germanic ideas we have discussed is difficult to deny, nor can we ignore his own overt acceptance of the German mystical and neo-romantic tradition. Moreover, the substitution of mysticism and intuition for the traditional context of the Jewish religion, his rejection of scholarship, did introduce a vagueness into the quest for Jewish identity which made it difficult to disentangle the Jewish from the German, indeed from a general concern with human individuality.

It was easier to use such mysticism to build a humanism embracing all mankind than to isolate its specifically Jewish component. How this mystical approach toward life could provide the basis for a general European humanism is effectively illustrated in the thought of Buber's close friend, Gustav Landauer. Typically, Landauer considered himself a Jew and was proud of his Jewish heritage. But he could not arrive at a concise and consistent definition of his Jewishness. His pride in his origins fused with the belief in a general revolutionary tradition which supposedly derived from Jewish prophecy and which made the Jew especially suited to transform existing reality. This most famous of German anarchists rejected all traditional nationalism: the state and society must be built up from below. Their foundation rested on the voluntary and spontaneous unity of men gathering in small communities. Landauer did not shirk the call to revolution to overthrow contemporary society. He was

one of the leaders of the Bavarian revolution of 1918-19 and was finally murdered by counterrevolutionaries.

Buber was the executor of Landauer's will. Much earlier, Landauer had praised Buber's *Speeches on Judaism* (*Reden über das Judentum*, 1911) because they combined the call to freedom with great depth. By depth Landauer meant the reawakening of the human soul, which draws unto itself a picture of the living world. Pitting himself against attempts to explain the world and man by logical categories and concepts, he cited the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart: "The path to understanding lies inward." Here, in the secret and private recesses of his soul, the individual recaptures his "living past"—for he is merely a link in a long chain of ancestors and progeny that forms the community to which he belongs. The individual thus rediscovers the community to which he is linked through his blood and learns further that he is merely an "electric spark" within a larger unity. Clearly Landauer was here following Buber in postulating an emotional link between the individual and his ancestors: a living community which each man rediscovers by looking into his own individual soul.

This "genuine community" was contrasted with the pale and artificial community of state and society. Landauer believed that if the Jews would only follow Buber's advice, they could create such a "genuine community" and therefore become a truly "genuine" people, "magically united" through the depth of their souls. And, because by recapturing this ideal these people would also have received an image of the unity of the world in their souls, their deeds would be performed on behalf of humanity at large.²²

The distinction between an artificial and a genuine community (*Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*) was a commonplace in German *fin de siècle* thought and was adopted by

the Youth Movement as well. Buber the Zionist and Landauer the anarchist shared in this attitude. The Volk or the people were an integral part of this mystical thought, but unlike many Germans, these Jews did not end up in the bonds of a narrow nationalism, which they rejected. Landauer never became a Zionist but, for all that, he spoke before the Bar Kochba circle in Prague. He made it clear to these young Zionists that he regarded nationhood as merely a disposition, a readiness to work for causes that were not solely national but first and foremost those of mankind.²³ It was precisely on this point that Buber, though a Zionist and not an anarchist, agreed with Landauer. His disillusionment with the state of Israel, once it came about, is well known. The nationalism that prevailed in the new state seemed to negate the high goals that Buber had set for it. Yet, could a modern state, besieged on all sides, regard its nationalism as only a "disposition," as merely a stage in its progress toward eventual union with all humanity?

In fact, a large number of German Zionists continued to see no contradiction between Jewish nationhood and the flowing together of mankind by the means which Buber had put forward and which Landauer so well exemplified. Such ideas, dating back to the prewar years, penetrated into the 1920's. Then Robert Weltsch, in the important German-Zionist newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau*, exhorted his readers to regard the Zionist movement as centered on the inner development of the Jewish nation, on the awakening of the soul, so that the essence of the Jewish heritage might be once more recaptured. He conceived of this heritage in cultural terms, which he considered more important than political or economic factors. Such a Jewish culture was not exclusive; it was part of a living, eternal law. By

living a national life based on this principle, Jews would attain a harmonious relationship with all the other peoples of the world. Weltsch accepted the definition of culture which Martin Buber reiterated when the shadows were closing in over Germany (1929). Culture cannot be "made"; it is part of the life process itself, rising up from life's very foundations. The essence of this process is the constant confrontation and struggle between God and man; its reality is always one of inward growth, not of outward power.²⁴

Thus Robert Weltsch protested against the military pomp and circumstance with which the banners of the Maccabees were brought into a Jerusalem synagogue on the festival of Hanukkah (1925). Such demonstrations could lead to the same hollow, theatrical nationalism which dominated other nations, besides serving to alienate the Arab population.²⁵ This humanist nationalism remained alive in the postwar age and retained its similarity to the original national impetus that had dominated some of Germany's youth before the First World War.

But its days were numbered in Germany. Through the experience of the First World War an aggressive nationalism had come to dominate the German scene, and the postwar German Youth Movement largely accepted the change. By 1929 few voices in Germany took up the cry of one Zionist writer that nationalism, if it was to serve the common good, must be humanitarian, inner-directed, cultural, for only thus could all the diverse groupings of humanity attain harmony.²⁶

The Volkish influence on German Zionism did not, in the end, transform the belief in a Jewish Volk into an aggressive, exclusive ideology. But the German Volkish movement did lead in this direction—providing a deep, long-lasting

difference between Jewish and German thought. To be sure, the German Zionists were also becoming increasingly isolated within the Zionist movement itself, for there a more aggressive nationalism triumphed in response to the longings of the oppressed masses of Eastern European Jewry and the realities of the Palestinian situation. Not that German Zionism stood alone, for among some East European Zionists humanistic nationalism had also found its adherents. However, the peaceful coexistence of Arab and Jew in a binational state had informed the political direction of most of German Zionism, providing the concrete application of the harmony among all peoples toward which a genuine folkdom was destined to lead. But this was not to be. The problem of creating a humanistic nationalism has not been solved for Jews in Israel any more than it has been for any other modern nation.

What then was specifically "Jewish" about a nationalism which in its early stages was so closely related to Volkish influence? This proved a troublesome problem for many Jews of that generation, in spite of Martin Buber's attempt to offer a specific Jewish tradition that would crystallize the values of the Volk while at the same time rejecting the religious orthodoxy that, throughout history, had served to hold Jews together. Even Buber's great influence could not reconcile the conflict between a Jewishness focused on the soil of Palestine and Germanism as an ideological force.

Moses Calvary told the Zionist leader, Kurt Blumenfeld, that "my dreams ripened among pines, not among palms." From the time of its founding (1912-13), the Zionist Youth Movement Blau-Weiss (Blue and White), was faced with this problem. The Blau-Weiss was an offshoot of the German Youth Movement and shared its ideology as well as its action—the emphasis on nature rambling, on learning to

live in nature and to "view it with one's soul." The hope, as one leader put it, was that this sharing of a foreign experience would lead to the realization of a Jewish goal. But was this possible? Gerhard Scholem, destined to become one of the foremost Jewish scholars of his time, attempted to solve the problem by rejecting the Youth Movement aspect of the Blau-Weiss and calling for a renewed preoccupation with the Jewish religion and the Jewish heritage. He failed, for few were willing to discard the movement whose Volkish influences were shared by Jew and Gentile alike. Then, at one of its last meetings, the Blau-Weiss leadership confronted the problem once more (1924). They castigated the Jews' longing for Palestine, which they considered stemmed merely from externalized religious and historical feelings. A simple personal relationship to soil and earth could provide the only genuine sentiment for the necessary return to the homeland. But it was precisely this feeling for historical nature which the Youth Movement inculcated—a nature that included the people who dwelt within it, the ancient towns, as well as the forest and fields. The leaders of the Jewish Youth repeated a cardinal tenet of the German Youth Movement and went on to admit that such a return to nature had to take place for Jews "on German soil and in the German landscape." The discussion ended with the only possible conclusion: today the cultivating of a close relationship to nature would take place within the German landscape, but "next year in Jerusalem."²⁷

It was easier to state the problem than to find a solution to it, and only vague hopes and pious wishes seem to emerge from these writings. Small wonder that Moses Calvary himself, as a leader of the Blau-Weiss, found his way back to the safe anchor of orthodox Judaism once he had emigrated to Palestine, as did others who in their youth

had dreamed too German a dream. Moritz Goldstein, a writer on Jewish problems, informed the Bar Kochba that the Jewish Volk, through its own force, would overcome Nietzschean nihilism as well as discarding the image of Goethe and Kant. But he failed to specify the Jewish content which would take the place of such German thought and instead merely posited that the Jews were peculiarly suited to be the "Volk of the idea."²⁸ Robert Weltsch cited as a paradoxical formulation of those days the contention that preoccupation with Nietzsche or Hölderlin would make stronger Jews than "a forced return to a ritual in which we do not believe."²⁹ Some sidestepped this paradox by calling for "deeds, not cerebration," while others talked vaguely of the Jewish "urge toward higher things."³⁰ But what Weltsch calls a paradox is simply the result of the way this new Jewish consciousness emerged.

The idea of the Volk, centered on the irrational forces of nature, necessarily looked for its fulfillment to a specific historical landscape that would be a reminder of the past and an impetus for the glorious future it could call its own. "Because the nature which infused [the Wandervögel] was the nature of the German *Heimat*, thus from love of landscape grows love of Volk and fatherland, a national-German . . . background for all forms of culture and life."³¹ For the Germans all this was "given," but for the Jews the desired transference of Germanism to a Jewish context presented an essentially insoluble dilemma. Jewish youths did not want to build on the foundations past generations had laid; rather they yearned for a cleared and empty space where they could construct a new edifice. But their wish was beyond granting, and thus the Germanic ideology moved in to supply foundations for them.

The dilemma was clearly manifest when Moses Calvary

had to answer the accusation that the German heroic ideal had been simply and schematically grafted onto the Jewish heroes of old. His contention was that heroic figures like Siegfried had been romantically awakened for German youth only within the last decades and that Jewish youth could not but see their heroes under the same aspects if they were to be in tune with the age. For Calvary, young Jews had to fashion their Jewishness after the German model, and especially through the model of the Youth Movement. He saw Blau-Weiss in this light. For Calvary, given the Jewish situation, this imitation was a necessity. However, his ambivalence is clearly stated in a letter written to Martin Buber during the First World War (1916). There he criticized the philosopher Hermann Cohen (about whom we shall have more to say in the last chapter of this book) as an "enraged German." Jews do not necessarily have to form a united front with Germanic thought, he felt.³² However, he saw that the Blau-Weiss had adopted such thought in an attempt to recapture Jewish identity.

The Jewish Wandervögel believed that the feeling for the German landscape would be translated into a feeling for Palestine. Yet, as can be clearly seen, the definitions of Jewishness made from this context merely echoed the ideals of the German Youth Movement. An article entitled "An Outline of Our View of Man" in a volume issued by the Zionist group, the Habonim, in 1935 had this to say on the subject: what Jews needed was the immediacy of experience, a strong, non-questioning, unconscious life. This meant being close to nature, to the earth and the labor it entails, to the rhythmic changes of the seasons. Finally, there was the longing of the Jews for manual work, for land and community life. But what was specifically Jewish about all this? This is an excellent summary of the Volkish

urge of German youth, and the praise the article accords Knut Hansum as "poet of the blessing of the soil" could be duplicated throughout the history of the Volkish movement.³³ It was easy enough to say in 1914 that "we want to transfer the healthy effect of the Wandervogel onto our own youth,"³⁴ but it was quite another matter rationally to sort out the Jewish component from the Germanic, especially against the background of a general revolt of youth against rationalism and industrial society.

To be sure, a new emphasis on the Hebrew language solved the problem for some of these men. But here again it was difficult to combine a literary emphasis with the new stress on a nature-bound anti-intellectualism. Nonetheless, Hebrew as the daily language certainly gave a heightened intensity to the revived Jewish consciousness. Just how far this changed the ideological content is open to question, however, since it was difficult to build a secular national consciousness for a people who had always sought such identity through their religion. Perhaps this is the crux of the matter; if so it still poses a major problem for modern Israel.

Hans Goslar, an active Zionist (who later became press secretary to the Prussian government in the Weimar Republic), attacked Buber, somewhat unjustly, for rejecting his religious heritage and calling for a revolt of youth without it (1918). "What we know is not solely the dark urgings of the blood."³⁵ Buber had tried to lay a religious foundation, but since this was itself stated in mystical terms, it seemed overwhelmed by what Moses Calvary called "the same call which also sounds for the peoples which surround us, the call for a more colorful and artistic modeling of life."³⁶ By the First World War, however, many youths had increasingly found the answer to their Jewishness through a deep-

ening of the experience that bound them together, with their own age and kind, in a meaningful community: the *Bund*.

The *Bund* was no ordinary group, but a specific product of the German Youth Movement. It resolved the urge toward an organic, rather than an alienated man, by positing unity of soul, body, and spirit as the prime law. This law bound together individuals who had voluntarily entered the *Bund*: unity of soul and spirit was to be attained through shared experiences of nature and Volk, unity of the body through a shared Eros. For a good many Germans this became the nucleus from which all true states should have their beginning, and it constituted an alternative to existing, unsatisfactory political organizations. At times the Zionist Youth Movement Blau-Weiss took refuge in this principle of spontaneous and voluntary association, for "Judaism is difficult to define." The calendar issued by the Blau-Weiss for 1916 asserted that experiencing a living Jewish community through shared joys and shared roaming was enough in itself to define the "desire for Jewishness."³⁷ Admittedly, this was criticized in their journal as a mere "drifting within the stream of the German Youth Movement," but Heinz Kellermann, making a study of youth for the Berlin Jewish community, was nevertheless correct when he berated Jewish youth for being "stuck" in such a vague collective experience, unable to define their Jewishness in a more traditional or rational manner. He criticized young Jews for believing that the *Bund* as such sufficed to explain their Jewishness.³⁸ Once again one is struck by the common strivings of Jewish and German youth.

Indeed, the strong trend toward the *Bund* and *Orden* in German youth during the Weimar Republic had its parallel in the activities of Jewish youth. For example, the German-

Jewish *Bund* of roamers, the Comrades (Kameraden), founded after the First World War, asserted in 1924 that the conscious will to be a member of the *Bund* was all the program called for; there was no need to work out specific goals toward which the organization should strive.³⁹ The Comrades illustrates the dangers involved in making the *Bund* simultaneously the organizational framework and the mystical unit that superseded all defined goals and programs. For the Comrades split up under the growing shadow of National Socialism. Some members now felt the need for a clearly worked-out program that would lead into a better future. The Craftsmen (Werkleute) split off from the Comrades in 1932 and adopted a Marxist program. Others left to found the Black Flag (Schwarze Fähnlein), which desired to use the Volkish thought in order to assimilate its members into the German nation.

We have already noted that the large Zionist youth organization, Blau-Weiss, considered itself a *Bund* and refused to abandon the model of the German Youth Movement. They avoided a split in their ranks, very likely because of their specific general goal of settling in Palestine.⁴⁰ But the Blau-Weiss also discussed its *bündisch* nature in the pages of its journal, once again raising the problem of its own relationship to the dominant mood of articulate German youth.⁴¹ Moses Calvary spoke for the majority: an abandonment of the *bündisch* nature of the organization would mean its end as a true community. The individual personality of each member, if left free to unfold itself, would destroy the meaningfulness of the shared experience. The Blau-Weiss followed this ideal. Calvary reiterated a general article of faith of the Youth Movement: the stronger the natural ties of the individual with the Volk,

the more freely such an individual can develop without damaging the community.⁴²

Strong leadership was equally important. In the words of a German Youth leader, community and leadership form a *Bund*. Both Zionist and anti-Zionist Jewish youth groups adopted this principle of strong leadership. In the *Schild*, the organ of the Jewish War Veterans which furthered *bündisch* organizations for non-Zionist Jewish youth, this ideal was defined both before and after Hitler came to power. In an article written at *Pessach* time in 1929, Moses was held up as such a leader, and his leadership attributes were exactly the same as those which the *Bünde* had consistently maintained. A leader must know the soul of his people, its true nature, and must be filled with love for the Volk. Movements and revolution are made by the Volk, but only the leader, "the soul of the Volk," can give them purpose. The task of the leader is therefore to understand the Volk in order to rule it with complete sovereignty (*beherrschen*).⁴³

Not only the German and the Jewish Youth Movements but the Volkish movement as a whole subscribed to this view of the leader. After Hitler had come to power, the *Schild* wrote that the realization of the leadership concept was a positive step on the part of the national revolution. This fact, it went on, should not blind Jews to seeing its advantages as a system of government, not only for states but for all types of organization.⁴⁴ Here we can detect signs of progress from hitherto blindly held attitudes of mind to an acceptance of their possible political consequences.

German Zionist youth, especially the Blau-Weiss, were the first to test these concepts against reality when, in the 1920's, they went out to settle in Palestine, just as young

Zionists had been the first to take up the Volkish ideas that had agitated German youth. The ideas to which these youths had paid homage in Germany did not survive the reality of settlement. The transference of Germanic ideals to a Jewish context had been beset with difficulties even in Germany; in the harsh reality of Palestine, the attempted symbiosis broke down at once. For all its anti-intellectualism, it had been too intellectual for the prosaic facts the immigrants faced. The Zionist adaptation of Volkish ideas broke down earlier than that of assimilationist groups within Germany. The latter's confrontation with reality did not come about until the Nazi seizure of power.

II

The influence of Volkish thought on German Jews has a further aspect which serves to heighten the dilemma of the link between German and Jew. After the First World War, and especially in the years preceding the Nazi seizure of power, those who desired a more complete integration of the Jews with the Germans turned to the Volkish ideas which were sweeping all before them. During an earlier period these ideas had been rejected by assimilationists in favor of a deeply held belief in liberal values. Such liberal values were retained to some degree and there was still a strong element of Jewish liberalism well into the Nazi period. However, this link with the past was ill-equipped to cope with the new realities, and at last the *C.V. Zeitung* (official organ of the "Central Organization of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith") found itself the sole spokesman for a liberalism which had been rejected by most Germans and many young Jews alike.

After the First World War, German nationalism gathered

increasing momentum while liberal ideas fell into discredit. As a result, many of the younger Jews who wanted to be accepted as Germans turned to the Volkish ideology in order to find a basis for their arguments and attempted to use this ideology to deepen their German-Jewish identity, just as the young Zionists had used it earlier to provide a road toward Jewish identity. Such efforts reached a climax at the time of Hitler's triumph and their own incipient expulsion from the community. To be sure, these young Jews were in a minority, like the young Zionists before them. The vast majority of German Jews clung to the principles of liberalism with something like desperation. Nonetheless, the efforts of this minority are a part of the story of Volkish influence on German Jews; nor should they be judged too harshly in retrospect.

We must not be blinded here by what eventually happened, but seek rather to understand the situation as it existed among the nationalist groups with whom these Jews sought to come into contact. Even after their seizure of power in 1933, and into the next year, some Nazis showed a certain ambivalence in their attitude toward Jews. For example, as late as April 1934, a Nazi leader gave permission to the Jewish war-veterans organization for their youth groups to play German teams at football—provided the games were played in private and with the "necessary restraint."⁴⁵ There is evidence, some still hidden among private papers, that until 1934 there existed at least a possibility, however tenuous, for a National Socialist-Jewish understanding. One Jewish youth leader who tried to bring it about believed that an accord could be reached with the Röhm group.⁴⁶ There is some semblance of truth there, for the "socialist" revolutionaries around Ernst Röhm and Gregor Strasser were less inflexible on the Jewish question,

to the extent that they desired to bring about a truer social and economic revolution.

Against this background, some Jewish youth groups felt that integration with the new Germany was possible, and they bolstered their hopes by putting into practice essentially Volkish ideas rather than transmuted them into a new Jewish nationalism. The Black Flag sought to find a "path toward Germany" and in so doing adopted wholeheartedly the Volkish ideology. The German Jew should be a "soldierly and *bündisch*" man, they asserted, using the same slogan many of the youth groups in the nation used. Moreover, in accordance with the traditional beliefs of the Youth Movement, the "*bündisch* man" was defined as an aristocrat, one whose stance derived from his very being. In tune with all we have discussed, it was asserted that "not matters of reason, but vital forces" were basic and that these forces were fashioned by the human spirit. Once again the question arises: what was specifically Jewish about this *Bund*? Religion was overtly rejected, and instead a typically vague reference to Jewish history and Jewish tradition took its place.⁴⁷ The Black Flag, taking its origins from the Comrades, was preeminently a *Bund* and sought to transform the young Jew into a "new man" on a parallel with such attempts by the German Youth Movement, now re-formed as the *Bündische Jugend*. In passing it should be stressed once again that these German *Bünde*, though Volkish, were not National Socialist, and indeed the majority of them opposed that movement.

In 1934 the Black Flag had only a thousand members yet, like all *Bünde*, this body had no desire to be a mass movement. But, as with the other *Bünde*, discipline proved difficult to impose on the whole national organization. In spite of the trappings which emphasized such discipline at

public meetings—the solid phalanx carrying the flag, the military deportment and uniforms of the members—the local *Bünde* at times went their own way. For example, the Hamburg *Bund* of the Black Flag was influenced by the Deutsche Jungenschaft led by Tusk (Eberhard Köbel), which combined mystic rites with allegiance to the Communist Party.⁴⁸

Such local organizations, however, were not regarded with particular favor by the Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten, the Jewish war-veterans organization, founded after the First World War, which numbered some 30,000 members. That organization provided the forum for the Jewish *Bünde* (to which we shall return), which desired to strengthen German-Jewish identity; both the leader of the Black Flag and Hans Joachim Schoeps, who had founded his own *Bund*, the *Vortrupp*, made national speaking tours under its auspices. It is not surprising that a veterans organization should have sympathized with the ideal of *bündisch* and soldierly comportment, or that its members, having risked their lives for the nation, should have felt a special need for ideological identification with Germanic thought. Long before the Nazi revolution, the Reichsbund had consistently called for a return of Jews to the soil. The Jew as peasant and craftsman formed a necessary reservoir of Jewish strength, because, in the eyes of the Reichsbund, urbanism was sapping the very roots of Jewish existence through a process of proletarianization.⁴⁹ Defined in accordance with Volkish ideology, proletarianization was not a "class" term, but, as W. H. Riehl had used it in the nineteenth century, denoted uprootedness.

Riehl had directed this word especially against the uprooted and urbanized Jews. From the end of the nineteenth century onward, however, a Jewish settlement

movement attempted to transform Jews into farmers in Germany. Significantly, the organization to further Jewish settlement, which the Reichsbund superseded, was founded in 1897 at the same moment that the Germans began to step up their efforts to "return the Volk to the land."

Such attitudes were heightened under Nazi pressure, for Jews were now forced to leave the so-called "free professions," the doors to which were barred to them. The leader of the Reichsbund called once more for "work on the land, which makes man healthy, strong, and free," as well as, typically, "uncomplicated."⁵⁰ Statements like these must be read against the darkening horizon of the times, but clearly they were a continuation of a tradition that was shared by Germans and Jews. Moreover, among the German Jews themselves the Zionists, with their attacks on Jews who lounged in city cafés, shared identical attitudes with the assimilationists, though they despised each other.

The adoption of Volkish ideas undoubtedly facilitated the reassertion of Germanism deemed necessary and desirable by the leaders of the Reichsbund. In keeping with the ideology, the *Schild* ran a series focusing on heroic figures of the Jewish tribe within Germany, military leaders or inventors to a man, and pointed with pride several times to the Jews who had fought in the Free Corps.⁵¹ These attitudes reached the limits of good taste when the Reichsbund in October 1933 sent the new Nazi government a declaration affirming its stand along with the German fatherland, for Germany's *lebensraum* and honor were at stake. The German Reichsbund was not unique in its reaction to rightist and anti-Semitic pressure. For example, in the 1930's a league of French Jewish war veterans reacted in much the same manner to the rising tide of anti-Jewish feeling in that country. Just as the Patriotic Union of French Jews stressed

their deep roots in France and advocated "French" courage and morality (in contrast to the Bolsheviks and East European Jewish immigrants), so the assertions of the Reichsbund must be viewed as a militant Germanism in the face of Nazi contentions. Throughout history and in every nation, veterans' organizations tend to become rightist pressure groups.⁵² Jewish veterans' organizations shared this tendency, now heightened by the attempts to exclude them from the national scene.

Hans Joachim Schoeps was right when he wrote, in 1934, that the Reichsbund had established itself as the organization of German-conscious Jews. The front-line experience of the First World War which that organization sought to reflect in its attitudes had a definite affinity to the events that were taking place in contemporary Germany.⁵³ Indeed, the Nazis exploited the "spirit of the front lines" which supposedly had existed during the war. Perhaps therein lay the hope for a better understanding? At any rate, the veterans' organization served to provide a mass audience for German-Jewish symbiosis, which was based on Volkish ideology.

In this connection, Hans Joachim Schoeps's *Vortrupp* is of special interest. This small Jewish *Bund* regarded itself as a continuation of the German Youth Movement, which the Nazis were by that time destroying. Like the Youth Movement in general, these people saw themselves as a "third force" opposed to both Bolshevism and Western democracy. We are back with the theme that reappears so many times in this book. Moreover, though the *Vortrupp* disapproved of Nazi racial ideas, it approved of movements fighting against both Bolshevism and the corrupting influences of modern liberalism. Within the Jewish scene it sought to provide a "third alternative" to the Zionist movement and to the liberal-

ism of sections of the official Jewish establishment such as the C.V.⁵⁴ Jews were considered to be one of the German tribes ("Stamm") who, like the Saxons or the Bavarians, had lived for centuries on German soil. There was nothing unusual about this specific view of the place of the Jew in the nation. Most of those dedicated to assimilation, including the Reichsbund, shared it. Schoeps, a conservative, felt that the Jewish claim to Germanism was based on history, order, and law. His definition of Germanism was colored by his own profound experience of the Youth Movement, and he predictably opposed liberalism, materialism, and the Enlightenment. Further, he was dedicated to the maintenance of a *bündisch* aristocracy of youth on the same idealistic basis that the Youth Movement had proclaimed.

Schoeps is a Jewish theologian, however, and a religious historian of great power and importance, and it was to be expected that he would introduce a specifically Jewish element into this ideology. Unlike Martin Buber (whom he accused of having more in common with Meister Eckhart than with Abraham, Moses, or Job),⁵⁵ Schoeps's conception of Judaism was not necessarily linked to the emergence of a Jewish Volk. Indeed, Schoeps's religious ideal was removed from this world and its politics. Being a Jew meant participating in a historical relationship to God, who stood in the very center of his faith. This was an individual relationship and, unlike Buber's, did not express itself through any collectivity. Schoeps was greatly influenced by Kierkegaard and Martin Luther. The essence of his faith was "comforted despair," and in 1934 he wrote that Luther's cry "I believe, God help my unbelief" was the only true testimony a Jew could give.⁵⁶

This Judaism did not conflict with the specifically Germanic posture of the *Bund*; young Jews could be dedicated

to a Volkish Germany and still hold to this existential Judaism. Schoeps was the antipode of Buber's Zionism, though both shared an emphasis on the inwardness of faith. They differed sharply on how this faith expressed itself in history: Schoeps, in rejecting the idea of the Jewish Volk, believing as he did in a fusion of German and Jew, accused Buber of standing outside history and its necessity.⁵⁷ However, neither was able to solve the problem of how to relate the Jewish faith to the German environment, how to accomplish the transfer from Volkish-oriented Germanism to Judaism. Schoeps of course did not want such a transfer. He wanted Judaism to be an essential element of the Germanic ideals of his group. He called the Zionists the true assimilationists because they accepted a foreign nationalism as their own,⁵⁸ yet it is hard to see how his Judaism offered much on earth beyond an essentially Germanic world view.

For all these groups, and others like them, the form life took was all-important, and this vital question was invariably linked to the Volkish ideology. They, like the Zionists earlier, were battling against the Jewish stereotype, and when this image was elevated to an article of national faith, the battle took on added impetus. Their image of the ideal Jew was not significantly different from the ideal of the earlier Zionist generation. Here we can see clearly the common Volkish base which the assimilationist groups shared with the young Zionists, if to a different purpose. The ideal Jew was aristocratic, rooted in the genuineness of the landscape, anti-urban, soldierly, and bound to his fellows by the *Bund* of a shared spiritual experience. Moreover, he was tough, sinewy, and well formed in body. This emphasis on physical form was a further feature of the German movement.

Form was defined as the forming of life (*Lebensgestaltung*) and as such had been a basic ingredient not only of the Youth Movement but of the whole *fin de siècle* revolt against bourgeois society. It is no coincidence that long before the emergence of the German-Jewish *Bünde*, the organization of Jewish "Turners" (gymnasts) was founded, advocating the "bodily renaissance of the Jews" and linking this with the beginning of a Jewish consciousness of peoplehood.⁵⁹ In time, the belief in the regenerating effects of nature was combined with the concept of nature as strengthening the body through struggle. Once again the ideal was similar to that of the Volkish movement. "The German must learn to have form, to want to be beautiful," and Jewish youth—Zionist or assimilationist—echoed this sentiment. This meant pleasure in strength of body and in sport.⁶⁰ Sport itself was never endowed with a purpose of its own, such as sheer enjoyment, but was always integrated with ideological concerns. It had been so for the Jewish Turners and it remained so for the Jewish *Bünde* and the Reichsbund, which emphasized sport as vital for the moral and physical health of Jewish youth. Moreover, it is no coincidence that from the Zionist side Robert Weltsch wrote some of his early articles on the nature of Jewish nationalism for the *Jewish Monthly of Sports and Gymnastics*, a publication specifically linked to a German tradition that, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, had held that gymnastics and sport had a definite, overriding national purpose.

What, then, was the uniquely Jewish component of this thought? This question was a constant preoccupation of both the Zionists and the advocates of German-Jewish symbiosis. Siegfried Bernfeld summed it up concisely in 1915: Jewish youth as a *Bund* differed from German youth

because its members were consciously Jews and their cultural drives were for the most part taken from the past and present of the Jewish Volk. Being a Zionist, he added that the orientation of these Jews was toward an autonomous Jewish culture in Palestine. Otherwise, he contended, the young Jewish community was much the same as the German. Like the Germans, they strove toward higher things, rejecting school and parents. Bernfeld wrote with great sincerity, but he too illustrates a dilemma that existed before and after him. For he not only denied a concern with Hebrew and Yiddish and a specifically Jewish culture; he also dismissed the question of religious affiliation.⁶¹ The vagueness of the Jewish past and present, the lack of specific ways in which it differed from German history, suggested a romanticism difficult to distinguish from that of the host country.

Nothing has been said here about the concept of race. It was never predominant in the Youth Movement or in the Volkish tradition to which young Jews tried to relate. Moreover, for Jewish youth the acceptance of this ideology never quite obliterated that belief in humanity which their liberal parents held so ardently. Those who played an important role in the Zionist aspect of this ideology, like Buber and Weltsch, became the principal spokesmen for a binational, Jewish-Arab state of Israel. Fichte and Volk were part of a specifically German culture which was assimilated, but mankind as a whole was never lost from sight. Racial ideas had no place here.

It is significant that even those Jews who seemed to accept racism changed the concept so as to deprive it of that exclusiveness essential to racist thought. Max Naumann, the leader of the *Deutschnationale Juden*—an extreme assimilationist group which was politically conservative—provides

a good example of this ambivalence toward a racism which, at first glance, he seemed to accept. Writing in 1920, he asserted that Jews belonged to a race characterized by a distinctive body build, idiosyncratic facial expression, and peculiarities of language and physical movement. This stigmatization could surely have come straight from any major racist, Hans F. K. Günther, for example; it was a bald reaffirmation of the stereotype, justified on supposedly racial grounds.

Naumann, the assimilationist, would not admit, however, that such considerations would call for Jews to turn away from Germany and seek separate identity. He suggested that a solution to the problem lay in the fact that Jews "feel" German and that "our German feeling overcomes the blood"⁶²; this was the inward orientation of the Volkish ideology. The German racists felt that there was an inherent difference between their own soul and the Jewish soul, and this disparity determined the differences in physical appearance. Naumann denied the validity of this hypothesis: though the rest of his bodily make-up might give a different impression, the soul of the Jew is German, he said. In this context Naumann qualified his racism still further by dissociating the Eastern Jew from it. In his view, Eastern Jews were physically different from and spiritually foreign to German Jews.⁶³ Thus the Jewish race becomes a German-Jewish race. Later (in 1933) he maintained that racism was the product of a justified German anger against Jewish abuses of Germanism, especially as practiced by the liberals of the C.V. Once the anger passed, he contended, the Deutschnationale Jews would be ready to join the German Volk, for they loved Germany with a passion that was self-justifying.⁶⁴

Naumann's ideas are worth mentioning, for they show how difficult it was for any Jew to accept racism, even when he could come to grips with that school of thought which built a racist structure on Volkish foundations.

Naumann perished at the hands of the Nazis. Nothing that has been written here is meant to apportion praise or blame before the gates of history. It is far more important to understand the historical context out of which the ideological correspondence sprang; those who were involved could not see into the future. Moreover, the very absence of racism from that part of the Volkish ideology which these Jews accepted, and from their own ideology, should put this discussion into its proper light. None of the men and women we are here considering lived in enforced or even self-enforced isolation. Rejecting the Jewish past as it had evolved during the centuries, Jews partook in a culture which in a very real sense was theirs as much as it was the Germans'. Why it was the Volkish culture which attracted some Jews so strongly is easily understood. Jewish youth was a youth in revolt, and that meant revolt against the bourgeois society of their parents, a society imbued with liberal and rational ideals. To be sure, the revolt of many young Jews and Germans became leftist and took a Marxist direction, but for the majority of bourgeois youth this step seemed merely a substitution of one materialism with another. They saw conventions enforced in their own homes and in their schools in the name of what seemed to be a shallow, materialistic society, and they became passionately concerned with creativity, with the inward man, with a spiritual dynamic which could reach far beyond the dreariness of industrial civilization. German youth could build on a German romantic tradition, and the Youth

Movement in fact revived the spirit of the Wartburg. Young Jews had no such traditions, and consequently they adopted those of the culture into which they were born.

For these Jews this meant in addition an escape from the atrophy of their own past. They saw their religion as shallow and empirical; they saw it in association with urbanism and the ghetto. The Volkish ideology offered a path toward the achievement of a Jewish consciousness which they thought could be transferred from German to Jewish concerns. This transference never quite succeeded, for it tended to cloud the uniquely Jewish component of their national awakening. Later, others saw in this transference a chance for an even closer German-Jewish symbiosis. But that failed also, for the very awakening of the new German Volkish self-consciousness called for a "clean separation" and not for unity. The failure of German-Jewish unity on this level has its tragic aspect. A common revolt of youth based on the same ideological grounds could not overcome the inherent problems faced by the Jew who wanted to revitalize his Volk or by the Jew who wanted to become one with Germanism.

From a wider historical perspective, this analysis throws some light on the depth and penetration of Volkish ideology. Even some of those against whom it was potentially directed came to share many of its presuppositions. For even where Volkish thought was not overtly racial, it tended to separate Germans and Jews and thus worked for the exclusion of Jews from German life. Volkish thought was one response to a world which Robert Musil has well described: "A world has come into being in which the realm of objects [*Eigenschaften*] exists apart from man."⁶⁵ Jews and Germans wanted to blot out this alienation. Since it was the youth who desired this, the revolt was directed against their el-

ders, who were pictured as prisoners of a liberal, rationalist age.

The men and women we have been discussing were a minority in Jewish life, but they constituted a significant minority. They tried to cast off the political attitudes which had dominated German Jewry since its emancipation.⁶⁶ They felt at one with the change in public opinion that was taking place all round them: the new Volkish nationalism and the inner-directedness of all human experience. The problems which their experience raises are much more important than the mere numbers involved. The end was tragic, but the questions they tried to solve still haunt our own times. For who among us has yet found a way to end alienation? Who has bridged the gap between materialism and human creativity? Who has succeeded in infusing modern nationalism with the belief that genuine culture is more important than outward, aggressive power?