

## Ambivalent Modernity: the Jewish Population in Vienna

by Albert Lichtblau

### Abstract

*Vienna is regarded as an outstanding city for Jewish protagonists of modernity as the lives of Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl illustrate. Most of these individuals were migrants or had to escape Nazi persecution. Creative Jews were confronted with aggressive anti-Semites, who created the prejudice of Jews as initiators of “unwanted change.”*

*This article reflects that modernity was ambiguous for the Jewish population in Vienna in a socio-historical context such as population growth after 1848, migration and urbanisation, segregation, secularisation.*

Modernity is a term full of ambivalence. It refers to modernisation, which means change. Many change processes leave losers and winners and are therefore accompanied by fears and hopes.

The economy of industrialisation forced European states to change their population policies, which eventually lead to the removal of discriminating mobility restrictions that existed for particular sections of the population. This also concerned the Jewish population. In terms of mobility, Modernity did not begin legally for them in the Habsburg Monarchy until 1848 or 1867, when equal rights were accorded to them. One might contradict this by pointing out that modernity had long before been firmly rooted in the Jewish population.

The Enlightenment had contributed a great variety of impulses that found their socio-political expression during the revolution of 1848.<sup>1</sup> At that time, mainly Jewish students stood up for the revolution. At a joint funeral service for Christian and Jewish followers of the revolution that had been killed, the most eminent preacher of Vienna's Jewish community, the Isaac Noah Mannheimer, appealed for the interdenominational support for equality:

“Allow me another word to my Christian brothers! It was your wish that these dead Jews rest with you in your, in one soil. They fought for you, bled for you! They rest in your soil! Do not begrudge those who have fought the same fight, and the harder fight, namely to live with you on the same earth, free and light-heartedly as yourselves. ... Accept us too as

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Karniel, *Die Toleranzpolitik Kaiser Josephs II.*, (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte Universität Tel-Aviv, 9) Gerlinger: Bleicher Verlag 1985); Wolfgang Häusler, “Demokratie und Emanzipation 1848”, *Studia Judaica Austriaca* 1 (1974): 92-111.

free men, and God may bless you!”<sup>2</sup>

This speech expresses the dilemma of the political modernity, which was announcing itself through democratic participation, from the perspective of a minority: When the majority possesses the power, minorities depend on their goodwill and on them having respect for how minorities express their loyalty and participation.

As the capital of a multinational state, Vienna not only was a city of multiculturalism until 1918, but also the first European metropolis under an anti-Semitic government. Community politics were dominated by the anti-Semitic Christian Social Party from 1895 until the end of World War I. It is no coincidence that Adolf Hitler from the town of Braunau am Inn learned from anti-Semitic politicians of all hues and adapted their propagandistic successes based on demagogic attacks as well as their racist ideology.<sup>3</sup>

### **Nation, politics & exposure**

The tension specific to Vienna was not only characterised by a tradition of distance between the Jewish and non-Jewish population, which was deeply rooted in the Catholic faith, but also by the grave burden caused by a shift of pressure through economic as well as social and political crises. The short phase of relief for the Jewish population, as a result of the emancipation of 1867, was shattered by a massive economic crisis, which was followed by a fundamentally political one. The Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy skidded into a conflict of nationalities that eroded the foundations of the state’s structure. The legal system of the state did not consider the Jewish population a nation, but a religious community.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Jewish population was exploited in the struggle for national rights, on the one hand – for instance in the case of the Polish in Galicia, or the Germans in Bukovina – but not regarded as serious opponents, on the other. In the Czech countries, German and Czech national groups alike declined to cooperate with the Jewish population.

Vienna was a reflection of these conflicts. After decades, the supremacy of the Liberal Party in Vienna was broken by the anti-Semitic Christian Social Party under Karl Lueger in 1895.<sup>5</sup> The Liberals had little to put

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<sup>2</sup> M. Rosenmann, *Isak Noa Mannheimer. Sein Leben und Wirken*, (Wien-Berlin: R. Löwit Verlag, 1922), 138-139.

<sup>3</sup> Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators*, (München: Piper, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Stourzh, “Galten die Juden als Nationalität Altösterreichs?”, *Studia Judaica Austriaca* 10 (1984): 73-117.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Boyer, *Karl Lueger (1844-1910). Christlichsoziale Politik als Beruf*, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2010).

forward against the powerful nationalistic arguments. Owing to the work of Theodor Herzl (1869–1904), Vienna gained lasting significance for Jewish policy. The lawyer, writer and journalist was by all means a typical Jewish intellectual striving for recognition through culture. Because of his own exposure to a new kind of hostility against the Jewish people, which he experienced especially as a correspondent for the daily newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* in Paris when observing the Dreyfuss trial, he understood the crisis of assimilated Jewish identity. Utopia is often dreamed up in a situation of fundamental crisis. This also applies to Theodor Herzl's programmatic Zionist concept as published in his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) in 1896, which he developed intuitively quasi overnight.<sup>6</sup> The clarity of Herzl's utopia was striking: other nations would only respect the Jewish population as equal if it considered itself an independent people and established its own Jewish state. The Zionist movement has Herzl's efforts to thank for a consistent ideological concept. In addition, he managed to establish the discourse on the "Jewish question" at a diplomatic and international level, within the last years of his life. Theodor Herzl and being home to the seat of the world Zionist General Council until 1905 made Vienna the centre of Zionism. However, the majority in Vienna remained reserved towards Zionism at first. Initially, neither the liberal nor the religiously oriented Jewish population of Vienna seemed to think much of this Jewish nationalism.<sup>7</sup> In terms of national self-esteem, the Austrian First Republic, proclaimed in 1918, clearly suffered from inferiority feelings, as the new state represented merely the bankruptcy estate of a centuries-old, dynastic, multinational system. Only few believed in the viability of the First Republic. The majority of its population considered itself German. However, the victorious powers forbade them to unify with their German neighbour country. This was precisely what the Nazis used to their advantage. The German nationalists had lost their former opponents under the Habsburg Monarchy such as the Czechs or Hungarians. Therefore, they focused their aggressive energy all the more on the Jewish population, which represented a familiar "enemy within."<sup>8</sup> The introduction of the universal and equal suffrage for men and women in the First Republic changed the political landscape in Vienna. From that time on, the Social Democratic Party was in power, steering community politics until the party was banned under the Christian Social Party in February 1934 as a result of the civil war and the Austro-fascist

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<sup>6</sup> See Felix Weltsch, "Der Zionismus als Reaktion auf den Antisemitismus", *Jüdischer National-Kalender für die Tschechoslowakei 1923-24* (1923): 32-38.

<sup>7</sup> Adolf Gaisbauer, *Davidstern und Doppeladler. Zionismus und jüdischer Nationalismus in Österreich 1882-1918*, (Wien-Köln-Graz: Böhlau, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution. A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism*, (Chapel Hill-London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

seizure of power. After 1918, Vienna became a proving ground for social democratic reformist politics.

With the Liberals having slumped to a level of insignificance and Zionist parties having failed, the Social Democratic Workers' Party was more or less the only electable option for the Jewish voters, as all other parties tended towards anti-Semitism.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the workers' movement was a stronghold for politicians of Jewish birth who were prepared to assimilate, but were hardly willing to take a stand for the rights of the Jewish population, because the experience of abandoning their Jewish identity was still too new.<sup>10</sup> The most important Austro-Marxist theorist, Otto Bauer, was one of them, but did not go as far as many others as he did not leave the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (Jewish Community).<sup>11</sup> Hugo Breitner, the highly controversial – for levying communal taxes in order to fund council housing – councillor, for example, had already renounced his Jewish faith around the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup> In simpler words, the Social Democrats expected socialism to “solve the Jewish question,” or, as the party's founder Viktor Adler, who had also renounced his Jewish religion, put it: “The socialist society will carry Ahasver, the Wandering Jew, to his final rest!”<sup>13</sup> Shortly before the turn of the century his optimism had changed to resignation. He wrote: “The last anti-Semite will only die with the last Jew.”<sup>14</sup>

With all attempts to conform taking no noticeable effect, it must have been difficult for this minority to try and find its place amongst a majority population that was unsure of its nationality. Considering this situation, the modernisation-oriented ‘Red Vienna’ was the only liveable oasis appealing to Jews in a country otherwise dominated by Christian-conservative, German-national powers. Upon the seizure of power by the Christian Social Party, which was characterised by anti-Semitism, in 1934, Vienna lost this specific quality. The last four years before the seizure of power by the NS were bizarre, as the Jewish population found itself under the protectorate of a regime infiltrated with anti-Semitic ideology.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On Jewish national parties in Austria see *Chilufim. Zeitschrift für Jüdische Kulturgeschichte* 7 (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemma of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Hanisch, *Der große Illusionist Otto Bauer (1881-1938)*, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2011), 40-57.

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Fritz, “Der Kopf des Asiaten Breitner”. *Politik und Ökonomie im Roten Wien. Hugo Breitner – Leben und Werk*, (Wien: Löcker, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Victor Adler, “Über die Judenfrage”, *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 22, 1932.

<sup>14</sup> Norbert Leser, “Jüdische Persönlichkeiten in der österreichischen Politik”, *Österreichisch-jüdisches Geistes- und Kulturleben* 1 (1988): 25.

<sup>15</sup> Sylvia Maderegger, *Die Juden im österreichischen Ständestaat 1934 – 1938*, (Wien-Salzburg: Geyer-Edition, 1973).

## Metropolisation

In the following chapters various aspects including urbanisation, culture and the answers to modernity provided by religion will be dealt with. The fact that the Jewish population played an important role in the period between 1848 and 1938 was based on the influx of Jews that continued until 1918. Vienna benefitted from the sheer size of the Habsburg Monarchy and the largely unrestricted mobility across its regions covering the territories of today's Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and many others until 1918. The year of the revolution, 1848, could in fact be marked as the actual beginning of modernity, as only from then onwards, were Jews – other than a small privileged class of so-called Court Jews and their employees – permitted to settle permanently in Vienna.<sup>16</sup>

The influx of migrants to the cities, which can generally be described as a 'go west' movement, brought about a considerable increase in the size of the Jewish population in the cities of the Habsburg Monarchy; above all, its capitals Vienna and Budapest. Following the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Jewish population of the now diminished Austrian state was concentrated in Vienna, where 92 percent of the country's Jews lived.<sup>17</sup>

In the course of time the native countries of Jewish immigrants were changing. Whereas immigrants from Hungary, which included the neighbouring country of Slovakia, dominated up to 1880, more and more people later arrived from Bohemia and Moravia, and eventually from Galicia and Bukovina. Apart from religious diversity, the different cultures of their native regions were responsible for the heterogeneity of Vienna's Jewish population. The dissociation from people from the 'East', who were considered inferior, was the most obvious intra-Jewish conflict. It was directed against their language, Yiddish, as well as their habitual manners in everyday life.

To measure integration within the Jewish community of a city, one can, for example, analyse marriage patterns. Marsha L. Rozenblit's study indicates that Galicians preferred to marry partners from the same area. One may turn this argument around; for instance, consider the fact that 72.1 percent of Galician-born brides who married between 1870 and 1910 wed men from the same crown land. This also could mean that they had little choice in the matter. Gender had a very strong impact on partner decisions, since the endogamy-marriage pattern of Galician bridegrooms was lower: 49.7 percent. There was only one other group

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<sup>16</sup> Löw Akos, *Die soziale Zusammensetzung der Wiener Juden nach den Trauungs- und Geburtsmatrikeln 1784 - 1848*, unpublished dissertation, (Wien: 1952).

<sup>17</sup> "Die Ergebnisse der österreichischen Volkszählung vom 22. März 1934", *Statistik des Bundesstaates Österreich* 1 (1935): 45.

that stands out: The majority of Viennese-born men refused partnerships with women born somewhere else; they preferred to marry Viennese-born women. Because many ‘Western’ Jews looked down on the *Ostjuden*, why would they marry one of them?

Table: Percentage of bridegrooms and brides who married partners who were born in the same crown land (1870–1910)

	Bridegrooms	Brides	Bridegrooms	Brides
	1870–1910		1918–1938	
Vienna	62.4%	33.6%	59.5%	42.6%
Bohemia	15.4%	25.8%	15.8%	18.2%
Moravia, Silesia	27.7%	34.2%	23.4%	25.5%
Galicia & Bukovina	49.7%	72.1%	55.7%	70.7%
Hungary	34.2%	47.9%	23.4%	34.9%

Source: Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914. Assimilation and Identity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 44; records Jewish Community Vienna, data bank Lichtblau.

Mobility is considered an indicator of a modern way of life. Looking at population census results linking religious affiliation and birthplace data, it is evident that the ancestral structure of Vienna’s Jewish population differed greatly from that of its non-Jewish inhabitants. In 1923, Vienna’s Jewish population reached its peak, amounting to 200,000 members of the Jewish faith and approximately 11 percent of the city’s total population. Scarcely more than one third was born in Vienna, which meant that the vast majority was marked by the experience of immigration. Many illustrious citizens such as Gustav Mahler, Sigmund Freud or Karl Kraus were not born in Vienna. Many famous creative artists native to Vienna, such as Stefan Zweig and Arnold Schoenberg, had parents whose biographies indicate diverse places of origin. Their biographies illustrate the brevity of the period of cultural blossoming abruptly cut short by National Socialism. It is no coincidence that, with the exception of writer Arthur Schnitzler, next to none of these celebrities were both born and died in this city.

Table: Birthplace of Viennese population 1923

Region	Jewish population		Non-Jewish population	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
Vienna	77,260	38.3	927,041	55.7
Austria	7,967	4	296,770	17.8
Abroad	116,286	57.7	440,456	26.5
Total	201,513	100	1,664,267	100

Source: Leo Goldhammer, *Die Juden Wiens. Eine statistische Studie*, (Wien-Leipzig: R. Löwit Verlag, 1927).

Vienna also harboured a second minority group of considerable size, which had likewise drawn the displeasure of nationalist groups: the Czech-speaking population. Due to the sovereignty of the Czech Republic, however, its status changed considerably in the First Republic. A bilateral agreement safeguarded the minority rights of this demographic group. It dropped out of the nationalists' primary line of fire, after greatly decreasing in size due to emigration to the Czechoslovak Republic following its foundation in 1918.<sup>18</sup>

During the First World War, Vienna's Jewish population once again experienced a large influx of Jews from the East of the Habsburg Empire, particularly from Galicia and Bukovina, fleeing Russian troops into the heart of the country. The refugees were targets of anti-Semitic agitation that played upon the image of the foreign-looking, orthodox and impoverished Jew and regularly called for the expulsion of these former asylum seekers. When the members of the former Habsburg monarchy in Austria were obliged to choose a nationality, an Interior Minister of the German National faction succeeded in interpreting the law in such a manner that the Eastern-Jewish immigrants scarcely had a chance of obtaining Austrian nationality.<sup>19</sup>

In comparison to the second large minority group in Vienna, the Czechs, the Jewish population was much more compact and concentrated. It is easiest to measure the differing concentration of ethnic groups in urban environments using the segregation index, which can have a value between 0 and 100. Zero signifies that two groups are evenly distributed

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Lichtblau, "Zwischen den Mühlsteinen. Der Einfluß der Politik auf die Dimension von Minderheiten am Beispiel der Tschechen und Juden im Wien des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts", in *Un-Verständnis der Kulturen. Multikulturalismus in Mitteleuropa in historischer Perspektive*, eds. Michael John, Oto Luthar, (Klagenfurt/Celovec-Ljubljana/Laibach-Wien/Dunaj; Hermagoras, 1997) 87-113.

<sup>19</sup> Beatrix Hoffmann-Holter, "Abreisendmachung". *Jüdische Kriegsflüchtlinge in Wien 1914 bis 1923*, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 1995) 248-257.

in terms of housing. A value of 100 signifies that both groups have entirely separate residencies. The segregation index for Jews and non-Jews, respectively amounting to more than 42 percent across the districts of Vienna, indicates that both groups had distinct preferences regarding the selection of residential districts. It appears that both male and female Jews preferred to live near other Jews. What can be interpreted as advantageous to the minority group – providing cohesion due to tight networks such as associations, self-regulation, protection, supply etc. – can also lead to a segregation of social contacts.

*Table: The spatial distribution of Vienna's Jewish and non-Jewish population, as measured by the segregation indexes, 1880–1934*

Census	Segregation index Jewish – non-Jewish population
1880	43.1
1890	43.7
1900	45.0
1910	44.2
1923	42.3
1934	42.6

Source: Albert Lichtblau, *Antisemitismus und soziale Spannung in Berlin und Wien 1867 - 1914*, (Berlin: Metropol, 1994), 26-30.

### **Outstanding cultural achievements?**

Immigration, diversity and segregation created a structural foundation for the way in which the Jewish population, marked by growth, participated in society. When studying the history of the Jewish population prior to the National Socialist era, the fascination with outstanding achievements by individuals such as Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg or Stefan Zweig is grating. Minority policy harbours the pitfall of lauding minorities to such an extent that they pass into an exotic otherworld that is met with bipolar idealisation or rejection. Such a perspective ignores people who led average lives or even failed. For xenophobes and anti-Semites, outstanding achievements and reality, respectively, are irrelevant anyhow; they stand by their opinion that people they define as “others” are inappropriate, foreign and, consequently, dangerous. They feared successful people in particular.

One of the main problems facing modernity was the inability to determine otherness. The reduction of differences specified by law no



longer permitted a differentiation between population groups, making affiliation seemingly fluid instead.<sup>20</sup> Xenophobes reacted with a wide range of fantasies pertaining to appearance or character shaped by one's ethnic, national or even "racial" affiliation. This was clearly irrational and ludicrous, but anti-Semitic speeches possessed political entertainment value. It is no coincidence that Vienna played an important role in the emergence of so-called "self-loathing." Otto Weininger's book *Sex and Character*, published in 1903, is a much-discussed attempt at breaking out of the dead-end of assimilation and animosity.<sup>21</sup> After 1918, anti-Semitism celebrated greater and greater success on the political stage in terms of the discourse of exclusion, as numerous associations barred Jewish members; the campaigns now also became violent and criminal.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, how is one to explain the outstanding cultural achievements of individual Jewish creative artists? It is helpful to picture the history of the Jewish population as a sequence of generations. People who experienced the revolution of 1848, the initial euphoria about common interests and the disillusionment about the mobilisation of reactionary anti-Jewish lines of thought were shaped by the ambivalence of their experience. Due to the suppression of democratic activities, this period was followed by a calm interval, which raised hope for the assimilatory way of life. People socialised during this period had to believe integration was possible via inconspicuousness. It was not until everyday speech was imbued with nationalist and racist language as a result of anti-Semitic propaganda from 1880 onwards that it was made plain to the generation raised during this period that the assimilatory model had failed. This period saw the beginning of escape from religion by means of secession. Leon Botstein viewed the secessions as one of the possible reactions to emancipation, but as always, an interplay of various factors was at work.<sup>23</sup> Many famous creative artists such as Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg – who would later return – or Karl Kraus took this path. Religious secession was an expression of the fact that the binding force of religion was vanishing, on one hand, and that secession continued to be seen as an entry card into non-Jewish society, on the other.

In his autobiography titled *The World of Yesterday*, writer Stefan Zweig, born in Vienna in 1881, created a three-generation model that is undeniably plausible for people who turned to culture. He wrote,

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<sup>20</sup> Laws attempted to group people into clearly defined national categories.

<sup>21</sup> Jaques Le Rider, *Das Ende der Illusion. Die Wiener Moderne und die Krisen der Identität*, (Wien: ÖBV, 1990), 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding anti-Semitism in Alpine associations, see Rainer Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus. Kultur, Organisation, Politik*, (Wien: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Leon Botstein, *Judentum und Modernität. Essays zur Rolle der Juden in der deutschen und österreichischen Kultur 1848 bis 1938*, (Wien-Köln: Böhlau, 1991), 44.

“It is generally accepted that getting rich is the only and typical goal of the Jew. Nothing could be further from the truth. Riches are to him merely a stepping stone, a means to the true end, and in no sense the real goal. The real determination of the Jew is to rise to a higher cultural plane in the intellectual world. [...] And that is why among Jews the impulse to wealth is exhausted in two, or at most three, generations within one family, and the mightiest dynasties find their sons unwilling to take over the banks, the factories, the established and secure businesses of their fathers.”<sup>24</sup>

Naturally, the rise to a higher intellectual plane was also pursued by important non-Jewish Viennese artists such as Oskar Kokoschka, Gustav Klimt, Adolf Loos or Egon Schiele, to name but a few. It was a period of fluidity, in which old paradigms were questioned, overturned, modernised, adapted. This dissonance was reflected in cultural expression. In his study on fin-de-siècle Vienna, Carl E. Schorschke states that Arnold Schoenberg was laying the powder for the explosion in music.<sup>25</sup> The tension present in society was reflected in culture, foreshadowing what would become the horrific reality of the First World War.

One approach for the description of the unusual situation that enabled a disproportionately high number of Jewish artists to engage in innovative creativity is relatively banal, being socio-historically justified. It involves more favourable preconditions for social mobility. Until the onset of the First World War, Vienna was characterised by expansion as a result of immigration. Rural exodus and urbanisation went hand in hand, as people who were unable to find employment in their region of origin tried their luck in the city. The majority of non-Jewish immigrant groups hailed from rural origins and agricultural professions, and were mostly employed as workers or craftsmen in the city. Innovation and creativity are for the most part linked to education, thus affording the Jewish population a much better starting position due to the traditional dominance of trading professions. To give an example: the census of 1880 reveals that nearly half of the Jewish population in Vienna was employed in a trading profession. Non-Jewish employed persons were predominantly workers, whereas the Jewish share of self-employed persons and salaried employees were significantly higher than that of non-Jews.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1970), 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> Carl E. Schorschke, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 144.

<sup>26</sup> Verifiable by means of the census of 1910. See *Österreichische Statistik* NF 3/2 (1914): 132.

Table: Non-Jewish and Jewish population based on economic class in Vienna 1880

	Non-Jewish population		Jewish population		Share of Jewish population
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%	%
Primary production	2,161	0.6	103	0.3	4.5
Industry, trade	161,561	43.6	7,213	24.9	4.3
Commerce	44,986	12.1	14,430	49.8	24.3
Transportation	17,203	4.6	700	2.4	3.9
Services	145,184	39.1	6,551	22.6	4.3
Total	371,095	100.0	28,997	100.0	7.2

Source: Stephan Sedlaczek, Die k.k. Reichshaupt- und Residenzstadt Wien. *Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 31. December 1880*, 3 (1882), 241.

University statistics illustrate the extent to which Jewish adolescents took advantage of educational opportunities. In the academic year of 1912/13, just over one fifth of total students at Austrian universities were Jews. By comparison, their share of the total population amounted to 4.7 percent.<sup>27</sup> The University of Chernivtsi stood out with a share of 44 percent, whereas the percentage of Jewish students at the University of Vienna in the same academic year amounted to 27.9 percent.<sup>28</sup>

As few of them were able to pursue careers as high officials, university graduates sought alternatives in other professions; for example, as physicians, lawyers or journalists. It is no coincidence that several Jewish creative artists exhibited such career patterns. Writer Arthur Schnitzler and the inventor of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, had studied medicine; Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, had studied law. He did not practice the profession, creating literary works and becoming a journalist instead. Herzl serves as a fitting example for intellectual orientation that was not guided by Jewish tradition in the sense of

<sup>27</sup> *Oesterreichische Statistik*, LXIII/1 (1902): 130-131.

<sup>28</sup> *Österreichische Statistik*, NF 14/3 (1917); Jakob Thon, "Anteil der Juden am Hochschulstudium in Oesterreich seit dem Jahre 1851", in *Zeitschrift für Demografie und Statistik der Juden* 3/3 (1907): 33-37.

traditional religious values, but rather by secular “German” mainstream culture. He adapted the nationalism and colonialism of European societies for his vision of a “Jewish state” and viewed mono-national sovereignty as a solution to the “Jewish question.” His thinking was inherently as nationalistic as the anti-Semitic environment that he thought to understand. “There is little doubt that the birth of political Zionism, most certainly in its most consequential, Herzl’s vision was the product of the disintegration of assimilatory efforts, rather than a fruition of the Judaist tradition and the resurrection of the love of Zion.”<sup>29</sup>

One could exaggerate and argue that many achievements of Jewish creative artists were based on the failure of the willingness to assimilate. Conscious of being able to expect little thanks from society at large, they were forced to seek alternative solutions in their respective fields, as illustrated in Sigmund Freud’s biography, running counter to the mainstream. The founder of psychoanalysis is cited time and again as follows, in a letter to his fellow masons of B’nai B’rith: “Because I was a Jew, I found myself free from many prejudices that restricted others in the use of their intellect; as a Jew I was prepared to join the Opposition and do without agreement with the ‘compact majority.’”<sup>30</sup>

In his book *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Zygmunt Bauman speaks of the “dimension of loneliness,” a continued segregation and social isolation which deeply impressed creative minds such as Franz Kafka. The above quote by Sigmund Freud is part of this context, showing that isolation in non-Jewish milieus left its mark. Looking back on his joining of B’nai B’rith in 1897, Freud remarked, “In my loneliness I was seized with a longing to find a circle of select men of high character who would receive me in a friendly spirit in spite of my temerity.”<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, assimilation did prove a success story in the entertainment sector that was modern at the time. It is a remarkable phenomenon of this time period that many Jewish creative artists played a large part in the success of two profoundly Austrian genres of music: the operetta and the *Wienerlied*.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, successful Jewish cabaret artists created a uniquely Austrian form of expression. Was this an expression of utmost assimilation and total absorption into a kind of local Austrian culture?

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<sup>29</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 148.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in: Ernst H. Gombrich, *Jüdische Identität und jüdisches Schicksal. Eine Diskussionsbemerkung*, (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1997), 26 ff. Peter Gay, *Freud. Eine Biographie für unsere Zeit*, (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1989), 676.

<sup>31</sup> Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener. Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert*, (Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen: Studienverlag, 2006), 16.

<sup>32</sup> Sara Trampuz u. Wolfgang Dosch, “Ein singendes, klingendes Märchen”. Die Verherrlichung Wiens in der Werken jüdischer Operettenkomponisten und – librettisten”, in *Quasi una fantasia. Juden und die Musikstadt Wien*, ed. Leon Botstein, Werner Hanak, (Wien: Wolke Verlag, 2003), 115-121.

Stefan Zweig suggests as much, writing in his autobiography, “Adapting themselves to the milieu of the people or country where they live is not only an external protective measure for Jews, but a deep internal desire. Their longing for a homeland, for rest, for security, for friendliness, urges them to attach themselves passionately to the culture of the world around them.”

Almost nowhere else had it been “happier and more fruitful than in Austria.”<sup>33</sup> Several Jewish creative artists evidently developed a particular sensibility for the emotional preoccupations of the people of their time. This may stem from their experience of being a minority and outsiders, as well as their striving for recognition.<sup>34</sup> The most popular cabaret artist of the interwar period, Fritz Grünbaum, was murdered by the Nazis.<sup>35</sup> For him and others, success spelled doom.

### Religious life

Looking at religious life leads us back to taking a look at everyday life. In Austria, laws divided the Jewish religious community by regions, not by the various religious groups. Members of the Jewish religion who were eligible to vote elected their own representation, which formed the organisation of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde. The results of the Kultusgemeinde elections show the weakness of orthodox groups in Vienna. After 1918, they received as little as eight to ten percent of the votes at elections. It is no wonder they felt cheated and wanted to break free from this compulsory organisation, which they failed to achieve. The dignitaries initially steering the Kultusgemeinde were gradually replaced by political groups. Until 1933 a liberal, anti-Zionist group dominated Vienna’s Kultusgemeinde. This became a paradox after 1918, as the Liberals had become completely insignificant in Austria’s politics by that time. Only the polarisation in Europe enabled Zionist groups to reach a slight majority within the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde for the first time in 1933.<sup>36</sup>

The spiritual crisis concerned the Jewish religion too. As a result of the secularisation after 1848, it lost much of its function as a connecting link in Vienna. The attempt of the modernisers to adapt to the changes was undermined by the traditionalists, which led to compromises such as the ‘Wiener Ritus’. Apart from that, diverse religious forms were practiced

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<sup>33</sup> Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> On operetta and the *Wienerlied*, see Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens. Geschichte - Wirtschaft - Kultur*, (Wien: Edition Atelier, 1987), 234-235.

<sup>35</sup> Marie-Theres Arnbom and Christoph Wagner-Trenkowitz, *Grüß mich Gott! Fritz Grünbaum. Eine Biographie 1880-1941*, (Wien: Christoph Brandstätter Verlag, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918 - 1938*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).

in many smaller houses of prayer. After the preacher Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793–1865), the Jewish community had no visionary spiritual leaders for a long time. It was not until 1918 that Rabbi Zwi Perez Chajes (1876–1927) with his Zionist-friendly attitude and many activities brought a breath of fresh air to Vienna's Jewish community.<sup>37</sup> Reports of survivors of the Nazi regime showed, however, what little effect religious life had on most Jews and how little religious tradition could be passed on for everyday life, which is why the group of practising Jews remained a minority. This drain caused by people leaving the Jewish religion posed a threat to its continuation after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. Even during the monarchy, Vienna was renowned for its high number of baptisms. The restrictive matrimonial laws concerning marriages between Jews and Catholics added to the number of secessions.<sup>38</sup> While in the decade between 1890 and 1900 just under 400 people left the Jewish religion per year, the number had gone up to over 1,000 per year 30 years later. These figures show how rapidly the change of identity was spreading. Then, no one would have imagined that National Socialism would take this form of identity change to absurd lengths by using genealogy tables going back many generations to make decisions over life and death.

In religious life, the integration efforts took place at various different levels; for example, in architecture. In the face of a growing Jewish community, new synagogues were built according to the architectural trends of the time – Classicism, neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque style, Historicism, Art Nouveau, Eclecticism – on the one hand, and the tradition of synagogue architecture on the other. The adjustment to the surroundings sometimes even went so far as to make synagogues virtually indistinguishable from other buildings; for example, the synagogue erected in Hubergasse in Vienna's Ottakring district in 1885/86. Only the two tablets of the Ten Commandments and two Stars of David on its roof revealed the fact that it was a Jewish house of worship.<sup>39</sup>

At large, the attempts of religious Jews to adapt to contemporary trends failed, or only worked for members of particular social environments that cut themselves off any secular ways of life. However, as an alternative, a remarkable 'scene of associations' developed within Vienna's Jewish community. The all-round athletic club Hakoah, founded in 1909, became the most famous example of the endeavour to live a positive, *du jour* Jewish identity. The successes of its athletes, both male and female, whose strips featured the Star of David, thus openly

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<sup>37</sup> Moritz Rosenfeld, *H.P. Chajes. Reden und Vorträge*, (Wien: Selbstverlag, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage in Nazi Austria*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Pierre Genée, *Wiener Synagogen 1825-1938*, (Wien: Löcker, 1987).

showing their Jewish affiliation, gave Jewish fans something positive to identify with. That way, Hakoah offered an alternative to a lifestyle characterised by segregation and privacy, chosen in response to the anti-Jewish atmosphere in the country and in an attempt not to attract any attention. It was a sensation that Hakoah's Jewish football club managed to become Austrian champions in the season of 1924/25 and strengthened the reputation of the Viennese club in the world of Jewish sports.<sup>40</sup>

### Summary

Modernity was ambiguous for the Jewish population in Vienna. It enabled them to advance into various segments of economy as well as into the educational and cultural elite. Individual representatives of this class wrote themselves into Austrian history in such manner that they cannot be ignored. They are therefore considered eminent representatives of a cultural modernity beyond Austrian borders. The other side of the coin was that political reactionaries sought to fight modernity by using its methods – including democracy, agitation and propaganda in assemblies and through the media – which exposed the Jewish population as a threatening factor. The end result of the history is clear: displacement and destruction. Modernity eventually turned into a trap for those who were repeatedly named for their outstanding achievements. The practice of fluid identities or hybrid affiliation provoked those who believed in the clearly identifiable identity in order to identify individuals. Racists did not care about the usual overlapping and multiple identities.

Although the Jewish population first appeared to emerge as winners, it became their undoing, because they were accused of acting as the representatives of modernity, which was perceived as a threatening change. In fact, it was irrelevant whether these reproaches did correspond with any social reality; this made no difference to anti-Semites, in whose scenarios of fear the Jewish population always had to serve as exponents of the threatening modernisation. Vienna was no exception to this. The historian Klaus Hödl wrote that the term 'Jew' was regarded as a "metaphor for unwanted change."<sup>41</sup> Anti-Semites claimed that Jews were shaking old values with no regard to traditions, and that they had 'lodged' themselves in the centres of power in politics and the media like parasites. In speeches on the Jewish population, anti-Semitic racists talked about themselves, because, in fact, it was they who wanted

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<sup>40</sup> Arthur Baar, *50 Jahre Hakoah 1909 – 1959*, (Tel-Aviv: Verlagskomitee Hakoah, 1959); *Hoppauf Hakoah. Jüdischer Sport in Österreich. Von den Anfängen bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. John Bunzl, (Wien: Junius, 1987).

<sup>41</sup> Hödl, *Wiener Juden*, 22.

many of the things that they accused the Jewish population of: power, wealth, pure national identities, solidarity. The fact that many Jews tried to avoid this can be interpreted as an attempt to handle the latent threat. Gaining recognition through exceptional achievement, through adaptation and/or contradiction was one of the many ways of trying to cope with the situation.

In the face of an easily identifiable beginning of the experiment, the year 1848, and its end, the year 1938, Vienna is in some way a historical laboratory, in which the influence of the various forces can be analysed over and over again.<sup>42</sup> This story will remain full of mysteries, as it can be turned around and regarded from many angles. Creative people are very deft in concealing the roots of their creativity, and rightly so. This also applied to Jewish cultural professionals, who were formative for cultural life in Vienna until 1938. This article mainly deals with local issues, but creative people are also always concerned with the global views and creation from a deep historic dimension.

History could also be written differently. For instance, if the question were: How anti-modernist was modernity in fact?

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**Albert Lichtbau** is a professor in the Department of History and chair of the Centre for Jewish Cultural History at the University of Salzburg (Austria), where he teaches contemporary history. His fields of scholarly expertise are Jewish studies, genocide and migration studies, as well as oral and audiovisual history.

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<sup>42</sup> Steven Beller has repeatedly questioned prevalent ways of thinking. *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Steven Beller (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001); Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938. A Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).