



Dan Diner, Moshe Zimmermann. *Disseminating German Traditions: The Thyssen Lectures.* Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009. 187 S. ISBN 978-3-86583-362-4.



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D. Diner u.a. (Hrsg.): Disseminating German Traditions

This volume consists of eight lectures, four of which were held at Tel Aviv University, three at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and one at the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig, supported by the German Thyssen Foundation. The most valuable of the essays, not one of the eight lectures, is the Introduction, "Israel's German Academic Legacy", by the two editors, Dan Diner and Moshe Zimmermann, which sets out the purpose of the lecture series. Their thesis is that the Israeli academic heritage has been deeply influenced by the nineteenth-century German tradition of research and learning. This is particularly the case for the three institutions which were founded in the pre-state period, the Technion in Haifa, founded in 1912, the Hebrew University founded in Jerusalem in 1925, and the research institute in Rehovot, later known as the Weizmann Institute, in 1934. These three institutions set the pattern for later academic and research centers. Although the language was modern Hebrew, all three, the editors point out, "reflected continental (i.e. German) preferences of knowledge and research" (p.7). This legacy was shattered by World War II, the Holocaust, and a new generation of Israeli born scholars. The German tradition was neglected, not only

German history but the history of German Jewry was not taught. English replaced German as the language of scholarly and scientific communication and the analytical orientation of the Anglo-American social sciences replaced the hermeneutics of the German legacy. The German tradition, the editors observe, became "invisible" (p. 10), but did not disappear, particularly in the humanities. By the 1970s a revival of German studies took place with a post-war academic generation of German scholars. In 1971 the Institute of German History was founded at Tel Aviv University and in 1980 a chair for German history was established at the Hebrew University. "The aim of the lecture series," the editors write, "was to present an academic audience and wider public a kaleidoscopic view on the meaning and impact of the German tradition of historical thinking" (p.13). The German tradition in the humanities, they stressed, was at the core of that undertaking. It is significant that both editors belong to a second generation of Israelis with roots in German Jewry.

The lectures do indeed present a kaleidoscope of Central European Jewish outlooks but most of the lectures have little to do with the theme which the editors have

formulated. However, the first lecture in the volume, George Mosse's "The Meaning of Bildung: A Concept of Universality," does fit in well with the theme proposed in the Introduction. The concept of *Bildung*, Mosse argues, has its roots in a specific German idealistic philosophy which forms the core of the German intellectual outlook, fundamentally different from Western outlooks, specifically British aims of education with which Mosse contrasts it. The German idea of *Bildung* as reflected in the German classical writers, e.g. Goethe, did not prescribe how the individual should be educated but saw him (as yet him rather than her) develop his capacities freely. Wilhelm von Humboldt reformed the German system of secondary and higher education along these lines. *Bildung* was closely associated with the German middle classes. The German Jews, as they ascended to the middle class, identified themselves in terms of *Bildung* which later formed the core of the philosophic outlook of the Central European German speaking academic intellectuals including Zionists such as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Robert Weltsch, and Hugo Bergmann, who in the 1920s laid the foundations of the academic institutions, specifically the Hebrew University, and helped keep the original ideals of *Bildung* alive. Mosse shows how *Bildung* in the course of the nineteenth century as the state took control of the educational system and adapted it to the occupational functions of a modern society lost much of its humanistic core.

The other lectures go in different directions which only marginally relate to the German Jewish intellectual legacy as set forth in the Introduction and in George Mosse's essay. We shall summarize them briefly. Reinhart Koselleck presents his concept of *Begriffsgeschichte*, which assumes that history, particularly in the modern period, can best be understood through an analysis of changing concepts. He occupies a middle position between the postmodern linguistic turn which holds that factual reality is a creation of language and an outlook for which reality predates language. Charles Maier follows the transition of German social history since the nineteenth century through three conceptual stages, the em-

phasis on the *Volk* which ultimately led to the racism of the Nazis, to the conception of history in terms of class, the source of Marxists' interpretation of social conflict, and more recently to history in terms of civil society. Peter Pulzer reflects on cultural migration from Central Europe to England and America and to Palestine particularly in the fields of music and art. He examines factors which contributed to the intellectual and cultural preeminence of Jews in Germany. Andrei S. Markovitz follows Karl Deutsch from Prague to America. After several introductory pages on his gratitude to Dan Diner and his friendship with Deutsch, little space is left for Deutsch's intellectual contribution. We learn about his early preoccupation with optics and mathematics, which led to his interest in quantitative history, but little about his important contribution to the study of nationalism. Michael Kater concentrates on the fate of musicians of Jewish origin in Nazi Germany and in emigration, including Palestine. This is an interesting essay, especially the section which deals with the efforts of Jews in the *Jüdische Kulturbund* to keep culture alive in the face of Nazi persecution. Charles McClelland deals with the professionalization among German Jews and examines their overproportionate representation in the private sector in the *Kaiserreich* and the Weimar Republic and the barriers to advancement to top positions in the bureaucracy. A final essay by Sander Gilman deals with aesthetic surgery among Jews in Germany, America, and Israel, particularly of noses, considered a key visual stereotype of the Jew.

All the essays, with the possible exception of the Markovitz essay on Deutsch in its present form, deserved to be published, although the volume lacked the thematic coherence promised in the Introduction. It is regrettable that important areas in the social sciences, in which émigré scholars had a significant impact in America, Britain, and Israel — I am thinking of Medieval and Renaissance studies such as Hans Baron, the Frankfurt School, Karl Popper and the Vienna school, psychologists and psychoanalysts like Erich Fromm, are missing.

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