

**German Jews and the Great War: Gustav Landauer's and Fritz Mauthner's
Friendship In Times of War***

by *Carsten Schapkow*

Abstract

The present paper examines the friendship of Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923) and Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) at the time of World War I. Mauthner's and Landauer's correspondence in wartime stimulated debate about the war, on the one hand, and German and Jewish identity, on the other. Most significantly, both intellectuals perceived in Germany, as a place of culture, a profound transformation. This was particularly the case when they found themselves compelled to consider what Germany should look like after the defeat in 1918. The debate between Landauer and Mauthner had a deep impact on their sense of general Jewish questions and their approach to the fate of Eastern European Jewry during the war.

World War I brought not only destruction and death to Europe; it also transformed the map of Europe. On a more intimate level it also challenged personal relationships. This can be studied in the case of the friendship between the anarchist Gustav Landauer and the critic of language Fritz Mauthner. Their friendship changed during the war because both men developed different interpretations of the war and its immediate aftermath. This change serves as an example of how the correspondence between friends in wartime prompted debate about the war, on the one hand, and German and Jewish identity, on the other. Most significantly, Germany, in the perception of these two intellectuals as a place of culture and as native country, was transformed. This process had a profound impact on both Landauer's and Mauthner's approach to the fate of Eastern European Jewry during the War period, which developed into their sense of a general Jewish question.

When the war began in August 1914, 3,8 million Germans were drafted. Over the course of the war 13 million German men served as soldiers. Of the approximately 600.000 Jews in Germany, 100,000 were drafted during the war while another 10.000 joined as war volunteers. All in all 30.000 Jewish soldiers received war decorations. Some 12,000 German Jewish died by the war's end in 1918.¹ Scholarly consensus holds that at its outset in 1914, the war was widely perceived by German Jews as a possibility to finally prove to their fellow Gentile citizens that they were indeed Germans, first and foremost, who would not hesitate to give their lives for Germany on the battlefield. Prior to 1914, German Jews had developed a variety of forms of belonging to Germany that did not always and necessarily include assimilation. The role of the military, as Derek Penslar has demonstrated, had a very significant impact on Jews in Germany who strove for integration and many times had to learn about rejection while serving.²

One of the reasons for German Jews to participate enthusiastically in the war, or to at least show a patriotic attitude when not serving as soldiers, was the still fragile situation of the Jews living in the German Empire. Anti-Semitism remained an issue, even though Jews in Germany had become citizens of the Empire in 1871, following the legal adoption of the principles of civic equality first promulgated by the *Norddeutsche Bund* in 1867. The problem of anti-Semitism particularly increased during and after the 1879-1881 Berlin anti-Semitism Controversy (*Berliner Antisemitismus-Streit*) with its focus on the role of German Jews in Germany as well as the question of Eastern European Jewish immigration to Germany. Despite apparent German liberalization, in reality it was impossible for Jews to advance in the civil service, the military, or the professorate.

Wilhelm II's so-called *Burgfrieden* proclamation at the outbreak of the war asserted that the empire would no longer distinguish between Germans of different political beliefs, but would instead see only one unified German people. Many Jews living in Germany believed this to be a call for their support in the

I would like to thank the two anonymous readers of an earlier version of the article for their comments. Sincere thanks go also to Tryce Hyman for his insightful comments and edits.

¹ Gerhard Hirschfeld, "Germany," *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Malden, Ma: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 432-446; 440. Tim Grady, *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 3. See also Peter Pulzer: "Der Erste Weltkrieg," in *Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, eds. Michael A. Meyer et al. (München: CH Beck, 2000) vol. 3, 356-380.

² Derek J. Penslar, *Jews and the Military. A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

war effort as well, believing as well that their loyalty would finally help to make anti-Jewish sentiments vanish. As early as August 1 the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* [Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith] founded in 1893 to fight anti-Semitism, published a call to serve in the war effort. It stated: “Fellow believers – We call on you ‘beyond what is deemed necessary to offer your service to the Fatherland’ [...] give money and goods and volunteer for military service.”³

In this regard it is not surprising that German Jews believed in the argument made by many German intellectuals that the war was one that set German *Kultur* against both western civilization and Russian barbarism. The latter notion played a crucial role for German-Jewish soldiers in general. It is moreover important to note that the majority of German Jews as well as non-Jewish Germans perceived the war at the outset as a defensive act.

Despite the early enthusiasm of German Jews, several first-hand accounts show evidence that such enthusiasm vanished slowly or had transformed by 1916. Peter Pulzer, in his book *Jews and the German state: The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933*, writes: “What can be said is that if Jews were not exempt from the war euphoria of 1914, they recovered from it more quickly.”⁴ Already in 1915, both in public debates as well as in the *Reichstag*, Jews were accused of not serving in the military but of enriching themselves instead through their involvement with the 200 *Kriegsgesellschaften* [Warfare societies]. These same accusations would later lead to the infamous “Jewish census” (*Juden-zählung*) in the German army. To what extent the *Juden-zählung* of 1916, the registration of Jews in the military, provided evidence of dwindling war euphoria is difficult to determine, and the interpretation also depends on when and where contemporaries wrote about their experience with it.⁵

³ “Aufruf des Verbandes der deutschen Juden und des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens vom 1. August 1914,” printed in *Im Deutschen Reich. Zeitschrift des Zentralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, 20/9 (1914): 339. All translations of primary sources from the original German into English are mine.

⁴ Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German state. The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

⁵ On the “Jew Count” see in particular Anna Ullrich, ““Nun sind wir gezeichnet” – Jüdische Soldaten und die “Juden-zählung,”” in *Krieg! 1914-1918 Juden zwischen den Fronten*, eds. Ersten Weltkrieg, Ulrike Heikau and Julia B. Köhne (Berlin: Hentrich&Hentrich, 2014), 217-238. Michael Geheran, “*Juden-zählung*,” 1914-1918, Online International Encyclopedia of WWI, ed. Ute Daniel, 2015 (http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/juden-zahlung_jewish_census).

Overall, the military was held in very high esteem within German society. The initial wave of national euphoria during the war made opposition rare. For example, over-identification with the German cause was very apparent even when rumors of German War crimes against civilians in neutral Belgium—which later came to be known as the Rape of Belgium—began to emerge. In response to these rumors, 93 German scholars signed a pamphlet entitled “To the Civilized World” that decried any possibility that such barbarity could come from German soldiers. These signatories perceived Germany’s actions in Belgium to be part of a defensive war that responded to attacks on German troops. Ludwig Fulda, Hermann Sudermann, and Georg Reicke drafted the call for signatories. Among them were 58 university professors, 43 of whom were members of the prestigious Prussian Academy of Science and Culture. Only ten of the signatories would later withdraw their names from the proclamation when it became apparent that the Rape of Belgium had indeed taken place. As can be seen, disenchantment with and opposition to the war were slow to develop.

Despite the jingoism prevalent in German society there had been a pacifist forum in Germany at least as far back as 1892, when Bertha von Suttner (1843-1916) founded the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft*, or German Peace Society. Additionally, on November 16, 1914, only a few months after the outbreak of World War I, the pacifist *Bund Neues Vaterland* [the League New Fatherland] was established. The League, which would be banned in 1916, protested against both the war itself and wartime annexation of lands. In the summer of 1916 the *Zentralstelle Völkerrecht* [Central Office for International Law] was established with local offices throughout the entire German Empire. Its goals were to promote the democratization of Germany and peace without annexations. The call to establish the office was signed by 170 personalities, amongst them Gustav Landauer and his wife Hedwig Lachmann.⁶ Members of anarchist organizations active in Imperial Germany since around 1900, numbering some 2000 individuals like Landauer, clearly opposed the military and the war.⁷ During the war it was almost impossible to publish anything critical about the Central Powers’ war effort that would pass the censor. Because of this censorship private correspondence between opponents of the war became crucial.

⁶ See Gustav Landauer, *Sein Lebensgang in Briefen. Unter Mitwirkung von Ina Britschgi-Schimmer. Band 2*, ed. Martin Buber (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten&Loening, 1929), 159.

⁷ Ulrich Linse, “‘Poetic Anarchism’ versus ‘Party Anarchism’: Gustav Landauer and the Anarchist Movement in Wilhelmian Germany,” *Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 45-63.

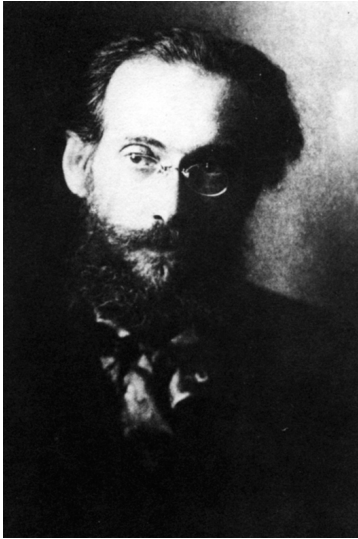


Fig. 1: Gustav Landauer (1870-1919)

Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) was one of the few intellectuals who criticized the war from the beginning. Landauer was as an anarchist and an outsider even among the radical leftists living in Germany.⁸ His dissent was informed by his sense of identity, in that he actively derived his dissent from the fact of his being a German *and* a Jew.⁹ Indeed, the Jewish aspect of his identity seemed to grow during the War. For his long time friend Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923), on the other hand, the outbreak of the war provoked mixed reactions.

The two men had known each other since 1890. In that year Landauer had submitted his play *Hilde Hennings* to Mauthner who praised the work and hoped to find a publisher for Landauer. Their friendship contained a paternal aspect, where Landauer occupied the position of filial ‘son’ to Mauthner in the role of figurative ‘father’. But their correspondence shows that they each needed the other for the sake of a productive exchange of ideas. For certain, Landauer was greatly influenced by Mauthner’s philosophy of language. When Landauer was imprisoned during 1899/1900 he proofread Mauthner’s *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* and provided substantial comments.

Mauthner even declared that without Landauer’s help this work would not have been completed and published.¹⁰ In sum their friendship was over the years

⁸ See Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community. The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1973); Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europa: A Study in Elective Affinity* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1992); Corinna Kaiser, *Gustav Landauer als Schriftsteller: Sprache, Schweigen, Musik* (Berlin-Boston: de Gruyter, 2014); Linse, “‘Poetic Anarchism’ versus ‘Party Anarchism,’” 45-63.

⁹ On the multiple connections Landauer had with anarchism and Judaism, see most recently *Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew*, ed. Mendes-Flohr; Gianfranco Ragona, *Gustav Landauer anarchico ebreo tedesco* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2010); *Gustav Landauer. Ausgewählte Schriften. Band 5. Philosophie und Judentum*, ed. Siegbert Wolf (Lich: Verlag Edition AV, 2012).

¹⁰ “Die Herausgabe hätte ich aber gar nicht bewältigen können ohne die Freundschaft Gustav Landauers, der mich unermüdlich bei Ordnung und Sichtung Manuskripts unterstützte.” (Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache. Erster Band. Sprache und Psychologie* (Stuttgart

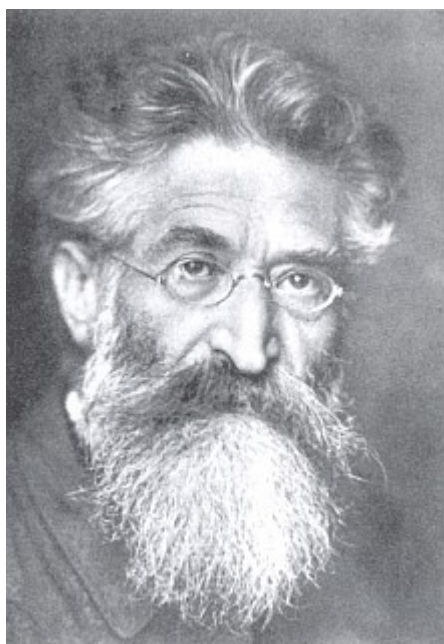


Fig. 2: Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923)

always demanding and intellectually stimulating for both. In his autobiography, Mauthner indicated the idea that he had decided on a solely German identity when he moved to Germany in 1876, and as a consequence left the Jewish Community in 1891. Born into an assimilated Jewish family of Prague with almost no attachment to Judaism, Mauthner grew into a skeptic of Judaism who harbored anti-Semitic sentiments as well. He never converted to Christianity, however, because he considered himself an atheist.¹¹

Mauthner's self-identification as a German can be seen in his lifelong dealings with the philosophy of language as well as in his autobiography, *Prager Jugendjahre*, published in 1918.¹² In the autobiography, Mauthner describes his situation in terms of being a double outsider. This was for him the case specifically as "a Jew who lived as a German boy in a Slavic land"¹³ in the years that followed the Revolution of 1848 and the Austrian defeat at Königgrätz in 1866, years also marked by the heated debate over nationalism in Prague. In the philosophy of language one of the main foci for Mauthner is on the concept of *Muttersprache*, the mother tongue. In his major works, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1901-1902) and *Die Sprache* (1906), as well as in *Muttersprache und Vaterland* published in 1920, Mauthner further elaborates on the relevance of the mother tongue in the context of his critique of language. Note Mauthner's

und Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Zweite Auflage, 1906), VIII. See also Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, 153-160.

¹¹ On the friendship between Mauthner and Landauer, see Carsten Schapkow, "Ohne Sprache und ohne Religion? Fritz Mauthners Sprachkritik und die zeitgenössischen Debatten über Deutschtum und Judentum," in *An den Grenzen der Sprachkritik. Fritz Mauthners Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kulturkritik*, ed. Gerald Hartung (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2013), 19-49. On Landauer, Mühsam, and Mauthner see also Carolin Kosuch, *Missratene Söhne. Anarchismus und Sprachkritik im Fin de Siècle* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2015).

¹² Fritz Mauthner, *Erinnerungen I. Prager Jugendjahre* (München 1918).

¹³ "Ich war Jude und ich lebte als deutscher Knabe in einem slawischen Lande." (*Ibid.*, 110)

critique of Eastern European Jewry: “The Jew will only become full German (“Volldeutscher”), if expressions of Jargon (“Mauschelausdrücke”) became a foreign language to him or if he does not understand it at all.”¹⁴ Obviously Mauthner, himself born as a Jew in Prague, can be seen in a rather broad geographical sense as belonging to Eastern European Jewry himself. Culturally, however, Mauthner did not see himself being part of Eastern Europe and its diversity of languages.¹⁵ Mauthner would not have produced his oeuvre on the critique of language without the discussions he had with Gustav Landauer, something exemplified by the fact that he dedicated *Die Sprache* to Landauer.¹⁶ The continuing exchange of ideas between the two men is also apparent within the pages of *Muttersprache und Vaterland*.¹⁷

In addition to influencing him as a critic of language, the debate with Landauer about the significance of the war reawakened Mauthner’s consciousness of his own Jewish identity. This renewed awareness becomes manifest in particular when both men consider Germany’s future after its defeat in 1918, becoming especially apparent in their correspondence when viewed against the background of the broader debate on Jewish identity in German-Jewish circles of the era.

Unlike his friend Mauthner, Landauer considered his Jewish identity to be an important part of his personality, and claimed to share with other Jews the capacity for mutual recognition merely by sight.¹⁸ As for Mauthner, it is only in his letters to Landauer that he clearly defines how he understands his Jewish identity—namely as a duct in his head—to be a particular style or characteristic. Mauthner maintains that this duct also had an impact on his German identity – an impact he felt ambivalent about even while believing it to be ineluctable.¹⁹

¹⁴ “Der Jude wird erst dann Volldeutscher, wenn ihm Mauschelausdrücke zu einer fremden Sprache geworden sind, oder wenn er sie nicht mehr versteht.” (Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, 541).

¹⁵ Steven Aschheim describes Mauthner as an “Ostjude”; an expression he sets in quotation marks. See Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 54.

¹⁶ See Gerald Hartung, *Die Sprache* (Marburg: Metropolis Verlag, 2012), 149.

¹⁷ Fritz Mauthner, *Muttersprache und Vaterland* (Leipzig: Dürr und Weber, 1920). Fritz Mauthner’s letter to Gustav Landauer, December 21st, 1915 in *Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Hanna Delf, Julius H. Schoeps (München: Beck, 1994), 312. See Landauer’s response (*Ibid.*).

¹⁸ See Paul Breines, “The Jew as Revolutionary: The case of Gustav Landauer,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 12 (1967): 75-84; 76.

¹⁹ “Der Eingang hat mich wieder durch Form und Inhalt entzückt. Dann aber lag es wohl an mir

The friends had also differing views in their understanding of Zionism. As an example: in 1913, Landauer published the article *Sind das Ketzergedanken* in the anthology *Vom Judentum*, edited by the Prague Zionist Association *Bar Kochba*. Hans Kohn, in his introduction to *Vom Judentum*, described a “crisis of spiritual life” (*Krise des geistigen Lebens*) and analyzed Jewishness in terms of a “national community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*).²⁰ According to Kohn, contemporary Judaism was torn and the individual Jew was an “idolater” (*Götzendiener*) who was in the process of vegetating in his current state of assimilation.²¹ In his article, Landauer puts an emphasis on the fruitful connection between Germanness and Jewishness.²² His sympathy, however, clearly lies with the “new nation in formation” that would grow “independently from other common nation states through work for humanity.”²³ According to Landauer, the Jews had an advantage in that they held their neighbors “in their breast,” which would make them a role model that expressed his ideal of working to improve humankind.²⁴ Landauer calls for “being Jewish with full consciousness and a clear acknowledgement of this dual and dialogical principle.” This “Jewish complex” directly speaks to the idea of a complex identity, which in itself is part of a process.²⁵ In contrast, Mauthner wrote to Landauer in response to the article to explain that he could not agree with Landauer’s position on questions of contemporary Jewish identity. For Mauthner, such complexities as those asserted by Landauer did not exist. Rather, Mauthner claims to feel only as a German despite the “duct” in his head, noted above, that, Mauthner confessed, still connected him with the Jewish part of his identity. To contextualize this statement we must understand that as a young man living in Prague, Mauthner

(und uns), dass alle Prämissen zu meinem Standpunkt zu führen schienen: “Ich fühle mich nur [als] Deutscher; weiß dabei, dass meinen Gehirn irgendwie einen Duktus hat, den man jüdisch nennt; umso schlimmer oder um so besser, ich kann es und will es nicht ändern.” Deine Conclusio ist anders, und nur darin gehen wir auseinander“ (Letter Fritz Mauthner to Gustav Landauer, October 10th, 1913, in *Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 282).

²⁰ *Vom Judentum*, eds. Kohn, Vorwort, Krojanker (Prag, 1913), VI.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² See Landauer, “Sind das Ketzergedanken,” 255.

²³ *Ibid.*, 253.

²⁴ “Unsere Nation hat die Nachbarn in der eigenen Brust; und diese Nachbarnossenschaft ist Friede und Einheit in jedem, der ein Ganzer ist und sich zu sich bekennt. Sollte das nicht ein Zeichen sein des Berufs, den das Judentum an der Menschheit, in der Menschheit zu erfüllen hat?” (*Ibid.*, 257).

²⁵ *Vom Judentum*, eds. Landauer, *Ketzergedanken*, Krojanker, 255.

made the “decision” to become *only* a German.²⁶ Following his move to Berlin in 1878 he always referred to himself as a German for whom Bismarck’s politics of action held great appeal and inspired much admiration. There was no room for complexity in Mauthner’s concept of identity.²⁷

A particular point of disagreement for Mauthner was Landauer’s conception of the nation. Mauthner perceived himself solely as a German without connection to or solidarity with the Jews in either Germany or Eastern Europe.²⁸ The mere existence of Eastern European Jews seemed to appear in Mauthner’s view as a threat to the existence and status of assimilated German Jews like himself. During the war, the positions of Landauer and Mauthner became even more implacable. Mauthner embraced Kaiser Wilhelm II’s proclamation from August 1914 that from now on he would recognize only one German nation and would refuse to recognize Germans of various tribes, based on religion, ethnicity, or political orientation. Although clearly not an admirer of Wilhelm II, but rather, as noted above, preferring Bismarck as a man of action, Mauthner described himself in the terminology of the so-called *Burgfrieden* as someone who was part of the German people.²⁹ He likewise felt that a defeat would question his own decision to become a German when he moved to Berlin and left his Jewish identity behind in the Habsburg Empire.

Gustav Landauer felt little enthusiasm for anything when the war broke out. On July 21, 1914 he wrote to his friend, author and translator Ludwig Berndt, in Karlsruhe:

Dear friends, we will terminate our vacation and travel back home. There is nothing to hope for any longer, and nothing to be afraid of; it is there.” Landauer continues:

²⁶ Fritz Mauthner, *Erinnerungen I. Prager Jugendjahre*, (München, 1918); Jacques LeRidder, Fritz Mauthner, *Scepticisme linguistique et modernité, une biographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Parution, 2012), 75-81. On Mauthner’s biography see also Gerson Weiler, “Fritz Mauthner— a study of Jewish self-rejection,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 8 (1963): 136-148.

²⁷ Letter Mauthner to Landauer on October 10th, 1913, in *Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 282.

²⁸ “It is possible for Mauthner’s Jewish Duktus to exist without it’s having any impact on his attachment to Germany and German national identity.” (James Goldwasser, *Fritz Mauthner’s Way of Being a Jew*, in Elisabeth Leinfellner/Jörg Thunecke, eds, *Brückenschlag zwischen den Disziplinen: Fritz Mauthner als Schriftsteller, Kritiker und Kulturtheoretiker*, eds. Elisabeth Leinfellner, Jörg Thunecke (Wuppertal: Arco Verlag, 2004), 51-61; 55.

²⁹ See Fritz Mauthner, *Abdankung. Aufruf vom 3. November 1908, Fritz Mauthners Ausgewählte Schriften. Band 1* (Stuttgart und Berlin, 1919), 366-368.

“In these times ‘we need the voice of Tolstoy and any strong human voice – and help.’ [...] And wherever we can help other people, who suffer, we want to help without consideration of any political views.”³⁰

Landauer, who opposed the war from the beginning, quite contrarily argued that even in times of war it was crucial to engage in philosophical debates. He expresses this opinion to Mauthner on September 29, 1914, with reference to Fichte’s colloquium on the *Wissenschaftslehre* from 1813 and wonders why people were not having this kind of dialogue now?³¹ Fichte’s philosophy in particular – as Ulrich Sieg has shown – was referenced during the years of war to attack the external enemy but also to construct internal unity.³²

For Landauer this meant engaging in philosophy and recognition of all individuals regardless of their nationality, especially in times of war. Yet, the reality in Germany looked different. What Landauer recognized was “the disgrace of lethargy, fogginess, and drunkenness amongst almost all of our intellectuals,” as he wrote to his wife Hedwig on December 18, 1914.³³ Landauer expressed his feelings towards the war probably best in his letter from January 2, 1917, to his friend Auguste Hauschner (1850-1924), a committed pacifist: “There is only one defeated allowed in this war: war itself.”³⁴

In this regard it is worth noting that Landauer treated soldiers with respect, although he was an outspoken opponent of the war. In a letter to Hugo Warnstedt on August 10, 1915, Landauer responded to Warnstedt’s hope not to serve any longer as a soldier. Landauer declared in the letter that he would not refuse to shake hands with someone who used a gun in order to survive in times of war. According to Landauer, this man would not be responsible for what he did. Still, he had to atone. In consequence, the moral responsibility rested upon

³⁰ Landauer, *Lebensgang in Briefen. Band I*, 459.

³¹ “Aber, wenn ich das Gegenteil sehe, wenn einer sich entschuldigt, dass er, in dieser Zeit Philosophie treibt – Fichte, 1813, hat sich nicht entschuldigt, als er sein Kolleg über “Wissenschaftslehre hielt” – dann darf ich traurig werden” (Landauer to Mauthner on September 29th, 1914, in *Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 292).

³² Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg. Kriegserfahrungen, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 163-164.

³³ Landauer to Hedwig Mauthner, December 18th, 1914 (Landauer, *Lebensgang in Briefen, Band II*, 18).

³⁴ Landauer to Auguste Hauschner, January 2nd, 1917 (*Ibid.*, 172).

the spiritual leaders of the general public, who had completely failed.³⁵ Landauer was convinced that one has to confront “falsifiers and oppressors of the critical mind in Germany”.³⁶ Such could be found, Landauer continues, as the “hereditary enemy on the teacher’s desk of the universities, in schools, and in the chairs of the editorial offices of newspapers in Germany.”³⁷

Mauthner, on the other hand, maintained that one should not engage in philosophical debates at all in times of war. In an article for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, he attacked the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) harshly, and with anti-Semitic insinuations – as a “little tailor” who did not create authentic philosophy but just imitated philosophical fashion.³⁸ In this article, Mauthner also suggests that in times of war philosophizing will not be appreciated by the society at large and will not benefit its members.³⁹

Bergson, who was the president of the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques*, had given a speech on August 8, 1914, in which he declared that “The fight against Germany is the fight of civilization against barbarism.”⁴⁰ Bergson also traveled at the request of President of France Aristide Briand to the U.S. to garner public support for the French cause. In his philosophy, Bergson focused on the immediate experience and intuition rather than on rationalism and the science of understanding. Mauthner disputed on two levels the validity of Bergson’s criticism of Germany’s actions during the war in Belgium as “barbaric.” First, Mauthner perceived Bergson as a hostile French writer, not merely a philosopher. Second, Mauthner impugned Bergson’s critical abilities when he referred to him by a term “little tailor” that evoked the latter’s Eastern

³⁵ Landauer to Hugo Warnsted (*Ibid.*, 67-68); Landauer to Fritz Mauthner, November 2nd, 1914 (*Ibid.*, 8).

³⁶ Landauer to Hugo Warnsted, November 18th, 1915 (*Ibid.*, 102-104).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

³⁸ “Das Schneiderlein der philosophischen Mode, hat uns Deutsche Barbaren genannt. [...] Der große Krieg wird uns weiterhin vor der Lächerlichkeit schützen, dass federgewandte deutsche Schriftsteller den glatten Lack von Bergson ernst nehmen, dass sie dem Lande eines Kant und eines Schopenhauer die Stilübungen Bergsons, als eine bedeutende Philosophie anpreisen.” (*Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 456; originally printed in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, September 13th, 1914).

³⁹ “Ich weiß, daß in diesen Tagen ein Aufsatz über solche philosophischen Dinge kaum lesbar sein wird. [...] Heute ist jedem von uns vorläufig [...] das Mittagsbrot jedes deutschen Soldaten wichtiger als die ganze Philosophie.” (Fritz Mauthner, “Wer ist Henri Bergson?” *Ibid.*, no page number).

⁴⁰ Quoted in Christophe Prochasson, “Intellectuals and writers,” *A Companion to World War I*, ed. Horne, 323-337; 333.

European Jewish heritage.⁴¹ Bergson was the son of Polish-Jewish composer Michal Berekson (Bergson) (1820-1898) and Catherine Lewisohn (1830-1928).

Mauthner's patriotic feelings also gave rise to a "deadly fear" (*Todesangst*) about Germany's future.⁴² He viewed Germany as under attack. Landauer, on the contrary, had spoken about European soldiers in the war, which made them universal in their experience of suffering and as a consequence called for an immediate ceasefire. Addressing the idea of universal suffering, Mauthner puts a question to Landauer in a letter from November 15th, 1914: "I am not sure, whether you still have inclinations to Zionism. I would like to know from you if you would still talk about peace if your Zionist state would have been attacked by European soldiers?"⁴³ To this question Landauer did not respond. It is, however, worth mentioning that neither Landauer nor Mauthner commented in their correspondence on Jews shooting at each other at the frontlines. The debate between Landauer and Mauthner progressed while the two discussed the possible immigration of Eastern European Jews to Germany.⁴⁴

The notion that Germans were engaged in a war of culture gained support from the comparison that German soldiers and the German public made between Eastern Prussia under Prussian rule and the occupied territories across the border. The German military tried to find alliances among the civilian population, including the Jews, when they advanced into the formerly Russian territory in Poland. For these soldiers, the latter regions were clearly marked as uncultured. This conception, of course, was much older than the actual outbreak

⁴¹ See Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle*, 71. Hermann Cohen also disputed Bergson's ability to criticize Germany for the same reasons. See Hermann Cohen, *Deutschtum und Judentum. Mit grundlegenden Überlegungen über Staat und Internationalismus* (Gießen 1915), 44.

⁴² Mauthner to Landauer on November 15th, 1914 (*Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 294).

⁴³ "Bei mir ist Todesangst um Deutschland das beherrschende Gefühl, bei Dir offenbar nicht, da Du das mindestens unglückliche Wort von dem 'europäischen' Soldaten gebrauchst. [...] Ich weiß nicht, ob Du noch zionistische Neigungen hast; möchte aber wissen, ob Du zum Frieden reden wolltest wenn es so wäre und Dein zionistischer Staat von europäischen Soldaten angegriffen würde" (*Ibid.*). On Landauer's Zionism see also Michael Löwy, "Romantic Prophets of Utopia. Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber," (*Gustav Landauer. Anarchist and Jew*, ed. Mendes-Flohr, 64- 81, 78).

⁴⁴ See Brief Landauer to Hedwig Mauthner on December 29th, 1914 (*Landauer-Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 299-301).

of the war. It is also arguable that the ethnic diversity of these regions did not help to establish a more nuanced notion of the East.⁴⁵

German-Jewish institutions viewed the idea of cultural supremacy mainly as a tool against the tyranny of Czarism. As a consequence, German-Jewish Zionists, such as Max Bodenheimer (1865-1940) and Franz Oppenheimer (1864-1943), founded the *Deutsche Komitee zur Befreiung der russischen Juden* in August 1914, which was succeeded by the *Komitee für den Osten*. The liberal, non-Zionist C.V. as well as various Zionist organizations all supported these agencies.⁴⁶

Neither the German government nor the military administration of the territories occupied in 1915, which was formerly Congress-Poland, had a clear idea of how to deal with the Jewish population. Over on the other side, the Russian government evacuated Jews as well as Poles, Lithuanians, and Latvians from the territories occupied by the Central Powers to Russia between 1915 and 1917.⁴⁷ However, from the German administrative perspective, it was clear that Eastern European Jews or *Ostjuden* in the terminology of the period should, in particular, be prevented from immigrating to Germany.⁴⁸

Closing the border on the Eastern Front so that Eastern European Jews would not enter Germany had already been debated before the war beginning with the *Antisemiten Petition* of 1880, and continuing with the *Reichshammerbund* (founded by Theodor Fritsch), the *Pan Germans*, the *Farmers League*, and of course the *Alldeutsche Verband* under the leadership of Heinrich Claß—who in 1914, for racist reasons, argued against any further immigration to Germany,

⁴⁵ Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, “German occupied Eastern Europe,” *A Companion to World War I*, ed. Horne, 447-463; 450.

⁴⁶ Some Zionist intellectuals like Gershom Scholem, although a tiny minority among the Zionists, opposed the War as did his Marxist brother Werner who in 1916 in full uniform protested against the ongoing war (see Peter Pulzer, “Der Erste Weltkrieg,” in *Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, eds. Michael Meyer et al. (München: CH Beck, 2000), vol. 3, 363.

⁴⁷ Alan Kramer, “Combatants and Noncombatants: Atrocities, massacres, and war crimes,” in *A Companion to World War I*, ed. Horne, 188-201; 192. On German administration in the occupied territories and the Jews see Gabriel Liulevicius, “German occupied Eastern Europe” (*Ibid.*, 447-463; 453-454).

⁴⁸ See also Leo Winz, “Die Ostjudenfrage,” *Ost und West*, XIV/2-3 (1916): 73-112. Steven Aschheim, “Jews and Germany’s Ostpolitik,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 28 (1983): 351-365; 365.

while supporting the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine instead.⁴⁹ The *Reichshammerbund* in particular questioned the role of German Jews in the military already by the beginning of the war.

Additionally, liberal politicians such as Friedrich Naumann, who had in his 1915 book *Mitteleuropa* called for the cooperation of Germany and the Habsburg Empire with other Central European nations in political and economic matters, now pleaded for German domination over Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ A public debate on the immigration of Eastern European Jews to Germany and Austria had already taken place when Russian troops had occupied Galicia in late summer of 1914.⁵¹ The subject came up again after German and Habsburg troops had advanced into the Russian Empire in 1915, and it persisted for the rest of the war. In late August of 1914 Mauthner had himself already begun to turn his attention to the Habsburg Empire.⁵²

Particularly during 1916, Mauthner and Landauer developed contrary positions on immigration. It was Mauthner who called for a cessation of Eastern European Jewish immigration to Germany because the situation of German Jews would be endangered. In contrast, Landauer felt this immigration would lead to class struggle and the “outbreak of hostilities against the new and old Jewish bourgeoisie,”⁵³ something that Landauer favored.

During this time a variety of discriminatory actions against Eastern European Jews came into being. This anti-Semitic atmosphere also reached German Jews, as Erich Mühsam had, for instance, described in his diary for the year 1915.⁵⁴ Mauthner supported the closure of the Eastern borders to Eastern European Jews as decreed by the Prussian Ministry for the Interior on April 23rd, 1918. Landauer firmly describes Mauthner’s assessment as *lästerlich*, or malicious, in his letter of December 18th, 1918.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Johannes Leicht, *Heinrich Claß 1868-1953. Die politische Biographie eines Alldeutschen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 221-225.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Naumann, *Mitteleuropa* (Berlin: Reimer, 1915).

⁵¹ Pulzer, “Der Erste Weltkrieg,” 375.

⁵² Kosuch, *Missratene Söhne*, 310.

⁵³ See Gustav Landauer, “Ostjuden und das Deutsche Reich,” *Der Jude*, October 1916, 433-439; 437.

⁵⁴ Erich Mühsam, *Tagebücher*, November 23rd, 1915.

⁵⁵ Landauer to Mauthner on December 18th, 1918 (*Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 355).

Landauer was convinced that both Western and Eastern European Jews would need a spiritual renewal after the war. However, it would be much harder for the Western Jew to accomplish such a renewal.⁵⁶ In contrast, the dignity and grace needed for this renewal already existed at this point among the Eastern European Jews.⁵⁷ This notion clearly reflects how Landauer had been influenced by Martin Buber's writings in the periodical *Der Jude* since 1916, among other writings – which clearly was not the case with Mauthner.

At the end of the war it was Landauer who, in a letter to Mauthner dated November 28, 1918, held the German people responsible for the war because they did nothing early on to stop the preparations for war.⁵⁸ But now, Landauer argued, with reference to the new situation in Bavaria, a democratic government based on the will of the people was in place.

And suddenly Germany is at the center for a struggle of all people for justice and reason [...]. A man who lived a miserable, pure, and honorable life as a starving writer, Kurt Eisner, stands there, a man of the spirit, this brave Jew, as the moral head of Germany [...] Why do you not thank destiny for the mercy that you are allowed to live through these times? Let that go down, which must perish, and let that take shape, which has the ability to do so. Help or stand aside, but have we not learnt Spinoza for life and not for school?⁵⁹

One of Landauer's main criticisms of Mauthner in 1918 was Mauthner's reliance on the "great men" of the past like Bismarck and Hindenburg.⁶⁰ Instead, he urges Mauthner to look up to men of deed like Kurt Eisner, not least because he was also a Jew. For Mauthner, however, the passing of the old order did not symbolize a new optimistic and morally renewed beginning. Mauthner obviously did not share the vision espoused by Landauer, according to which the new German state and its revolutionary upheavals would bring about the unity of the German people with all humankind. Only when the old order was destroyed could this happen, in the view of Landauer,⁶¹ who perceived this

⁵⁶ Gustav Landauer, "Ostjuden und das Deutsche Reich," 437.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁵⁸ Landauer to Mauthner on November 28th, 1918 (*Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 351-353; 352).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ "Sie [die Revolution, C.S.] wird vielleicht auf dem ganz richtigen Wege des anfänglichen Auseinanderreißen, die Einheit des deutschen Volkes sicherer herstellen, als es Dein Bismarck zuwege gebracht hat; sie wird uns weiter führen, wieder einmal führen auf den Weg, den unser

change to a new kind of government – embodied in chaos – as a true and authentic movement.⁶²

Mauthner instead wondered whether “Germany was not sentenced to death.”⁶³ This perception, that the end of the old order would also bring about a loss in security, can be seen in Mauthner’s unwillingness to consider the extradition of the former Kaiser Wilhelm II to the victorious forces, as in his article for the *Berliner Tageblatt* from February 6, 1919 entitled *Die Auslieferung des Kaisers*. Mauthner had, however, called for the emperor to abdicate.⁶⁴ Landauer himself pleaded for the extradition of Wilhelm II from The Netherlands to the German public authorities where the former emperor would be questioned concerning the advancement of the war. After having questioned him, Landauer suggested, ironically, that they would agree to pay him a pension and let him go on his way.⁶⁵

While Mauthner continued to live in Meersburg on Lake Constance, where he finished writing the *History of Atheism*, Landauer played an active role in the Bavarian Soviet Republic and was later murdered for it in Stadelheim in April of 1919. Landauer tried to combine his writings with his political agenda and hoped to bring about a kind of universal salvation. In his last work, *The History of Atheism*, Mauthner refers explicitly to “my friend” Gustav Landauer who was “among the spiritual superior leaders of the Revolution in Munich.”⁶⁶ Mauthner, although agreeing in theory with Landauer on many issues, feared the changes that were about to come over Germany; this included apprehensions about his decision to become a German and whether that could ever be

Buddha und unser Jesus gewiesen hat: Zur Einheit der Menschheit. Und so will ich, auch um der Einheit des deutschen Volkes willen, gegen die noch bestehenden Reste des Bismarckreiches loshämmern helfen, so viel ich nur Kräfte habe.” (Landauer to Mauthner on November 30th, 1918, *ibid.*, 353).

⁶² “Und auch jetzt: die Erschütterung ist da – der Fluss und die Bewegung – das beginnende Chaos – und der Sprachkritiker klammert sich an ‘Deutschland.’ Ich kann da nicht Größe des Ziels sehen, sondern Sentimentalität.” (Landauer to Mauthner on December 26th, 1918, in Landauer, *Lebensgang in Briefen*, vol. 2, 343).

⁶³ Mauthner to Landauer on December 3rd, 1918 (*Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 354).

⁶⁴ Kosuch, *Missratene Söhne*, 310. Kosuch refers to Leo Baeck Institute, Digitale Sammlungen, Fritz Mauthner: Tagebücher 1870-1916, Folder 9, Kriegstagebuch, Abhandlung.

⁶⁵ Landauer to Mauthner February 22nd, 1919 (*Gustav Landauer – Fritz Mauthner Briefwechsel 1890-1919*, eds. Delf and Schoeps, 361).

⁶⁶ See Kosuch, *Missratene Söhne*, 336; also Fritz Mauthner, *Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1920), 210; 392.

questioned in the future. Consequently, in his remaining years, Mauthner resolved this apprehension, by choosing not to associate with either Weimar Germany or Jewish nationalism, but to remain a skeptic who continued to believe himself to be a German.

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