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Published in:
Journal of Classical Sociology

DOI:
10.1177/1468795X19856840

Publication date:
2020

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (APA):
Feldt, J. E. (2020). The future of the stranger: Jewish exemplarity and the social imagination. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, *20*(3), 225-243. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X19856840

The Future of the Stranger

Jewish Exemplarity and the Social Imagination

Since its first publication in 1908, sociologists, social theorists, and historians have frequently noted the connection between Georg Simmel's essay "Exkurs über den Fremden" and perceptions of Jews in European history (Simmel, 1971). But with a few notable exceptions, the significance of this connection has not been elaborated on beyond allusions to Simmel's Jewish background or to the significance of the allo-semitic discourse of the period (Alexander, 2013; Morris-Reich, 2004, 2008). Many later social theorists, including Zygmunt Bauman, Julia Kristeva, Seyla Benhabib, Ulrich Beck, and Slavoj Žižek, have used Simmel's notion of the stranger as a central aspect of their discussions of the meanings and implications of social estrangement in modernity or in relation to discussions of migration and multiculturalism (Bauman, 1989; Beck, 1996; Benhabib, 2006; Kristeva, 1991; Žižek,

1989). Again, the stranger's connection to Jewish history is noted, but then the Jews are often turned into "the Jews," into semantic blank spaces that can be filled with contemporary meaning unconstrained by any connection between the stranger and Jewish history itself. This has been called "the Jew" as trope, or the "negative Jew" perspective (Cheyette, 1998; Rosman, 2007). While productive in other ways, these perspectives do not analyze the significance of the connection to the Jews in the trajectory of thought to which Simmel's essay belongs, nor can they teach us about the connection between the stranger and Jewish history. In this article, I will discuss how the exemplarity of the Jews pertains to a trajectory in intellectual history and social theory in which the Jews played a particular role for historical and social progress in general. Conceptions of Jewish exemplarity were developed as early as the 1780s, in the earliest stage of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, and they may well have reached their zenith with American pragmatist sociology's concept of the marginal man in the 1920s and 1930s. Recently, the perspective of Jewish exemplarity has been revisited and renewed in the context of new perspectives on globalization and

cosmopolitanism (Gelbin, 2015, 2017; Gilman, 2016; Slezkine, 2004). While it is well established that Simmel's stranger was a direct inspiration for Robert Park, Everett Stonequist, and others, it is less clear what preceded Simmel's variation of Jewish exemplarity (Goldberg, 2012, 2017). I hope to show what the exemplarity of the Jews means in Moses Hess's work, in Simmel's essay, and in Park's pragmatist sociology; why it is important to understand what exemplarity means from this perspective, including the relation between exemplarity and contingency; and finally, how a new reading, a new genealogy, of this trajectory points to boundaries in and of social imagination, that is to the boundary work of the Enlightenment, for which the Jews became the exemplary subjects and objects.

In this way, my exploration of the exemplarity of the Jews redirects attention, to a certain extent, from Georg Simmel's legacy as a neo-Kantian thinker towards traits in his thought reflected in his use of the Jews to exemplify the stranger but also in his view of the Jews as "objective," or distanced, as the European population group that incarnated central aspects of what

was already before Simmel's time considered the psychology of modernity (Podoksik, 2016). In this regard, Simmel's view on Jewish strangeness bears some resemblances to the way in which the Jewish social form was associated with "Spinozism," both negatively by its detractors as atheism or pantheism, but also positively as for example by Moses Hess, Berthold Auerbach, or Georg Brandes. The historical meaning of Spinozism as an intellectual and social position developed between the late Enlightenment and the end of the 19th century shares indexicality with the stranger: the finger will point towards the Jews or Jewish-associated positions and places when Spinozism or strangeness needs exemplification. Spinozism as a Jewish-related intellectual and social position has very little to do with Spinoza's philosophy itself but instead involves the way in which Spinoza and Spinozism came to represent an alternative cultural and historical topology to the main, anti-Jewish, currents of the moderate Enlightenment (Goetschel, 2004). Indeed, Spinoza's life story became a *Bildungsroman* in the 19th century providing a romantic, inspirational ethos for secularized Jews (Hjortshøj, 2017). Varying degrees of Spinozism, whether explicitly professed or not, became an

important thread in alternative, or more radical, streams in the Enlightenment, in which, for Jewish thinkers, the Jews were often assigned an exemplary role and modernity was given a different intellectual history, related to a Jewish secular tradition, as a way to avoid certain modern teleologies in which the Jews belonged only to the past (Biale, 2011). Associating the Jews and their social form with the past, as a relic or a "dead trunk" in the history of civilization, was an integrated aspect of progressive historical Enlightenment thought related to both Kantianism and Hegelianism. In the Kantian perspective of a universally progressing history, Jewishness will always be a mark, or negatively a stain, of particularity, indicating parochialism, a lack of progression vis-à-vis the majority, and, eventually, questionable loyalties. Paraphrasing Immanuel Kant himself, from his "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective" (1784), limbs that are not used will die away in the progression of history (Kant, 2006: 4). That is the teleological law of nature from a Kantian perspective. With this teleological law of nature, notions of relevance, contribution, and purpose return as secular prophecies pertaining to the dynamics, limits, and futures of societies

(Egholm Feldt, 2016). In itself, considering the Jews an exemplary social form as Hess, Simmel, and Park did meant associating with a trajectory in cultural, historical, and social thought in which the Jewish social form played a significant historical role for the development of society, a role with a continuing meaning for future horizons as well. The perspective that sees the Jews as exemplary not only detracts from Kant's and Hegel's positions on the Jews, it provides an alternative view of historical and social progression.

I will outline here a genealogy of the exemplarity of the Jews, beginning at its peak, with Robert Park's concept of "marginal man." Then I will discuss Simmel's well-known Jewish stranger more briefly, and, finally, draw extensively on the works of the Jewish communist Moses Hess (1812–1875), which in many ways represent one of the clearest expositions of this trajectory of Jewish exemplarity. My reading of Hess is intended to unpack the historical and social imagination, between metahistorical speculation and proto-sociological analysis, that produced "Jewish exemplarity" as a theoretical idea, a historical entity, and a site of causation (Abbott, 1995:

873). Reading Hess will provide us with a view of the social imaginary in which the Jews played an exemplary role in society, pushing modernity forward towards a different kind of fulfillment.[1] The role of the internal outsider played by the Jews linked them to the boundary work of the Enlightenment, as both the objects and the subjects of Enlightenment and thus as exemplary particulars of social in/exclusion (Alexander, 2006). Hess shows us how modernity can be seen as the epoch in which the cultural, historical, and social psychology of the Jews comes into its own, as the model of a modern group mentality, but also how this social form entails a special estrangement caught between distance and nearness, something that Robert Park and others develop into a theory of modernization, starting at the end of the 1920s. For Hess, historical Jewish social estrangement had to do with the Jews taking on the role allotted to them by historical circumstance, as secular prophets who preach to the deaf, are persecuted, and live in the world of the future: in other words, agents of modernization. The modern characteristics of Jewish social life, and its effects, such as intellectuality, objectivity, and mobility, were already a fully developed social

imaginary by the middle and end of the nineteenth century, as Hess can show us, and Georg Simmel's stranger is in this light a brilliant condensation of an exemplarity of the Jews that was already fairly well established at the time and whose meaning was not unlimited. Hess, then, can teach us something about the topos of the exemplarity of the Jews to which Simmel connected and that he developed further. But I will begin almost a century later, in America at the zenith of Jewish exemplarity, to establish what it is that is so significant, for history and social theory, about Jewish estrangement.

The Significance of Marginality

In 1928, the sociologist Robert Ezra Park published an article entitled "Human migration and the marginal man" in the *American Journal of Sociology*. The view of the Jews that Park presented had been developing since the 1910s in the growing academic literature on migration and immigrant groups in American sociology (Goldberg, 2017: 76–103). Anthropological and sociological articles

and books appeared discussing immigrant groups such as Poles, Italians, and Jews, and typologies were created to address how well these groups fared in their new homeland. Pragmatist sociologists such as Park were particularly interested in how the Jews in America established Jewish organizations, such as the New York *Kehilla,* which existed from 1909 to 1922, to deal with Jewish cultural, educational, and social questions. Such organizations were seen as a type of assimilation into the American public sphere, rather than as self-segregation. In this school of sociology, assimilation meant assimilation not into specific ethnic and cultural traditions but into the public sphere. It meant participation in the various sectors of public life, providing bridges between loyalties to the parochial community and loyalties to the values of the common public (Goldberg, 2012).

American social thought did not just study how the Jews fared in America compared to other minority communities. It also relied on existing European discourses about the Jews that related the Jews directly to the Enlightenment and gave them a special role that other minorities did not have.

Numerous European social thinkers had already assigned the Jews a special role in European social development, in a pattern of using Jews as a category that is “good to think,” culminating in the blossoming of modern allo-semitism in the fin-de-siècle (Bauman, 1998). It is noteworthy that Georg Simmel’s use of the Jews, in "The stranger," as the classic example of a type of contributing and productive stranger, is reproduced by Park and others to show a broader shift in the root metaphor, in modern society, from sedentarism to mobility. And in pragmatist sociology, as for Simmel, it was not in any culturally or racially essentialist way that the Jews were the best example but it was simply that in practice, they demonstrated something significant about wider social developments, particularly related to issues of modern mobility and the modern economy. Modernity as mobility, as movement, was a core notion both for pragmatist sociology and for German social thinkers such as Simmel (Mounce, 1997**; Goodstein, 2017: 296–330**).

Park, Stonequist, and others understood the Jews as playing a double role in the history of the Enlightenment and modernity. With the emancipation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

the Jews lost the cultural safety and parochial community they had enjoyed behind the ghetto walls and became the first marginal people with a "double consciousness," the first social group existing in double estrangement, both from their own heritage and from majority society. At the same time, the Jews played the role of fertilizers, being themselves the producers of marginality and strangeness through their trade, mobility, and presence as internal outsiders. Accordingly, the enlightenment of the Jews marginalized them, but it also made them into agents of enlightenment and marginality (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1935: 1–12).

In American sociology, the notion of double consciousness implied in the psychology of the "marginal man" was not Park's invention but that of W. E. B. Du Bois (1918 [1903]), who developed it from his sociological studies of African-American life at the turn to the twentieth century. In his writing on the double consciousness of the marginal man, Park referred to Simmel's social thought and to the example of the Jews but ignored Du Bois, despite the close similarities between the perspectives. Arguably, early pragmatist social thought did not think of non-

European groups as productive, or modernizing, marginals, but as less-civilized population groups (Morris, 2015: 119–148).

In his 1928 article, Park explains how human movement forces change, crisis, and conflict onto the receiving societies. Movement leads to disasters and wars, but also to innovation and a general release of creative forces. New things are developed and learned as an effect of movement. How this happens in the modern world, however, is significantly different from how it happened within historical population movements. In the modern world, movement tends to be more peaceful and more closely related to business and trade, and rather than groups it is now individuals who move. Movement still produces crisis, but in the modern world, this crisis is more subjective and becomes manifested in the production of a new type of personality.

> Inevitably, however, this release is followed in the course of time by the reintegration of the individuals so released into a new social order. In the meantime, however, certain changes take place—at any rate they are likely to take place—in the character of the

> individuals themselves. They become, in the process, not merely emancipated, but enlightened. (Park, 1928: 888)

Not all moving people qualify, in Park's view, as migrants of the kind that produces a new type of personality. Romany, vagrants, and other nomadic peoples for whom mobility is the status quo are not interested in social reintegration. The new personality type is the product of a sequence involving the breakdown of a traditional organization of society, followed by the emancipation of the individual, and finally reconstruction and reintegration into a new society, which leaves the individual enlightened in the way that Simmel understood the idea: distanced, objective, rational, and never completely at home. To Park, Stonequist, and other sociologists, this personality type was historically Jewish:

> When, however, the walls of the medieval Ghetto were torn down and the Jew was permitted to participate in the cultural life of the peoples among whom he lived, there appeared a new type of personality, namely a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. . . . The emancipated Jew was, and is, the historical and typical marginal man, the first cosmopolite and citizen of the world. (Park, 1928: 892)

For historically contingent, but in no way random, reasons, then, the Jew became the first marginal man. The Enlightenment released the Jews, who then became estranged from their own past and cultural traditions but also marginalized in majority society, a process that gave modern Jews, as

noted earlier, a double consciousness, never quite at home either in Jewish culture and tradition or in majority society. For Park and, as we will see, also for Hess, this was not, however, a negative development or an inherent problem of the Enlightenment; it was enlightenment itself as a historical and social process. It was a historical account, a social analysis, and a normative perspective for the ideal mentality for the modern man, a secular prophecy or an alternative, processual teleology in which an exemplary minority embodied the psychology of modernity towards which history will move. This was minoritarian modernity *avant la lettre* (Breckenridge, 2002: 6). Strangeness and marginality were productive social positions and psychologies in modern society. Park developed his social type of the marginal man on the basis not only of Simmel's thought on the stranger but also of broader patterns linking the psychology of city dwellers, the psychology of money, the cultural meaning of movement, and other core aspects of Simmel's thought. Marginality produces enlightenment, productivity, and the psychology suitable for the continuous

reconstructions that social life in the modern world entails. For historically contingent but not coincidental reasons, the Jews became the classic example of this personality.

The Classic Strangers

In Simmel's essay (1971), the Jews are mentioned twice as the specific example and the historical contextualization of what stranger and strangeness mean: "the classic example of this is the history of the European Jews" (144). Obviously, this matter-of-fact indexical pointing to the history of the European Jews is indicative of the existence of a popular social imaginary in which the Jews were already perceived as familiar strangers, but at the same time, it requires us to examine more specifically what it was that Simmel actually meant. Using the Jews as the classic example clearly entailed for Simmel a whole package of controversial semantic and symbolic content related to the Jews and to his own situation, from race biology to fin-de-siècle debates about the degenerative influence of the Jews on society. Simmel completely avoids cultural, religious, or race-based

explanations for the role played by the Jews, instead associating that role with their economic history, seen as a social history through which social characters and economic systems, in this case the modern capitalist money economy, evolve within the same unifying historical and societal forces. The Jews are the classic example because of the role they fulfill in the economic system, while that very economic system at the same time produces strangeness as an effect of its method of measuring value, namely money. In the modern economy, understood in its broadest sense as a unified system entailing culture and psychology, in other words as a social form, the Jews were fertilizers of the economy. They mediated trade, enabled economic dynamics, and simultaneously stimulated a psychological distancing between objects and their value that included not only goods but also places and identities, as Simmel explains in *The Philosophy of Money* (2004), in the section entitled "Money's Congruence with Those Who Are Marginal" (221–228).

Simmel's Jewish stranger is not unrelated to the allo-semitic discourses of the period, i.e. to very prolific discourses that gave the Jews a particular significance vis-à-vis social

development and social pathologies. Antisemites also pointed to the role Jews played in, for example, the economy, finance, intellectual life, and journalism, and many of them even emphasized the same particular feature that Simmel did, namely the fact that the strangers/Jews were entering into a social organization in which all positions were already occupied (Simmel, 1971: 149; **Fine, 2016**). The stranger has to produce the conditions of possibility for his or her own "landless" life, to which trade is the best means. The stranger is a supernumerary, an addition who is still part of society or, in Simmel's words (1971: 149), an inorganic appendix that is still an organic member of the group. This makes the stranger, in some significant respects, a collective identity in Simmel's perspective. The stranger is not a Romany, transient, weirdo, or mentally ill person, for example, but a simultaneously inorganic and organic part of society that can at the same time be pointed to as an appendix. Simmel gives the example of the pre-Enlightenment European practice of indiscriminately levying taxes on the Jews. All Jews had to pay exactly the same tax, while other people paid taxes according to their wealth. The Jews carried only symbolic content: their social

position was “Jew,” not owner of this or that objective content or value (149). In other matters, the Jews were countrymen, colleagues, fellow members of various networks, or family, but they also carried this collective property of strangeness in a special way.

Simmel’s perspective, although it shared, in its diagnosis of the Jews of the period, some aspects with discourses that were pathologizing, racial, or culturally essentialist, was nevertheless very different from them. For Simmel the strangeness of the Jews appeared as a product of history, unique but also generalizable. The Jews did not carry any particular metaphysical lesson for the world, no moral role as scapegoats or reminders, as an essential or eternal value, or as a special contribution to the universal history of civilization from a metaphysical perspective; the role they played was, instead, specific to the historical development of social forms in Europe and to the economic system of modernity. This **constitution** of the strangers/Jews is a social **form** within the modern social order, but it has also formed Jewish subjectivities and Jewish history. Simmel’s Jewish stranger thus outlines a notion of contingency closely related to “exemplarity”: the Jews are

the classic example of the stranger, but from a general perspective, that role could have been played by another social group. Nevertheless, it was not, and the Jews and Jewish history have been interwoven with the social **form** of the stranger, lighting up the boundaries both of Jewish history and of the Enlightenment.

Simmel's Jewish stranger points to something central in his sociological and philosophical thought in general which is the connectedness, or even the necessary unity, of particularity and universality. In the stranger, the categories of distance and nearness, home and foreign, now and then, are connected in a variety of almost paradoxical observations of how various properties that belong to the stranger are, at the same time, general properties of social existence. As Elizabeth Goodstein (2017) also notes, the stranger shows us Simmel's complex social thought on how a priori categories, our universals, are historically developed, shaped through temporal sequences, invariably tied to something, and how they are universalized in the processes of negotiating and enacting relations (308).[2]

Cultural-historical identification, the indexical pointing to the "where" and the "who," is then for Simmel about much more than providing an example; it is about exemplarity not in the sense of being "one of a kind" or "one among many" but in the sense of being "more than itself." Where allo-semitic discourse loads the "negative Jew" with a wide range of often incoherent symbolic content, often both anti- and philosemitic, which also could be seen as "more than itself," Simmel explains to us the limited contingency involved in how the role of the Jews developed along with modernity's social forms and social imaginaries.

Jewish Exemplarity

In the following, I will draw on the works of the Jewish communist Moses Hess, who between 1837 and 1862 developed a notion of Jewish exemplarity for the future, i.e. the notion that Jewish history is a secular, processual teleology in world history in which the minority, the Jews, are in reality the same as the ideal totality, the ideal future social norm, which eventually dissolves the distinction

between the Jewish social form and modernity. I do this in order to clarify a genealogy of historical and social thought on Jewish exemplarity, which Simmel tapped into and then expanded. Before Simmel's Jewish stranger and Park's marginal man, the Jews were already internal outsiders in major streams of European cultural, historical, and social thought, but Hess turned this strangeness into an exemplary, socially meaningful position, a "more than itself" social position, in which the Jews were the historical fertilizers of the seeds of modernity. Hess's work is an important example of how, in the nineteenth century, Jewish exemplarity became an alternative historical topology and teleology to the main currents of the Enlightenment, and his work can help us understand some of the conceptual-historical background of Simmel's Jewish stranger and Park's marginal man. In Hess's work, we see how the dichotomies of universal-particular, familiar-strange, etc., are dissolved and replaced with exemplarity, within a monist worldview in which the Jews are the historical bearers of the double consciousness of modernity.

Hess was an important actor in mid-nineteenth-century Hegelian circles. It is difficult to draw a clear line of argument or linear evolution of thought through Hess's oeuvre, from *Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit* (*The Holy History of Mankind*) in 1837 to his now best-known *Rom und Jerusalem: Die letzte Nationalitätenfrage* (*Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism*) (1862), which is widely considered to be a precursor to modern Zionism. Nevertheless, there are clear indications of a deep ongoing concern with questions of particularity versus universality and with the place of Judaism in both past and future. In both works, the Jews and Judaism play an exemplary role for the historical development of social forms.

In *The Holy History of Mankind*, the young Hess (2004) attempted to lay the groundwork for an ambitious philosophy of history. His motivation was his experience of a dire need for a new historical vision with the potential to re-evaluate and redirect religion and religious differences into an inclusive history that would embrace both Judaism and Christianity in a common progressive development. The book was written in the form of a prophecy, published anonymously

by “a young Spinozist” and addressed to all “God-fearing governments,” and its discourse began with a series of quotations from the Bible, giving it the full authority of historical importance. The book was the first socialist tract to be published in German, and as such a revolutionary document, but at the same time it was an odd mixture of Judaism, Christianity, Spinozism, and Hess’s own ideas of historical progression.

Hess’s self-professed Spinozist inspiration demonstrated itself in his vision of the connectedness of everything. *The Holy History of Mankind* was constructed as a monist line of argument in which everything that happens to anything will eventually have effects on all other things. The surface of things is connected to the depth of things, to paraphrase David Frisby’s introduction to Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money* (2004), and all elements both bear and are borne by the totality (xviii). In this argument, all differences are differences in attributes, not of substance. This is because our knowledge of things stems from our knowledge of their effects, which implicitly involves knowledge of the causes of the effects. To have an idea about something implies having

knowledge about that thing's causes and effects. In his ambitious attempt to write a history demonstrating the connectedness of everything, Hess emphasized the effects of various cultural and social forms on historical development. This natural parallelism between ideas and things, mind and matter, and the secularized teleology that Hess derived from Spinoza linked Hess both to the Enlightenment's broader pantheism dispute, sparked by Lessing and Jacobi, and to its more specifically Jewish dimension, embodied by Moses Mendelssohn in the late Enlightenment (Goetschel, 2004; Feldt, 2016). In this way, Hess inserted himself into the lines of transmission of the important debates over the character and identification of Jews and Jewishness that were part of the Enlightenment debates over Spinozism, pantheism, atheism, and heresy and that continued in and around the strife over the Jewishness of Jesus in the 1830s. As Shlomo Avineri also notes in his introduction to *The Holy History of Mankind*, Hess (2004) was worried that an abstract universalism would prove to be false in its effects and that the debates over Jews and Judaism were an indication of the danger implied in the thought of many radical Hegelians (xxvii).

The Holy History of Mankind is divided into two sections. The first section is entitled "The Past as the Foundation of What Would Happen," while the second bears the title "The Future as the Consequence of What Has Happened." In the first section, Hess presents an outline of world history in which the Greco-Roman contributions to historical progression are completely marginalized, replaced by an exclusively Jewish origin for Western civilization and metaphysics. In Hess's scheme of things, there exist only three "fathers" of the evolutionary-historical stages of Western civilization: namely the Jewish fathers considered as one; Jesus Christ; and finally Spinoza, who represents the final historical stage, in which universal freedom can become possible (5–57). Hess's historical vision is both teleological and processual, as reflected by his section titles: the past is a foundation and the future is a consequence, but not in a purely dialectical or structural way. The social forms developed historically carry with them meaning that is "more than themselves," making the past a foundation for prognosis within limited contingency. Despite Hess's quasi-metaphysical language, we see here contours of Simmel's processual teleology in which the Jews also, qua the

past, play a role that means more than itself. Judaism, in Hess, is reconstructed as a completely integrated stream in Western historical and social evolution, and Judaism carries with it meaning for more than itself. The prophet of this particularist universalism is a Jew: "With Spinoza began no other period than that for which Christ had yearned, for which he and the first disciples and all of Christendom have hoped and prophesied" (44). Hess's metaphysical history does not bear directly on our understanding of Simmel's stranger apart from the significant background of the entanglement of Jews with a particularist or pragmatic notion of universalism. This entanglement, though, is deeply important for understanding the relationship between the Jews and the boundaries of the Enlightenment, which the social role of the stranger illuminates.

The Jewish Social Form: Nationality

In Hess's topology of world history, the Jews embody and carry with them through history the universal virtues of law, justice, solidarity, and nationhood, as elements of their social form. Jesus

Christ, and the rise and eventual fall of Christendom, are an integrated part of Hess's evolutionary scheme, which reveals itself in the final stage as the development of a universal human consciousness, led by the example of the Jewish nation. It is unclear whether Hess envisioned that all people would become Jews or that, instead, Jews would cease to exist, along with all hitherto known nations, and be swallowed up by the new common consciousness of mankind. Hess was unclear on this in the same way that Simmel later was when he indicated an osmotic relationship between Jews and Europeans through which Europeans were Judaized but Jews were also Europeanized. This, however, should not be understood as a cultural melting process, or an integration process, but as historical sociology. As a social form, the Jews are not disappearing, they are Judaizing Europe (Morris-Reich, 2008: 84). In Hess's much less coherent and much less sophisticated thought, this was Spinozism and Hegelianism combined: laws of nature, laws of history and justice, are God's laws, and the world is all one substance, in which everything is related, but at the same time these universals manifest themselves through exemplary cases and individualities.

> This nation has been summoned from the very beginning to conquer the world—not like Pagan Rome by its force of arms, but through the inner virtue of its spirit. The Jewish People itself wandered like a ghost through the world it had conquered, and its enemies did not succeed in vanquishing it, because its spirit is intangible. This spirit has already permeated the world, and the world is yearning for a new constitution worthy of the old Mother. (Hess, 2004: 95)

At this early point in the development of Hess's thought, he is primarily concerned with rewriting the history of mankind, in other words outlining the natural law of historical development as he sees it. Most significantly, as we have seen, Hess marginalizes Greco-Roman heritage and replaces it with a much-more-than-itself Judaism, as both the foundation of important social traits, which through historical processes become increasingly universalized, and the end goal of the history of mankind,

as a composition of nationalities inspired by the Jewish social form. From this perspective, Judaism comes to embody the first true *Volksstaat*, i.e. the first particular nation, as well as the future of a common human social imaginary in which "the law of God will live in every member" (96). The historical mobility and marginality of the Jews will move towards the center. In 1837, the young Hess was a revolutionary socialist, but he was also deeply concerned with the contemporary construction of Jews and Jewishness within the Hegelian movement. *The Holy History* is marked by a pervasive ambivalence about the Jews, which Simmel also expounded vis-à-vis Zionism in particular as well as vis-à-vis the future of Jewishness in general: in other words, for which rational prognosis does the past lay the foundation? On the one hand, Hess develops a historical and philosophical reappraisal of Judaism with the purpose of rehabilitating Judaism for the future, and on the other hand what he delivers is a universalizing manifesto calling for the unity of mankind, which will melt old barriers. Despite this ambivalence, Hess effectively makes the future "Jewish." With Simmel's stranger early in the twentieth century, this ambivalence could be seen as coalescing

into a non-opposition between Jewish merging and Jewish nationalism, because it is a special proportion and reciprocal tension between nearness and remoteness that produce “the specific form of the relation to the “stranger”” (Simmel, 1971: 149).

By 1862, the mature Hess had let go of the ambivalence between securing a central role for Judaism in the utopian future and the total unity of mankind. In his *Rome and Jerusalem*, formulated as a series of letters, he revises and comments on his own thought and replies to his critics on the particular issue of nationality. Hess had realized that true universality had to manifest itself through the liberation of individuality. Each nation carried an identity and historical experiences that both shaped it and fostered visions of freedom in its members. A communist revolution and its claim to erase differences based on ethnicity and religion seemed to the mature Hess to be a great violence against the collective individualities in which freedom was anchored. Nations were simply cornerstones of rational prognoses for the future. In Hess’s view, it was impossible to separate the ideas, texts, and practices of living from the people who actually lived

them, meaning that Jews and Judaism were inseparable from their history, and the universal learning that could come from Judaism was accordingly inseparable from the Jews themselves. As a consequence, nations as well as individuals had to be liberated (Hess, 1918: 48–49). Simmel, living after the unification of Germany in 1871 and under formal Jewish equality, and being German and formally Christian, did not share Hess's ideology on Jewish nationhood, but that should not impede our understanding of the similarities between Hess's use of the concept of Jewish nationality and Simmel's Jewish social form. Like Simmel, Robert Park (1928) was not a Jewish nationalist, but he understood America in the 1920s and 1930s as a social laboratory of the world where nations such as the Jews could reconstruct themselves and be liberated. Enlightenment and modernization were extensions of emancipated Jews, the first cosmopolites and citizens of the world (892).

In *Rome and Jerusalem*, the Jews are the people, the collective individuality, who invent family, solidarity, and social justice, values that are crucial for all societies. In Hess's words (1918), "Judaism is rooted in the love of the family; patriotism and nationalism are flowers of its

spirit, and the coming regenerated state of human Society will be its ripe fruit" (48). Jewish history showed that Jews did not distinguish among individual, family, and nation and that they thereby created an understanding of the unity of the world in the sense of each element bearing the totality while at the same time being borne by it. The Jews were both an empirically existing people and also an abstracted, theoretical element of a wider sociology, and these two poles are connected. This sense of unity was the real source of universalist thought; thus, it was impossible to separate unity from the particular in much the same way that we see with Simmel's stranger and Park's marginal man. In 1862, Hess continued his prophetic argument that Christianity's destiny would be fulfilled with the recognition that Spinozism was the latest and final prophecy of Judaism. The spirit of this final prophecy was scientific, rational, and nationalist, incarnated in dialectics of history, justice, and the evolution of social forms. Hess read the American and French revolutions as signs of the coming messianic age of Spinoza: signs signalling not only the freedom of individual people but also the exemplarity of Judaism. The American and French revolutions were revolutions of

people "who had acquired their national historical religion only through the influence of Judaism" (138). The spiritual language aside, we see the contours of a processual modern teleology in which the Jewish social form plays a particular role, a role that is also evident in Simmel's work and later in the work of Park and Stonequist in the 1920s and '30s.

In several ways, *The Holy History* included positions that were pursued by and that coalesced for Hess in *Rome and Jerusalem*. His concern for the future of Judaism materialized within a nationalist scheme in which Judaism, through its historical exemplarity, played a more-than-itself role. The character of the Jewish nation was to Hess the most modern kind of social form: a national psychology that was a bearer of the totality and also borne by it. Hess's propositions marked a significant new entanglement in the social and historical imaginaries that Jewish intellectuals constructed for Jewishness in the modern world. Since the Enlightenment, and up until Hess, Jewish intellectuals and Christian philosemites had constructed cultural-historical topologies of world history that placed Judaism at the nexus of the history of Western civilization (Leonard, 2014). In

the historical-philological mentality of the period, up until Hess, Judaism was important to study and recognize, as both a creator of and a stepping-stone to the evolution of Western culture and history; but for Hess, as later for Simmel and Park, the Jewish social role was important not just in itself but as an exemplar for general characteristics of historical and social development.

The Limited Contingency of Jewish History

Hegelian biblical scholars such as David Friedrich Strauss, and historians and Jewish reformers such as Abraham Geiger, also contributed to the situating of Judaism in an important secularized time-space in Western history. The controversies that followed Strauss's and Geiger's contributions to the German debates spread across Europe and to America through translations of their works, turning into a social crisis that fundamentally questioned the cosmological as well as the historical and social order. Strauss's Hegelian argument that biblical texts, including the New Testament, were myths, representing ideas rather than empirical or divine truths, turned the discussions of order

away from theology and towards society and politics. In the Straussian version, Jesus was a Jewish individual who became associated with the "idea of Christ" because his person gave this idea a specific face. Jesus became the historical realization of the Christ idea for Christians (Strauss, 1846; Linstrum, 2010). For Geiger, on the other hand, the quest was about breaking Judaism free from Christological readings of Jewish history and religion. Geiger (re-)invented a Jewish Jesus, a Pharisee, who was both a tool and a weapon in the service of Judaism's right to exist in and of itself, independent of Christian theology. Jewish history and cultural and social identity became a key controversy in the nineteenth-century construction of modern cultural-historical topologies, as amply evidenced by the intense intellectual interest in Jews and Judaism but also by modern antisemitism and the heated discussions over the normalization of Jewish citizens across Europe (Sorkin, 1987; Heschel, 1998). The Jewish stranger and marginal man is accordingly more than itself; it represents an alternative social imaginary to the universalism implied in Kant's cosmopolitan teleology.

Hess was associated with the left Hegelian movement, or Young Hegelians, that developed following, and partly as a result of, the Strauss controversy (Breckman, 1999). Along with Karl Marx, Hess combined Hegelianism with new communist ideas and eventually came to develop a historical materialist analysis that was partly based on a criticism of other left Hegelians' emphasis on the critique of religion. In his youth, Hess shared with Marx the idea that consciousness, both social and individual, grows out of the social position that the group or individual occupies within a value-production hierarchy. For real change to happen, it is not enough to change people's ideas; instead, the entire system of value production needs to be reformed or even revolutionized (Avineri, 1985). This political radicalism, primarily disseminated through publications such as the *Deutch-Französisches Jahrbuch* and the *Rheinische Zeitung*, where Hess was an editor, led in the 1840s to the exile of Hess, Marx, and others. Despite the differences among them, the radical criticism and activism of the left Hegelians, understood as a wider movement of opposition against religion, aristocracy, and the conservative order of the German states, led to more materialist-oriented

analyses of the Jewish situation in Europe. Instead of being a problem related to the essential nature of the Jewish religion, the Jewish question became a question of the Jewish position within the social order (Bauer, 1843; Marx, 1919). This history of the changed vocabulary of analysis of the Jewish position is important for understanding the crystallization of a socially constructive position of marginality in the social order associated with the Jews. The Jewish stranger and marginal man is in this way not entirely bound by materialist analysis of the Jewish social position, but it is not historically free of it either. Understanding the stranger includes the Jewish past, the German-Jewish experience, and its extensions into universalizing social theory.

The materialist analysis of the Jewish situation and experience that the Hegelians undertook from the 1830s to the 1860s was anchored in the perception that it was fundamentally cultural, historical, and social positions and roles that produced both the identity and the self-understanding of individuals as well as groups. Jews were Jews because they inhabited certain social spaces and performed particular social roles, which has now become an almost commonsense

perspective. For many Jews and Christian liberal reformers, this social prison of the Jews, consigned to the margins of historical progress, modern culture, and the modern social order, was the result of the oppressive power of Christianity and its strong anti-Jewish prejudice (Gerdmar, 2009). Over the course of the nineteenth century, Christian theologians developed readings of biblical texts and Jewish religious practices that created historical and cultural spaces in which Jews and Judaism were paganized, barbarized, and identified as belonging to a less advanced historical era; this was also an Enlightenment view, held by both Kant and Hegel (Munk, 2006; Westerkamp, 2008). This theological antisemitism explicitly and implicitly claimed that the Jews were representatives of their religion, understood as the philosophy of Judaism, its central texts, and the ritual practices of the Jewish religion performed in the synagogue and in Jewish homes. Even secularized Jews inherited and carried this religious and cultural coding in their social habitus, and they could and would spread it into the social organism at large if this coding was not identified (Geller, 2011). The perspective of Jewish exemplarity and the Hegelian materialist analysis were two related but still different

oppositional positions against the Christian, theological antisemitism that pervaded social thought in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

However, the materialist analysis developed by Marx and Hess rejected this identification of Christianity as the primary source of the marginalization of the Jews. Instead, they emphasized how the distribution of ownership and value production in society created a cultural order of which Christianity was a significant part, but nevertheless more as a result of this order than as its producer. In this materialist analysis, Jews and Jewishness could not have an idealist core developed through the historical spirit of Judaism and surviving across the centuries through rabbinical traditions and holy teachings. Jewishness was instead reproduced by the social order and by the historical and cultural imagination that this order created. This social imaginary should be understood not only as a hegemonic cultural power that locked the Jews in their precarious role as internal outsiders, but also as a passionate attachment, on the part of the Jews themselves, to their place in this order. Controversially (and it is still controversial today), Marx wrote in *Zur Judenfrage*

that Jewishness would cease to exist if the material conditions for its existence were removed, and the world would then be freed of the Jews; Hess, meanwhile, saw Jewishness as the social form of the future. As also noted by Jeffrey Alexander, Simmel was more sensitive and subtle than this in his more complex view on differentiation in society. The Jews were not deviant, proletariat, or disenfranchised, but they were experienced as different, in but not entirely of society. Nevertheless, Simmel did not discover a new social category with the stranger; as Alexander (2013) claims, he connected to a history of thinking with Jewish exemplarity, which already saw the Jews in similar terms (79–80). This does not detract from Simmel's, or later Park's, enunciation and expansion of the social category of the stranger, but, rather, adds to our understanding of it.

Conclusion

This genealogy of Jewish exemplarity, from mid-nineteenth-century German radical thought to the marginal man in early-twentieth-century American sociology, illuminates a processual historical

logic that represents a subtle redirection of strong Kantian and Hegelian anti-Jewish historical teleologies. Jewish exemplarity, the stranger, and the marginal man do not include essentialized notions of Jewishness but, at the same time, their conceptual history shows how, over time, Jewishness grows into a generalized historical and social form that imbues Jewishness and Jewish history with identity and meaning as much as it fertilizes social change. In the work of Robert Park and others, the Jews became the exemplars of enlightenment and modernization. The notion of Jewish exemplarity is both historically important, as an alternative notion of historical progression in which the Jews are not relics from the past, and theoretically provocative, as a position that sees the Jews neither as carrying specific essentialized qualities nor as purely the product of discourse or society.

The Jews and Judaism inspired concepts, patterns, teleologies, and theories in the humanities and social sciences from the Enlightenment through the Second World War, but not all ways of theorizing with the Jews refer to the fetishization of Jews, to allo-semitic discourse, or to

"the Jew" as a semantic blank space that can be filled with all sorts of social fears (Gilman, 1991; Geller, 2011). It is clear that Park, Stonequist, and other American sociologists publishing in the *American Journal of Sociology* in the 1920s and 1930s saw the Jews as the empirically existing social form on which the theoretical concept of the "marginal man" rested. The marginal man, as described by Park in 1928, was based on Simmel's Jewish stranger but was then developed into the core concept of a pragmatist social theory in which "marginality" and "double consciousness" were the central characteristics of the psychology of modernity. Park and other American pragmatist sociologists did not fetishize the Jew, but they saw in Jewish history an exemplarity and the limited contingency of the process of development of a social form. In *The Philosophy of Money* and in *The Stranger*, Simmel extended the development of this social form all the way back to the ancient Near East but also tentatively forward into the future, via a processual teleology inherent to his historical logic.

The Holocaust has since imprinted the Jewish historical rough ground, the history of Jewish exemplarity, and the history of the stranger with catastrophe, thus reshaping this historical, processual teleology. **Given Jewish history, the stranger is not only the one who comes today and stays tomorrow, or the unnerving "foreigner inside," which Zygmunt Bauman (1989) called the social being of the Jews in "Modernity and Holocaust" (34).[3] After the Holocaust, the stranger is also the topos, or social form, of potential catastrophe. Between Hess, Simmel, and Park on the one hand and Bauman on the other, the European Jews were murdered, and the exemplarity of the Jews for the social imagination changed, but it did not disappear.**

For Hess's prophetic Jews, Simmel's Jewish strangers, and Park's marginal man, Jewish history is the basis, the historical experience and process through which central aspects of the totality can be seen. Historical actors and events can alter the meaning of a social form, and Jewish exemplarity, in the meaning it had in Simmel's time, has faded and transformed. Yet, despite the radical changes in Jewish social forms in the twentieth century, some aspects pertaining to the

history of Jewish exemplarity resurface. The relation between Jewish history, as both past and future, and the concepts discussed in this article is not merely symbolic: it is exemplary and historical, and this exemplarity was already a fairly well-developed social imaginary at the end of the nineteenth century, though it can be argued that it came into its strongest articulation in the strands of American pragmatist sociology in the 1920s and 1930s mentioned above.

Simmel's stranger, in particular, has inspired much social thought, but it is questionable how much of that thought actually follows Simmel's meaning, since Jewish history limits the contingency of how to understand the concept of the stranger. Jewish exemplarity, as we have seen unfolded in Hess's work, was an alternative teleology to strong anti-Jewish currents in Enlightenment progressive thought, and it opens up future horizons for Jews and Jewishness, but without the cultural, racial, or metaphysical determinism most often reflected in discourses of the nature of Judaism or discourses of the special moral role played by the Jews. Hess illuminates for us the entanglements of this social imaginary between old and new vocabularies that crystallized over

the course of the nineteenth century, leading to fairly clear notions of a Jewish social form that was at the same time modernity's exemplary form, as a complex whole of group psychology, individual psychology, economy, mobility, and historical experience.

As I reread "The Stranger" today, a hundred years after Georg Simmel's death, it is striking to note how Jewish exemplarity has resurfaced in historical and social thought relating to cosmopolitanism, globalization, and transnationalism. Jewish history is once again being used in historical and social theorizing, particularly in debates about the social forms of cosmopolitanism and in the study of pragmatist and processual social thought in America, in which the Jews and Jewish history again play a significant role as the pragmatic example of a social form. Bringing Jewish history, Simmel's stranger, and Park's marginal man into sustained discussion with each other shows how much Jewish history set the boundaries for the possible meanings of these concepts, and how such "Jewish concepts" connect to the boundary debates of the Enlightenment, but within a different teleology than that of a historically progressive Kantian perspective. The stranger's past is

not lost, like a limb that no longer serves a purpose; instead, it is transformed and carried into the future.

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[1] By "social imaginary", I refer to the organization of knowledge into "kinds" of knowledge. Kinds of knowledge are not a priory given but they are created in processes and over time. I discuss here how the Jews became an important form in certain ways of conceptualizing and imagining the dynamics of society. See also Goodstein (2017).

[2] Goodstein writes: "Creating a canonical sociological 'essay' by decontextualizing his 'Excursus on the Stranger' from its (literal and conceptual place) in his 'large' *Soziologie* has not only effaced what Simmel explicitly depicted as the theoretically significant exemplarity of the stranger. It has obscured the way his meditation on the figure of the stranger and strangeness intervened philosophically at a crucial historical and cultural moment in the politically as well as intellectually decisive process of constituting the modern disciplinary imaginary" (322, my emphasis). I concur, and I find that this evaluation also pertains to the problem with ignoring the fact that Simmel explicitly pointed to the history of European Jews when explicating the exemplarity of the stranger.

[3] Some aspects of Bauman's Jewish "foreigners inside" are inspired by Simmel while others, arguably, anachronistically read the stranger as a site of disaster into Simmel. But Bauman's central contention that it is unforgivable to consider the Holocaust as something that happened to the Jews, but also unforgivable to consider the Holocaust as a freak occurrence in Western modernity, reminds us of Simmel's meditations on the stranger as both Jewish and universal. Historical particularity can be extended, via temporal sequences and events, into universality, or the a priori.