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Agency, Free Will, Self-Constitution: New Concepts for Historians of German-Jewish History between 1914 and 1938?

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses recent work on German-Jewish agency between 1914 and 1938. To find out whether 'agency' might be a helpful category for examining the crises facing Central European Jewry in this period, the article addresses the subject from the perspectives of individual and collective agency, applying classifications that philosophers have employed to make sense of human conduct. As I hope to show, these delimitations are only a preliminary step in trying to determine the explanatory power of agency. Whether the latter can serve as a tool in future work on modern German-Jewish history depends on the suitability of more specific philosophies of agency. Here the work of Christine Korsgaard and especially Michael Bratman may prove helpful in reflecting both on the self-understanding of German Jews in the first decades of the twentieth century and on their 'freedom of action' once this self-understanding was called into question. There is reason to see planning structures—grounded in the diachronic organization of our temporally extended selves—as basic to our individual and collective agency. Without 'planning agency', I will argue, 'agency' refers to mere action or choice.

'Human beings are *condemned* to choice and action', writes philosopher Christine Korsgaard.[1] And she continues: 'Maybe you think you can avoid it, by resolutely standing still, refusing to act, refusing to move. But it's no use, for that will be something you have chosen to do, and then you will have acted after all. Choosing not to act makes not acting a kind of action, makes it something that you do.'[2] 'Agency', if we accept this account, is ubiquitous wherever and whenever entities 'act on each other and interact with each other'.[3] Insofar as German Jews in the first decades of the last century were entities like you and me, we might ask how the subject of 'German-Jewish agency' could be examined constructively.

[1] Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*, Oxford 2009, p. 1. Italics in original.
[2] Ibid. See also Markus Schlosser, 'Agency', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agency/, accessed 28 July 2020.
[3] Schlosser, 'Agency'.

This article attempts to do so with the help of philosophy. The first section briefly discusses two possible non-philosophical responses to the question of German-Jewish agency in the early twentieth century. The first invokes Todd Endelman's reflections on the historiography of Diaspora Jewry. The second relates to the way in which post-colonial thinking has tried to shed light on the matter. Both touch on subjects (power, influence, resistance, integration) that are related to the issue in important ways. To find out whether 'agency' might be a helpful category for examining the crises facing Central European Jewry in this period, the second section will address the subject from the perspectives of individual and collective agency, applying classifications that philosophers have employed to make sense of human conduct. As I hope to show, these delimitations are only a preliminary step in trying to determine the explanatory power of agency. Whether the latter can serve as a tool in future work on modern German-Jewish history depends on the suitability of more specific philosophies of agency.

Here the work of Korsgaard and especially Michael Bratman may prove helpful in reflecting both on the self-understanding of German Jews in the first decades of the twentieth century and on their 'freedom of action' once this self-understanding was called into question. There is reason to see planning structures—grounded in the diachronic organization of our temporally extended selves—as basic to individual and collective agency. Unlike simple 'agency', a term that is so all-inclusive that it can refer to almost anything, 'planning agency' is about purposeful activity over time; unlike agency that acts from moment to moment, planning agency is about coherence and consistency. In the case of German Jewry in the first half of the twentieth century, the idea of planning agency may enable us to determine how agency was restricted well before regime change effectively cut short whatever plans and projects existed. The advantages of this approach, I will argue, are threefold: it offers, firstly, a conceptual tool that avoids both the ambiguities associated with the term 'agency' and the polemics associated with supposed Jewish lack of agency in the 1930s and 1940s. It allows us, secondly, to challenge tendencies in the historiography of the Weimar period that, in an effort to banish the erstwhile engrossment with doom and gloom, have sidelined the experiences of many Jews for whom the period was neither about optimism nor about the high drama of decision-making. Here, the notion of planning agency may alert us to the fact that, increasingly and unexpectedly, Jewish youths and adults had to abandon long-term ventures that had comprised their self-understanding as German Jews. Thirdly, it enables scholars to reconsider the recent focus on pluralistic expectations for the future by noting that tangible experiences of exclusion gave rise to realistic expectations of decline that bespoke real change rather than ideological predilections.

I. HISTORICIZING, COUNTERING, RESISTING

An initial reaction to 'agency' as a possible concept in the field of German-Jewish history is to wonder why scholars have turned to the concept in the first place. Why

agency, and why agency now? Asking such questions is to engage in the historicization of one's own discipline, a move that seems particularly apt when new terms are introduced to a given field. A prominent example of such an attempt at historicizing particular approaches in Jewish history is Todd Endelman's essay 'The Legitimization of the Diaspora Experience in Recent Jewish Historiography'.[4] Writing in the early 1990s, Endelman believed to have identified a distinct trend in the literature on the subject. Compared to the immediate post-war period, when both the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel informed the work of many scholars, Jewish historiography took a more favourable view of Jewish life in the Diaspora from the 1970s onwards. Endelman attributed this shift in tone and content to the self-understanding of many scholars working in the United States. Feeling both '"at home" in America and "comfortable" about their Jewishness', they emphasized the perpetuation of Jewish identity in order to demonstrate that Jews, whether in late nineteenth-century Berlin or late twentieth-century Boston, could maintain their sense of Jewish belonging while actively participating in the life of the surrounding society.[5] Legitimating the Diaspora experience meant legitimating one's own existence—and countering Zionist and religious attacks on Jewish 'assimilationism' at the same time.

Is it possible to engage in a similar kind of historicization with regard to scholarship on German-Jewish agency? At this stage, it seems premature to do so. For one, the literature that has been identified in this respect touches on a diverse range of areas, from the sectarianism to the resilience of Jews, from their involvement in right-wing 'völkisch' (racist-nationalist) thinking and 'subaltern nationalism' to their emotional management of the 'Burgfrieden' (political truce) and their triumph over the 1916 'Judenzählung' (Jewish census), from their ability to travel, organize, and politicize after 1933 to their resistance to National Socialist dictates, among others.[6] There is no recognizable trend that would allow us to speak of an 'agential turn' in this or the broader historiography. For another, it would be equally difficult to single out a common self-understanding, either among historians or the public at large, that might point towards a burgeoning interest in agency. To be sure, prominent scholars have been critical of popular ('neo-liberal') conceptions of agency, rejecting the view that selves are flexible bundles of self-management skills or that the capacity for agency is a given, when in fact such a capacity expands and contracts over time,

[4] Todd M. Endelman, 'The Legitimization of the Diaspora Experience in Recent Jewish Historiography', in *Modern Judaism*, 11, no. 2 (1991), pp. 195–209.

[5] Ibid., p. 197. See also David Engel, 'Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History', in *Jewish History*, 20, nos. 3–4 (2006), pp. 243–264.

[6] This literature was alluded to during the conference on 'German-Jewish Agency in Times of Crisis, 1914–1938', held at the University of Sussex in February 2020. See Philipp Nielsen, *Between Heimat and Hatred: Jews and the Right in Germany, 1871–1935*, Oxford 2019; Anna Ullrich, *Von 'jüdischem Optimismus' und 'unausbleiblicher Enttäuschung'. Erwartungsmanagement deutsch-jüdischer Vereine und gesellschaftlicher Antisemitismus 1914–1938*, Berlin 2019; David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit. Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938*, Göttingen 2016; Stefan Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen. Der deutsche Zionismus im Feld des Nationalismus in Deutschland 1890–1933*, Göttingen 2016; David J. Fine, *Jewish Integration in the German Army in the First World War*, Berlin–Boston 2012; Tim Grady, *Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War*, New Haven–London 2017; Sarah Panter, *Jüdische Erfahrungen und Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Göttingen 2014.

or that dignity depends on agential autonomy, thus excluding children and the infirm from our thinking on the matter.[7] The critiques, moreover, do indicate that 'agency' has become somewhat of a catchword in today's discourse on who we are, how we ought to behave, and what distinguishes us from other animals. Still, the time is not yet ripe to argue, in an Endelmanian vein, that the ('neo-liberal') spirit of the age may explain why some historians have turned to the subject of agency. Where we have a vast literature on the Jewish Diaspora that allows us to trace the way in which historians have become more appreciative of alternative conceptions of Jewish identity, the same is not true for the as yet scattered writings on German-Jewish agency.

In the humanities, one of the most influential readings of what 'agency' might entail has emanated from post-colonial studies. In an effort to reconcile anti-essentialism with resistance against power, theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Paul Gilroy, and Stuart Hall introduced 'hybridity', 'diaspora', and 'mimicry' as preferred means of reference. For Bhabha, to take a pertinent example, mimicry—that is, the process 'by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and the "partial" representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from its essence'—is an effect of the 'cracks within the colonial discourse'.[8] Resistance, Bhabha and other post-colonialist thinkers maintain, is always engendered by the dominant discourse itself.[9]

Several scholars have utilized post-colonialist concepts to reassert the idea of (German-)Jewish agency in the face of a hostile Christian majority, most prominently perhaps Susannah Heschel. Heschel's principal aim in her work on Abraham Geiger is to demonstrate how the 'Wissenschaft des Judentums' ('science of Judaism') undermined the 'prevailing viewpoint established by the Christian eye'.[10] Geiger's writings represented a 'revolt of the colonized' against 'Christianity's intellectual hegemony'.[11] As one of the 'earliest examples of postcolonialist writing', Jewish history resembled a form of counterhistory, a polemic by which the sources of the adversary were exploited and brushed against the grain.[12] The belligerent reactions to Geiger's work, Heschel argues, testified to 'just how

[7] See, for example, Ilana Gershon, 'Neoliberal Agency', in *Current Anthropology*, 52 (2011), pp. 537–547; Ulrich Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform*, Frankfurt am Main 2007; Jens Elberfeld, *Anleitung zur Selbstregulation. Eine Wissensgeschichte der Therapeutisierung im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main–New York 2020; Maik Tänder, *Das therapeutische Jahrzehnt. Der Psychoboom in den siebziger Jahren*, Göttingen 2016, pp. 431–447; Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 132–133.

[8] Homi K. Bhabha, quoted in Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies*, London 1990, p. 147.

[9] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, London 1998, p. 178. See also Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford 2001; Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, London 1997; Alfred J. López, *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Postcolonialism*, Albany 2001.

[10] Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, Chicago 1998, p. 2.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 3 and p. 14.

powerful his gaze really was', reversing the 'power relations of the viewer and viewed', and thereby 'transforming Christianity into a semiotic representation within the economy of Judaism'.[13]

While Heschel's interpretation of Geiger's role in the theological discourse is a fascinating appropriation of Bhabha's suggestion that, in post-colonial settings, mimicry enables the 'observer' to become the 'observed', it presupposes that German Jews saw themselves as the colonized. Yet most Orthodox Jews, to take an obvious example, were only tangentially interested in commenting on 'the Christian theological realm rather than resting independently on Jewish identity'.[14] Many other German Jews, moreover, felt both German and Jewish, so that 'mimicry' or 'returning the gaze' would have appealed only to a minority engaged in religious disputes on Christology. These Jews would have been more sympathetic to Steven Aschheim's view that the Jewish minority, far from 'contributing' to 'pre-existent, static, normative structures', eventually came to 'co-constitute' German culture[15]—even if this 'active' role should not negate the recognition of the asymmetrical power relations between Jews and non-Jews throughout Germany history.[16]

As much as counterhistory, counterhegemony, or subaltern resistance are helpful reminders that Jews were not simply the submissive sufferers of antisemitism or the grateful receptacles of German culture, they remain wedded to the more common binaries that have characterized past disputes about Jewish behaviour before and after the rise of Hitler: active versus passive, voice versus silence, perpetrator versus victim. There is nothing wrong with upholding these criteria or adding new typologies such as coping, compliance, and evasion to account for Jewish strategies during the Holocaust.[17] Still, if 'agency' is simply another word for most of the above, it does not add to our understanding of German Jewry in times of crisis.

II. INTENTION AND WE-INTENTION

An alternative approach would be to consider 'agency' as a distinct concept. Indeed, philosophers like Christine Korsgaard are not content with the notion that we are condemned to action or that action is omnipresent. They believe that interrogating

[13] Ibid., p. 22 and p. 242. See also idem, 'Jewish Studies as Counterhistory', in David Biale and Michael Galchinsky (eds), *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1998, pp. 101–115. On counterhistory, see also David Biale, *Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah, and Counterhistory*, Cambridge, MA 1982; Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1993, pp. 36–37; Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany*, Leiden 2005; David M. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, Princeton 2003.

[14] Heschel, 'Jewish Studies', p. 109. There were exceptions, such as Elijah Zvi Soloveitchick. See Shaul Magid (ed.), *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament: Elijah Zvi Soloveitchick's Commentary on the Gospels*, Philadelphia 2019. I would like to thank one of the anonymous *LBI Year Book* readers for this reference.

[15] Steven E. Aschheim, 'German History and German Jewry: Boundaries, Junctions, and Interdependence', in *LBI Year Book*, 43, no. 1 (1998), pp. 215–322 (pp. 316–317).

[16] Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen*, pp. 26–27.

[17] See Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust*, Princeton 2017, p. 7.

agency is a worthwhile pursuit because agency should be distinguished from mere action. So a third response to our enquiry about the significance of Jewish agency might be to explore the philosophical debate on agency and free will. In doing so, we would have to disregard some theories, including deconstruction and psychoanalysis, that undermine conventional notions of agency. Rather than argue, like Derrida, Freud, or Lacan, that there always exists a 'gap between authorial intention and textual meaning',[18] or that the idea of oneness, wholeness, and identity is a metaphysical fiction,[19] or that all subjects are invariably de-centred,[20] or that the 'ego' is not the master in its own house,[21] or that the quest for cohesion and congruency is both interminable and futile,[22] we would ponder the ways in which agency has been envisaged by prominent philosophers.

There have been many ways, needless to say. I would like to focus initially on two broad areas, one connected to personal agency, the other connected to collective agency. The former is usually the starting point for the latter. It is also often discussed as part of the vexed issue of free will. According to the conception of individual agency most favoured by philosophers, 'a being has the capacity to exercise agency just in case it has the capacity to act intentionally, and the exercise of agency consists [primarily] in the performance of intentional actions'.[23] Opponents of the standard conception maintain that agency 'cannot be reduced to the capacity to act intentionally', insisting that the 'exercise of agency may be entirely spontaneous, in the sense that an agent may initiate an action for no reason and without prior intent'.[24] Agency, in this view, is about the power to initiate where 'the exercise of this power cannot be reduced to the agent's being moved by reasons or intentions'.[25] The purpose of this article is best served by the first version of agency outlined above. After all, we are not really interested in spontaneous acts that have causal effects, but in Jews who did things for a reason, permitting us, the historians of these Jews, to write about their actions as if they were expressive of identities and as if the identities in question were constituted by certain choices.

Now if agency is about intention, then agency needs freedom. We need to be free to will what we want. But what is this freedom about? 'If I were to learn that one of

[18] Christina Howells, *Derrida: Deconstruction from Phenomenology to Ethics*, Oxford 1998, p. 3.
[19] Emil Angehrn, *Interpretation und Dekonstruktion. Untersuchungen zur Hermeneutik*, Weilerwist 2003, pp. 248–249.
[20] Jonathan Culler, *Derrida: Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, London 1983, p. 140.
[21] Sigmund Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse. Gesammelte Werke XI*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, p. 295. On German fears that Freud's theories would undermine (bourgeois) self-control, see Anthony D. Kauders, *Der Freud-Komplex. Eine Geschichte der Psychoanalyse*, Berlin 2016, especially chapter 1. For the way in which psychoanalysts believed that therapy could restore a modicum of self-control ('where id was, there ego shall'), see Uffa Jensen, *Wie die Couch nach Kalkutta kam. Eine Globalgeschichte der frühen Psychoanalyse*, Berlin 2019.
[22] Moran M. Mandelbaum, 'The Fantasy of Congruency: The Abbé Sieyès and the 'Nation-State' *Problématique* Revisited', in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 42, no. 3 (2016), pp. 246–266, and idem, *The Nation/State Fantasy: A Psychoanalytical Genealogy of Nationalism*, London 2019.
[23] Schlosser, 'Agency'.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

my past actions was the result of hypnosis or brain simulation', writes Thomas Scanlon, 'I would feel alienated from this act: manipulated, trapped, reduced to the status of a puppet. But why [. . .] should we not feel this way about all our acts? Why should we not feel trapped all the time?'[26] This is a convenient way, I believe, to summarize how most people and many philosophers understand free will. It is not about self-legislation from the moment we are born, but about self-legislation when we feel it is necessary. It is not about all single events in a lifetime, but about the possibility of an open future with forking paths.[27] It is not about failing to acknowledge our socialization, biology, and socio-economic conditions, but about decision-making in certain circumstances.[28] It is not, finally, about the absence of structure (in the shape of linguistic capacities, cultural codes, symbolic orders, or background assumptions),[29] but about the absence of constraint (in the shape of coercion, paralysis, phobia, addiction, or incarceration).[30]

So, if we agree that individual agency is about actions based on intentions that are culturally and historically embedded, what kind of questions might we conjure up for individual Jewish agency to become the subject of our enquiry? More concretely, how would these questions differ from the ones that want us to reconsider, in a Zionist or neo-Baronian fashion, Jewish victimhood or passivity or impotence—questions that, to my mind, have been dealt with already?[31] And to what extent do we wish to stretch the concept of constraint in order to be able to speak meaningfully of Jewish agency at the individual level? Let me give two examples to illustrate my point.

As David Jünger has shown, many hundreds of Jews emigrated from and then returned to Germany in the first years of the Third Reich. In some cases, Jews that had returned managed to emigrate once more. For Jünger, such individual behaviour highlights the difference between emigration and escape. Unlike escape, which really only set in after 1938, emigration between 1933 and 1935 focused less on physical survival than on economic security. Unlike the post-1938 period, then, the future in the pre-1938 period was relatively open, with forking paths, as Jews could still make choices and as agency was still available.[32] Jünger's interpretation of events seems to give rise to two conclusions. Firstly, German-Jewish history from 1933 to 1938 was not a chronicle of fates foretold. This conclusion presupposes questions concerning teleology or the totalitarian nature of National Socialism. German Jewry's tangled path in the early years of the regime is a reminder that

[26] Thomas M. Scanlon, 'The Significance of Choice', in Gary Watson (ed.), *Free Will*, Oxford 2003, pp. 352–371 (p. 356).
[27] Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, Oxford 2005, p. 7.
[28] Mark Balaguer, *Free Will*, Cambridge, MA 2014, pp. 71–72. See also Geert Keil, *Willensfreiheit*, Berlin–Boston 2013, p. 107.
[29] On this, see above all William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*, Chicago 2005, p. 9, p. 144, and p. 164; John R. Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, Oxford 2010, p. 31 and p. 157.
[30] Kane, *Free Will*, p. 19 and p. 93.
[31] On neo-Baronianism, see David Engel, 'Crisis and Lachrymosity'.
[32] Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit*, pp. 20–25.

the twisted road to Auschwitz pertains not only to National Socialist policy or the exigencies of war, but also to the amount of latitude available to members of the Jewish minority. Secondly, agency all but ended in late 1938, when reacting rather than acting became the norm.[33] This conclusion implies similar questions about teleology and antisemitic legislation in the Third Reich. Indeed, it really demands that we decide on what we mean by teleology in the first place—at what stage, in other words, we think contingency is unhelpful in explaining larger developments. As I will argue in the final section, it is possible to speak of turning points well before 1933, 1935, or 1938, provided we adopt the concept of 'planning agency'. Already in the Weimar Republic, Jewish agency was circumscribed in all sorts of ways: Jews avoided streets, squares, and spas, contended with an ever-growing number of calls to boycott their shops and businesses, and experienced exclusion from associational life, political participation, and recreational activities. The rise of antisemitism dealt a serious blow to their planning agency, so much so that we should question the anti-teleological bent in recent literature on the Weimar Republic.

My second example, Jonathan Davidov and Zvi Eisikovits' discussion of free will in total institutions, may clarify the problem. Based on in-depth interviews with twenty former camp inmates, the work revealed that even in Auschwitz a certain kind of choice was available. One survivor named Miriam recounted how she made a life-changing decision on the ramp so that she could be 'on the survivors' side', with the young people who could work. As a result, she made sure not to stand too close to her parents, whose destiny she did not wish to share. This experience prepared Miriam and others for further selections in the camp: 'Prisoners did everything to get to the next selection looking as lively as possible. This included slapping, painting their faces with red dust that came off the walls and ovens of Auschwitz, exercise just before assembly, or simply running to the square as fast as possible.'[34]

Are we to deny these people their individual agency? Do these actions cast doubt on the affirmation, repeatedly advanced in the philosophical literature, that free will goes hand in hand with the absence of serious constraints? If so, what kind of constraints do we have to imagine in order to rule out agency? These questions boil down to the larger issue of how historians can make sense of individual agency. It could be argued, for example, that if some survivors, the horrors of Auschwitz notwithstanding, exercised agency, then the concept does not really help us beyond what we have already discussed in other contexts under the rubrics of victimhood, power, and powerlessness, or voice more generally. Alternatively, we would have to turn to more specific understandings of individual agency beyond what a majority of

[33] Jünger's thesis corresponds to the findings of Beate Meyer, who has shown that, unlike its predecessor organization, the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (Reich Association of Jews in Germany) could only react to the injunctions of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA) (Reich Security Main Office). Beate Meyer, *Tödliche Gratwanderung. Die Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland zwischen Hoffnung, Zwang, Selbstbehauptung und Verstrickung*, Göttingen 2011, p. 37, p. 46, p. 77, and p. 120.

[34] Jonathan Davidov and Zvi Eisikovits, 'Free Will in Total Institutions: The Case of Choice Inside Nazi Death Camps', in *Consciousness and Cognition*, 34 (2015), pp. 87–97 (pp. 91–92).

philosophers can agree on. I intend to highlight such an approach in the third section of this article.

Nevertheless, perhaps Jewish agency as a conceptual tool is more productive if we decide to put the individual behind us and study collective manifestations of Jewish agency instead. Again, philosophers, sociologists, and social psychologists have tried to come to grips with what such agency would involve. As is true for individual agency, 'intention' seems to make all the difference in that without it agency could not be properly distinguished from mere choice or action. Abraham Sesshu Roth has summarized John Searle's notion of 'we-intention' in order to spell out the difference between collective agency and mass behaviour:

> A number of individuals are scattered about in a park. Suddenly it starts to rain, and each runs to a centrally located shelter. Although there may be some coordination (people tend not to collide with one another), running to the shelter is not, in the relevant sense, something that we do together. Now imagine another scenario with the same individuals executing the same movements but as members of a dance troop performing a site-specific piece in that park. In both cases, there is no difference in the collection or 'summation' of individual behavior: A is running to the shelter, and B is running to the shelter, etc. But the dancers are engaged in a collective action, whereas the storm panicked picnickers are not.[35]

A Marxist version of this juxtaposition would invoke the distinction between 'class in itself' ('Klasse an sich') and 'class for itself' ('Klasse für sich'), where the former may indeed exist as a sociological category but, being unaware of its 'role in the social process of production and distribution', has not yet morphed into the community of interest and action that comprises the latter.[36] It is this 'we-intention' that permits us to contrast collective agency or group behaviour from mere heaps of individual acts or collections of people. Any multi-member agent, Christian List and Philipp Pettit insist, must therefore be 'identifiable over time by the way its beliefs and desires evolve'.[37] As a result, we should be able to recognize a collective as the same entity even in such instances where its 'membership changes due to someone's departure or the addition of new members'.[38]

Delimiting collective agency in this manner, I believe, permits us to consider whether collective Jewish agency, as a concept or instrument, is more useful than individual Jewish agency. To be able to answer this question, we return to our earlier thought experiment and wonder what kind of questions we need to pose

[35] Abraham Sesshu Roth, 'Shared Agency', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/shared-agency/, accessed 4 May 2021; John Searle, 'Collective Intentions and Actions', in Philip R. Cohen, Jerry Morgan, and Martha E. Pollack (eds), *Intentions in Communication*, Cambridge, MA 1990, pp. 401–415 (p. 402); John R. Searle, *Making the Social World*, Oxford 2010, pp. 42–60, and idem, *Mind, Language and Society. Philosophy in the Real World*, New York 1998, pp. 85–110.

[36] Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. 1. The Founders*, Oxford 1978, p. 356. See also Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, Princeton 1992, p. 229. For an analysis of Marxist conceptions of collective action, see Jon Elster, *An Introduction to Marx*, Cambridge 1986, pp. 129–134.

[37] Christian List and Philipp Pettit, *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents*, Oxford 2011, p. 32.

[38] Ibid.

for collective Jewish agency to become a new area of research. How do these questions depart from earlier controversies that saw, for example, Salo Baron challenge Heinrich Graetz,[39] Diaspora scholars reject Zionist attacks on assimilationist 'defeatism',[40] or Hannah Arendt dismiss Jean-Paul Sartre's invention of an anti-semitism without Jews?[41] How do we make sure that, in pursuing the subject, we do not repeat the dichotomies alluded to above—active and passive, subject and object, autonomy and heteronomy?

I am not sure whether the idea of 'collective agency' in itself will allow us to answer these questions. As in the case of individual agency, we seem to be compelled to admit that collective agency existed well after 1938. Although much of the ensuing legislation, deportation, and incarceration made it increasingly difficult to speak of forked paths, such agency survived in the direst of circumstances, whether during the revolts of Treblinka and Sobibor, or in the Sonderkommandos (work units made up of prisoners) at Auschwitz, whose clandestine activities included burying manuscripts and diaries, organizing food and clothing, or producing home-made mines and hand grenades in preparation for the October 1944 uprising. Evgeny Finkel has helpfully outlined the strategies that were available to Jews in this period, ranging from cooperation, collaboration, and compliance to evasion and resistance. In his endeavour to restore victims' agency, 'in all their positive and negative aspects and inherent complexity',[42] Finkel is at pains to do justice to collective deeds that previous scholars have either ignored or dismissed as inconsequential. Thus, coping did not imply 'submissiveness and passivity', but often required 'breaking rules and laws by engaging in black market transactions, theft, smuggling and bribing, or taking various legal and illegal actions' to improve the chances of survival.[43] Still, Finkel's important corrective remains beholden to a discourse that, in thinking about Jewish agency in terms of active or passive behaviour, reminds the reader of the apologetics that has marked many a debate in modern Jewish history.

That said, the more general philosophical discussion on collective agency is productive in at least two respects: firstly, it forces us to shun reification, and secondly, it forces us to define the subject of our research. The first task is fairly straightforward: we can single out plenty of Jewish pimps, gangsters, racists, colonialists,

[39] Salo Baron, 'Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?', in *Menorah Journal*, 14 (1928), pp. 515–526. See also Ismar Schorsch, 'The Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History', in idem, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, Hanover, NH 1994, pp. 376–388.

[40] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture*, Minneapolis 2002; Arnold E. Eisen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming*, Bloomington 1986; Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Cambridge 1992.

[41] Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 47–48; Jonathan Judaken, 'Blindness and Insight: The Conceptual Jew in Adorno and Arendt's Post-Holocaust Reflections on the Antisemitism Question', in Lars Rensman and Samir Gandesha (eds), *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, Stanford 2012, pp. 173–196 (p. 174).

[42] Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, p. 18.

[43] Ibid., p. 99. On bribing the authorities, forging documents, and smuggling medication into camps, see also Meyer, *Tödliche Gratwanderung*, p. 119 and p. 156.

conservatives, communists, real-estate tycoons, or stockbrokers, sometimes even in sociologically relevant numbers at a given time in a given place, but only rarely did they engage in their enterprises as Jewish collectives in their own right, with Jewish 'we-intention', in the name of a Jewish entity. Should we feel tempted to resort to the language of Jewish collective agency, the spirit of Karl Marx or John Searle might remind us when to use it and when not, lest we impose 'we-intention' on heaps of individuals who happened to be Jewish.[44]

The second task—how to define the subject of our research—is much trickier. One response that is not available to us is the view, put forward by David Biale among others, that self-control means power and that power allows for collective agency. Biale sides with Salo Baron in maintaining that power entailed 'the ability of a people to control its relations to other peoples as well as its own internal political, cultural, religious, economic, and social life'.[45] Power is clearly communal in nature, and the concept of community is clearly tied to homogeneity, as is evident from the way in which Biale compares the power of the American-Jewish community with that of Babylonian Jewry. For although the United States has allowed a very large number of Jews to be part of the economic and cultural elites of the country, he maintains that an argument 'can be made for the superior power of the Babylonian Jewish community, certainly in its governance of its own members and perhaps even in its relationship to the non-Jewish power structure'.[46] In the present-day context, Biale's perspective might be equated with multicultural aspirations, whereby each minority is able to practice its creed without being forced to conform to a majority culture.[47]

Yet if we accept the careful analyses of philosophers and social scientists mentioned above, and if, furthermore, we accept that most German Jews felt both German and Jewish, such a multicultural vision does not apply to all or even most Jews in early twentieth-century Germany. It then becomes incumbent upon us to admit that the smaller the Jewish group, the easier it is to talk about collective agency. This is true for specific religious congregations, moderately sized interest groups such as the Verband nationaldeutscher Juden (VnJ) (Association of National German Jews), or more substantial pressure groups such as the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (CV) (Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith). Once we have formally agreed on attributing 'we-

[44] This problem is especially acute in Tim Grady's book on Jews in the First World War. In his attempt to demonstrate widespread 'Jewish' hostility to the workers' strike in January 1918, for instance, he cites both the editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, Georg Bernhard, and the coverage of the events in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, as if the judgment of a journalist who happened to be Jewish and the journalism of a Jewish newspaper were one and the same thing. Grady, *Deadly Legacy*, pp. 168–169. For further examples, see p. 26, p. 43, p. 46, and p. 221.

[45] David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, New York 1986, p. 7.

[46] Ibid., p. 205.

[47] See, for example, Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton 1994; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford 1995; Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, New York 2006; Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton 1990.

intention' to a suitable Jewish collective we are nevertheless left with the bottom-line question that has animated this article: to what end do we need the concept of (collective) agency at all? Put differently, does 'agency' really go beyond the representations that have been invoked time and again, whether in the more specialized literature, or in popular images of heroic resistance on the one hand and going like sheep to the slaughter on the other? If there is one particular conception of agency that might do more than just add another term to a familiar research question it could be 'planning agency', a model associated especially with the philosopher Michael Bratman.

III. PLANNING AGENCY

We tend to call human beings who struggle successfully to live moral lives 'rational' or 'good', Christine Korsgaard writes.[48] The struggle they are involved in, however, is 'not the struggle *to be rational* or *to be good*. It is, instead, the ongoing struggle for integrity, the struggle for psychic unity, the struggle to be, in the face of psychic complexity, a single unified agent.'[49] Korsgaard calls this continuous effort of achieving psychic unity self-constitution. Agency, in this view, is only agency if we see it as an expression of our entire selves, rather than as a 'product of some force that is at work *on* me or *in* me'.[50]

Korsgaard insists that self-constitution is not about fulfilling desires, responding to momentary needs, or acting in accordance with the dictates of others. In so far as she accentuates the significance of integrity and unity, her version of agency shares important elements with Michael Bratman's widely influential theory of planning agency.[51] For Bratman, human beings are purposive agents. That is, they are reflective about their motivation. They make prior plans that organize their activity over time. And they see themselves as agents who persist over time by commencing with, developing further, and finally completing 'temporarily extended activities and projects'.[52] This 'trio of features'—reflectiveness, planfulness, and the capacity to act in temporarily extended ways—comprises human agency.[53] Like Korsgaard, Bratman rejects the view that human agency is tantamount to acting from moment to moment or choosing from moment to moment or desiring from moment to moment. In contrast to ordinary desires, planning agency involves consistency, coherence, and stability. As such, Bratman subscribes to a Lockean interpretation of personal identity, where, aside from backward-looking memory, selfhood also

[48] Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*, p. 7.
[49] Ibid. Italics in original.
[50] Ibid., p. 18. Italics in original.
[51] Michael E. Bratman, *Structures of Agency: Essays*, Oxford 2007; Michael E. Bratman, *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together*, Oxford 2014; Manuel Vargas and Gideon Yaffe (eds), *Rational and Social Agency: The Philosophy of Michael Bratman*, Oxford 2014.
[52] Michael E. Bratman, 'Reflection, Planning, and Temporally Extended Agency', in Bratman, *Structures of Agency*, pp. 22–46 (p. 21).
[53] Ibid.

consists in 'forward-looking connections like those between a prior intention and its later execution'.[54] Planning agency therefore supports 'cross-temporal organization of practical thought and action in the agent's life in part by way of continuities of stable plans over time'.[55] Finally, both individual agency and shared agency (or Searle's 'we-intention') have all these features in common.[56]

How may this rather technical language contribute to our understanding of German-Jewish history? 'Planning agency' closely corresponds with one of the central preoccupations of historians, namely establishing chronology. Historical events combine processes with different temporalities—'relatively gradual or long-run social trends, more volatile swings of public opinion, punctual accidental happenings, medium-run political strategies, sudden individual decisions, oscillating economic or climatic rhythms—which are brought together in specific ways, at specific places and times, in a particular sequence'.[57] 'Simple' agency in the shape of choice and action is implicated in both long-term and punctual processes, but it is hardly adequate for explaining when and how short-term processes override or transform long-term processes—and conversely, when and how long-term processes retain their hold over society in spite of major disruptions. 'Planning agency' is more helpful in this respect, at least with regard to German Jewry, allowing us as it does to trace the way in which the integrity and unity of temporally extended selves were disrupted, possibly permanently so, well before regime change effectively ended the planning agency of a majority of Jews for good. What is more, by considering the planning agency of German Jewry we can challenge the 'orthodoxy' of much recent writing on the Weimar Republic, whose anti-teleological bias largely ignores the transformation of Jewish lives in this period.[58]

Historians have identified plenty of conservative, romantic, racialist, eugenicist, and nationalist Jews who did not conform to the popular image of middle-class bourgeois men and women of a humanist persuasion.[59] Like other Central Europeans, German Jews were heavily involved in the doctrinal disputes of the time. Nevertheless, we know that the Jewish minority was overwhelmingly concerned with the survival of the Republic. Not only did many Jews continue to

[54] Ibid., p. 29. See also pp. 26–27.

[55] Michael E. Bratman, 'Planning Agency, Autonomous Agency', in Bratman, *Structures of Agency*, pp. 195–221 (p. 207).

[56] Bratman, *Shared Agency*, p. 8, p. 15, p. 18, pp. 28–29, and pp. 34–35.

[57] Sewell, *Logics of History*, p. 9.

[58] Peter Fritzsche, 'Did Weimar Fail?', in *The Journal of Modern History*, 68, no. 3 (1996), pp. 629–656; Rüdiger Graf, 'Either-Or: The Narrative of "Crisis" in Weimar Germany and in Historiography', in *Central European History*, 43, no 4. (2010), pp. 592–615; idem, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik. Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933*, Munich 2008; Benjamin Ziemann, 'Weimar Was Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the German Republic', in *German History*, 28, no. 4 (2010), pp. 542–571; Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf (eds), *Die 'Krise' der Weimarer Republik. Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters*, Frankfurt am Main–New York 2005.

[59] Nielsen, *Heimat and Hatred*; Stefan Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen*; Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg. Kriegserfahrungen, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe*, Berlin 2001; David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, Princeton 2003; Mitchell B. Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Modern Judaism and Medicine*, Cambridge 2007; John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, New Haven–London 1994.

espouse one creed in particular, left liberalism, they were flexible enough to switch to the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) (Social Democratic Party of Germany) or the Catholic Zentrumspartei (Centre Party) once it became evident that neither the Deutsche Demokratische Partei (DDP) (German Democratic Party) nor the Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP) (German People's Party) would play a role in the defence of liberal democracy.[60] In the early 1930s, then, most Jews did not share the 'conviction that these emergency conditions could be managed to Germany's advantage'.[61]

These developments call for a revision of the notion that German Jews were Jews in private and Germans in public, 'men and women on the street and Jews at home'.[62] The ideological ('private') disputes within German Jewry, pitting mystics against rationalists, for example, or communitarians against liberals, reflected 'German' hopes and fears at the same time as ('public') electoral behaviour predominantly mirrored 'Jewish' hopes and fears. As much as the planning agency of Jews involved projects not unlike the projects of non-Jews—rabbis sought to introduce more 'Gemeinschaft' ('community') and spirituality into their congregations, members of the Verband nationaldeutscher Juden envisioned a rebirth of Germany no different from members of the Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP) (German National People's Party), Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber endeavoured to restore 'authenticity' to the German translation of the Hebrew Bible—these projects relied on a wider political culture without which the planning agency of these and other Jews would revert to mere action or, worse still, reaction.

To be sure, the framework for Jewish planning agency did not always change dramatically from the German Empire to the Weimar period, as the difficulty of gaining proper chairs at major universities or pursuing military careers testifies, not to mention the continued commitment, sadly always necessary, to defence measures (legal and otherwise) against antisemitism.[63] Likewise, the long-term plans of Zionists who hoped to settle in Palestine were hardly interrupted by the rise of right-wing forces in the Weimar Republic. Yet the changes ushered in after the First World War were on the whole so disruptive that the anti-teleological paradigm

[60] On Jewish voting patterns, see Martin Liepach, *Das Wahlverhalten der jüdischen Bevölkerung. Zur politischen Orientierung der Juden in der Weimarer Republic*, Tübingen 1996.

[61] Peter Fritzsche, 'Landscape of Danger, Landscape of Design: Crisis and Modernism in Weimar Germany', in Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (eds), *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, Columbia, SC 1994, pp. 29–46 (p. 37).

[62] Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*, Oxford–New York 1991, p. 33.

[63] Victor Klemperer, *Leben sammeln, nicht fragen wozu und warum. Tagebücher 1918–1932*, Berlin 1996; Avraham Barkai, *'Wehr Dich!' Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (C.V.) 1893–1938*, Munich 2002; Arnold Paucker, *Der jüdische Abwehrkampf gegen Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik*, Hamburg 1968; Inbal Steinitz, *Der Kampf jüdischer Anwälte gegen den Antisemitismus. Rechtsschutz durch den Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (1893–1933)*, Berlin 2008.

of Weimar historiography might be relativized, especially concerning the thesis that 'crisis' did not bespeak an extended period of decline, but rather a (hopeful) moment of decision-making for pragmatic and utopian politicians alike.[64] As much as Communists anticipated a transformation of society along Soviet lines and as much as National Socialists created emergency situations in order to overthrow the much-maligned 'system', not everyone saw the developments after 1918 as proof of the openness of history that could be used to one's advantage. For some, the room for manoeuvre in many walks of life was called into question.

In the case of Germany's Jews, the longer the Republic lasted, the more their planning agency was threatened. From the outset, violence against Jews limited their freedom of movement in certain areas at certain times. The term 'pogrom', hitherto reserved for 'barbaric' practices among 'unenlightened' Eastern Europeans, gained currency in Jewish media outlets in the early 1920s.[65] The fact that the number of antisemitic hotels and guesthouses did not decline in the politically stable years between 1924 and 1929 indicates that, even without the immediate threat of pogrom-like assaults, Jews felt compelled to avoid all sorts of spaces from an early point onwards. They felt compelled to do so even more in the early 1930s, when certain streets and neighbourhoods became off-limits, especially for school children.[66] The process of disintegration and dissimilation was visible in other areas too. Calls to boycott Jewish-owned shops and firms reinforced a sense of difference between Jews and Gentiles that subsequent calls to boycott völkisch-owned establishments could not offset.[67] In relatively tolerant cities such as Cologne, Stuttgart, and Breslau the previously amicable relations between Jews and other Germans started to deteriorate well before 1930, as the elites began to turn a blind eye to antisemitism in associational life and elsewhere, and as the political parties began to adopt the völkisch language of the Right.[68] This deterioration could be also observed in the countryside, where the barrage of National Socialist propaganda undermined the trust that Franconian peasants had placed in Jewish cattle-dealers.[69] The responses

[64] Graf, 'Either-Or'; idem, *Zukunft*; Föllmer and Graf, *'Krise'*.

[65] Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung. Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919–1939*, Hamburg 2007; Dirk Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt. Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik*, Bonn 1999, p. 11, p. 35, and p. 110.

[66] Werner Bergmann and Juliane Wetzel, '"Der Miterlebende weiß nichts". Alltagsantisemitismus als zeitgenössische Erfahrung und spätere Erinnerung', in Wolfgang Benz, Arnold Paucker, and Peter Pulzer (eds), *Jüdisches Leben in der Weimarer Republik: Jews in the Weimar Republic*, Tübingen 1998, pp. 173–196 (p. 192); Trude Maurer, 'Vom Alltag zum Ausnahmezustand. Juden in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus', in Marion Kaplan (ed.), *Geschichte des jüdischen Alltags in Deutschland. Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis 1945*, Munich 2003, pp. 348–470 (p. 375).

[67] Hannah Ahlheim, *'Deutsche, kauft nicht bei Juden!' Antisemitismus und politischer Boykott in Deutschland 1924 bis 1935*, Göttingen 2012, p. 8ff.

[68] Nicola Wenge, *Integration und Ausgrenzung in der städtischen Gesellschaft. Eine jüdisch-nichtjüdische Beziehungsgeschichte Kölns 1918–1933*, Mainz 2005, p. 130 and pp. 429–430; Martin Ullmer, *Antisemitismus in Stuttgart 1871–1933. Studien zum öffentlichen Diskus und Alltag*, Berlin 2011, pp. 343–345; Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer. Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925*, Göttingen 2000, pp. 317–329.

[69] Stefanie Fischer, *Ökonomisches Vertrauen und antisemitische Gewalt. Jüdische Viehhändler in Mittelfranken 1919–1939*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 183–184.

to these developments—Zionists and liberals, optimists and pessimists, defence organizations and aggrieved parties had often interpreted such events differently, subject to individual predispositions—signified change as well.[70] A good case in point is how gender roles were reinterpreted in the early 1930s. Whereas liberal women had insisted that Jews should be able to wear the latest fashion lest they internalized antisemitic stereotypes about their supposed propensity for superficiality and luxury, towards the end of the Republic the same women called for collective self-discipline in order to keep a low profile.[71] As Kerry Wallach has pointed out, this kind of self-policing 'challenged the autonomy of the individual'.[72]

The overall trajectory, in short, did not point in the direction of ever-greater solidarity with the Jewish minority. On the contrary, the trend tended to diminish the options available to German Jews before these options were reduced even more drastically after 1933. To be sure, these limitations to their 'planning agency' did not make them into the passive victims of 'History'. Even so, many Jews were forced to react to events not of their own making that threatened their place in the world as Jews, Germans, democrats, Berliners, or simply human beings with a capacity to act in temporarily extended ways.

CONCLUSION

If agency is about action only, then agency is available to almost anyone almost all of the time in almost any circumstances. If agency is about the capacity to act intentionally, whether individually or collectively, then agency is available in many situations as well, but it is more difficult to determine the degree to which this agency proceeds from longstanding, unencumbered objectives. 'Planning agency', a narrower concept than the other two, has the advantage of discriminating between short-term and long-term developments. This focus means that historians can ask when and how short-term processes deflected long-term processes, and how long-term processes reasserted themselves in 'situations where they seem to have been eclipsed by more pressing political processes'.[73] In the case of German Jewry between 1914 and 1938, these observations suggest some tentative conclusions.

Firstly, because Jews had 'simple' agency even in concentration or death camps, the use-value of the term is not immediately apparent, unless older debates, often of an apologetic nature, are revived.

Secondly, 'intentional' agency, while more carefully defined than 'action' and 'choice', also existed well into the latter years of the Third Reich, as individual Jews sought to manage their lives in diverse ways and as Jewish organizations sought to manage the lives of individual Jews in equally diverse ways. Although both Jewish

[70] Bergmann and Wetzel, 'Alltagsantisemitismus', p. 195.
[71] Kerry Wallach, *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany*, Ann Arbor 2017, pp. 109–110.
[72] Ibid., p. 99.
[73] Sewell, *Logics of History*, p. 9.

individuals and Jewish collectives coped, collaborated, complied, evaded, and resisted based on intentions that owed to prior proclivities (say emotional attachments), experiences (in the shape of professional achievements), or roles (as community leaders), it is not immediately apparent why 'agency' must replace older terminologies in this respect.

Thirdly, 'planning agency' might come in handy where historians examine continuity and change in early twentieth-century German Jewry. There have been various attempts to discover turning points in this context, from the Jewish census in 1916 and the revolutionary turmoil of 1918–1919 to the rise of Hitler in 1933 and the Nuremberg Laws of 1935,[74] all of which (implicitly at least) bring up the question of planning agency. Thus, Jewish officials tempered the optimism of many Jews in the wake of Wilhelm II's 'Burgfrieden' speech of August 1914. For these representatives, the antisemitism of the more recent past meant that the planning agency of the immediate future depended on what most Jews had grown accustomed to in the German Empire: much freedom in many walks of life, but the need to navigate carefully to keep clear of the pitfalls in a society whose prominent spokespersons continued to be uncomfortable with Jewish emancipation. Because many Jews integrated this experience into their everyday schemes and undertakings, their planning agency may not have been affected all that profoundly: the framework within which they could pursue their projects was such that their agential autonomy remained largely intact.[75]

Twenty-five years later, that autonomy was damaged beyond repair. True, Jews could act on and react to the injunctions imposed upon them, but they lacked the individual and collective experiences to make connections between past and present that would have spawned successful strategies—strategies that could have been applied, modified, or discarded. Caught in a double bind ('Handlungsfalle'), their planning agency had all but vanished.[76] Between 1914 and 1938, Germany's Jews experienced many ups and downs. Like other Germans, they were continuously 'condemned to choice and action', in Korsgaard's felicitous phrase. Yet the inability not to act was very different from the ability to self-constitute. If this distinction is a valid one, the question arises of whether 'planning agency' can help historians address the German-Jewish predicament.

As a first step, we might interrogate two related trends in the historiography of the Weimar Republic that have come to dominate the field in recent years. The first view maintains that, far from failing or prefiguring the Third Reich, Weimar also exemplified the open-endedness of history. While it would be facile to call for a return to earlier preoccupations with the Republic's collapse, the situation of the country's Jews might remind us of the inherent tension between synchronic and diachronic perspectives in accounts of the past. These explanatory models tend to impede one another: the more historians explain events based on the immediate

[74] See, for example, Donald L. Niewyk, 'Solving the "Jewish Problem": Continuity and Change in German Antisemitism, 1871–1945', in LBI Year Book, 35, no. 1 (1990), pp. 335–370.
[75] Ullrich, *Von 'jüdischem Optimismus'*, pp. 4–5.
[76] Meyer, *Tödliche Gratwanderung*, p. 14.

context, the less continuity is taken into account—and vice versa.[77] Planning agency is about long-term projects. The fact that, increasingly, Jews had to abandon such ventures (in areas such as education, sociability, political participation, holiday-making, or residency) suggests that anti-teleological approaches can also overstate the rupture of 1933. Indeed, the emphasis on contingency and discontinuity entails the risk of constructing narratives that postulate self-contained temporal units (the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich) connected rather loosely or obscurely.[78] The rise of antisemitism and the concomitant difficulty for German Jews to plan as if they belonged to Germany in all walks of life points to a trajectory that made 1933 possible.

Likewise, recent literature on the predominantly optimistic perceptions of the future, as much as it is a welcome reminder of expectations that saw crisis as an opportunity rather than as an emergency, tends to downplay the relative merits of certain scenarios.[79] Accounting for the many projections and fantasies is one thing, accounting for the growing historical impact of certain visions another.[80] In the case of Germany's Jews, different expectations reflected different ideological predilections, religious affiliations, and emotional make-ups.[81] This heterogeneity certainly survived well after 1918, but Zionist aspirations and liberal anxieties usually corresponded with the growing menace of antisemitism. As a Jewish future in Germany was called into question, Zionists could adopt 'Zweckoptimismus' (antisemitism as boon to their cause) and Centralverein members 'Zweckpessimismus' (antisemitism as a recurring challenge),[82] but the grounds for choosing either was the realization that (ultra-)nationalists thought little of Jewish life in the country. Jewish expectations of the future, in other words, were predicated not on 'crisis' as a specific narrative structure that demanded solutions,[83] but on a very real decline that defined the lives of many Jews in the late Weimar Republic. This decline did not affect their agency or capacity to react to adversity. In fact, this agency persisted until 1945. Instead, it meant that their planning agency as both Germans and Jews in a larger German setting could no longer be taken for granted.

[77] Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit. Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie*, Cologne–Weimar 1997, p. 416.

[78] Ibid., p. 417.

[79] See Graf, 'Either-Or'; idem, *Zukunft*; Föllmer and Graf, *'Krise'*; Rüdiger Graf and Benjamin Herzog, 'Von der Geschichte der Zukunftsvorstellungen zur Geschichte ihrer Generierung. Herausforderungen des Zukunftsbezugs im 20. Jahrhundert', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 42, no. 3 (2016), pp. 497–515, especially p. 514; Lucian Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft*, Göttingen 2020, pp. 240–241.

[80] Some scholars have maintained that analysing 'Zukunftsvorstellungen' ('future expectations') serves as a reminder both of the openness of history and of the way in which certain expectations actually contributed to future events. Hölscher maintains that the study of future expectations permits us to appreciate contingency, but also how expectations (of war, for example) made certain events (the First World War) more likely to happen. See Hölscher, *Zukunft*, p. 9, p. 225, pp. 227–229, and p. 234.

[81] See Moshe Zimmermann, 'Zukunftserwartungen der deutsch-jüdischen Gesellschaft im langen 19. Jahrhundert', in *Aschkenas* 18/19, no. 1 (2008–2009), pp. 25–39; idem, 'Zukunftserwartungen deutscher Juden im ersten Jahr der Weimarer Republik', in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 37 (1997), pp. 55–72.

[82] Moshe Zimmermann uses these terms in his account of Jewish future expectations in the late nineteenth century. See Zimmermann, 'Zukunftserwartungen der deutschen-jüdischen Gesellschaft', p. 34.

[83] See also Boris Barth's critique of Graf's *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik*, in *Sehepunkte*, 9, no. 4 (2009), http://www.sehepunkte.de/2009/04/14603.html, accessed 29 January 2021.