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Modernity and Polish Jews: Recent Developments in Polish-Jewish Historiography

Abstract: The article investigates the differing meanings employed in the concept of modernity by historians of the Polish Jews of the nineteenth century and how it has evolved over the last thirty years. It traces two essential traditions of modernist discourse on the nineteenth-century Polish Jews as following either process-oriented or project-oriented approaches. It also asks whether modernization theory and the concept of modernity are helpful in understanding the nineteenth-century history of the Polish Jews and whether there is anything specific that, when applying these notions to Polish-Jewish history, distinguishes it from the modernity discourse on other European Jewries.

Keywords: modernity, Poland, Jews, modernization theory, Hasidism, progress, Enlightenment, liberal Judaism.

In the permanent exhibition of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw the gallery devoted to the nineteenth century is entitled "Encounters with Modernity." This clearly illustrates the common conviction that modernity is the byword for the Jewish nineteenth century, both in eastern Europe and elsewhere, and is commonly taken for the most important, indeed formative, historical process or phenomenon distinguishing this period from both earlier and later times. This notion is part of the long tradition of historical debate about what constitutes modernity and when and where it began and ended.

Because of its centrality, the concept of modernity and its history thus seems to be an especially convenient departure point from which to investigate the dominant approaches to nineteenth-century Jewish history in eastern Europe and their evolution. This article presents a brief overview of the uses of, and discussions about, the concept of modernity

in recent historiography on Polish Jews (understood here as encompassing all descendants of the Jewish subjects of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth).[1] It will attempt to show that the concept of the modernity of Polish, or indeed all east European, Jews has significantly evolved from the narrowly defined ideological notion of modernity as the progressive program of change to a much broader, structural meaning of the concept of modernity as the process, often encompassing its paradoxical and sinister aspects. The underlying question posed in this article is whether the concept is still helpful in understanding the nineteenth-century history of the Polish and other east European Jews and whether there is anything specific about applying the notion to Polish-Jewish history which would distinguish it from the modernity discourse on other European Jewries.

At the same time, because of its centrality and complexity, the concept cannot be discussed comprehensively in one short article. The present article is therefore more an account of one possible understanding of the discourse rather than a systematic overview of all the most influential trends and concepts as used in recent historical writing about nineteenth-century Polish Jews. Moreover, this article does not attempt to list all the important publications on the subject. Rather, it provides a selection of illustrative examples of the phenomena and processes under discussion.

Definitions

The story begins with Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow, the founding fathers of modern Jewish historiography. For Graetz, modernity began in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century and was personified by Moses Mendelssohn and the ideas of the Jewish Enlightenment.[2] For

[1] The practical implication is that important modernization processes in St. Petersburg (see Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* [Berkeley, 2002]), Kiev (Natan M. Meir, *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859–1914* [Bloomington, 2010]), and Odessa (Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History 1794–1881* [Stanford, 1985]) are outside the scope of my article, whereas whatever happened in the Pale of Settlement, the Kingdom of Poland, Galicia, and the Poznań area falls within it. To a considerable degree this overlaps with what has, in the Anglo-Saxon scholarly tradition, been labeled Russian Jewry or east European Jewry; see the corresponding take on "Russian and East European Jews" in Kenneth B. Moss, "At Home in Late Imperial Russian Modernity—Except When They Weren't: New Histories of Russian and East European Jews, 1881–1914," *The Journal of Modern History* 84 (2012), 401–452.

[2] Heinrich Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, trans. Ismar Schorsch (New York, 1975); see also id., *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1967), 5: 291–373.

Dubnow, the starting point was the French Revolution.[3] For Graetz, it was the Haskalah and, more broadly, the intellectual change that marked modernity, while for Dubnow it was the social and political changes of legal emancipation, which lay at the heart of modernization. But what seems to me the most fundamental difference between these two positions, also in regard to Polish-Jewish history, is the very concept of modernity as either essentially a project, as for Graetz, or a process, as for Dubnow.[4] For the former, modernity was mainly a conscious project undertaken by either Jewish or non-Jewish reformers who believed in the progressivist, optimistic version of the modernization theory and sought to implement it in the Jewish community of their time. In this sense, it was also an identity project, since the transformation was to create a new Jew or a new Jewish community. For the latter, modernity was more or less an objective social, economic, or political process affecting Jewish society mainly from outside, but leading of course to profound internal changes, including ideological and intellectual transformation within it.

Both approaches entail an interesting paradox. While the understanding of modernity as a project assumes that the very concept has a high level of ideological content, historians taking this approach are, at least theoretically, free to take a non-committal position, to step out of the ideological frameworks of understanding modernity, and to research this ideologically loaded view of modernity as a project of the historical figures they research, but not of themselves. In other words, "modernity" is to be defined by historical agents, and not by the historian who seeks to study what people in the past meant by "modernity," and how it affected them as agents. On the other hand, the competing processual approach is superficially more objective, since it does not assume modernity to have any inherent ideological aspect and can be understood as a set of "objective" processes of social, economical, or political-legal change.

[3] For a brief analysis and comparison of Graetz's and Dubnow's concepts of modernity, see Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* (Oxford–Portland, 2007), 56–57; see also Robert Seltzer, "From Graetz to Dubnow: The Impact of the East European Milieu on the Writing of Jewish History," in David Berger (ed.), *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and Its Impact* (New York, 1983), 49–60. For more on Graetz, see Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover–London, 1994), esp. 278–293.

[4] For a similar analysis of so-called assimilation as either a process or a project, see Todd M. Endelman, "Assimilation," in Gershon D. Hundert (ed.), *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven–London, 2008), 81–87, available also online: http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Assimilation [retrieved: 20 May 2016].

At the same time, however, the fact that a historian has to decide which processes constitute "modernity"—and which lie beyond it—makes this approach much more vulnerable to ideological influence.

The classic period of research into nineteenth-century Polish-Jewish history, which ended only in the 1980s or, at the latest, the 1990s, was clearly dominated by the dichotomy of these two positions. The most articulate representatives of the processual approach were the Marxist historians, many of them originally, in the interwar period, associated with the Yunger Historiker Krayz, especially Artur Eisenbach in Poland and Raphael Mahler later in Israel.[5] Both of these historians continued the Dubnowian narrative, in which modernity was synonymous with the major changes of industrialization, urbanization, new social stratifications, mass migrations, and, especially, legal emancipation. In line with an "objectivist" and deterministic Marxist perspective, both Eisenbach and Mahler perceived the processes of industrialization and urbanization, but also those of demographic transition and social and spatial mobility, as forming a base (as opposed to a superstructure) determined by macrohistorical forces. Both Eisenbach and Mahler devoted much effort to describing and analyzing these forces.

What was at the heart of their research interest, however, was legal emancipation or the struggle against legal discrimination as a superstructure and subject of class struggle between old reactionary regimes and new modern social forces. It was here that historical agents and their implicit or explicit ideologies could find expression and be studied.[6] At the same time, modernity as a project was worth studying only inasmuch as it was an expression of these materialistically determined historical confrontations, as in Eisenbach's analysis of the Polish Enlightenment reformers as *de facto* agents of the *ancien régime* or Mahler's study of the social and economic bourgeois foundations of the Haskalah in central Poland and Galicia.[7] Regardless of the approach to modernity, these cultural forces

[5] On the formation of the Yunger Historiker Krayz, see Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2007), 58–64.

[6] See the important analysis in Jonathan Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?," in Jonathan Frankel, Steven J. Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), 5–7.

[7] See Artur Eisenbach, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland, 1780–1870*, trans. Janina Dorosz, ed. Antony Polonsky (Oxford, 1991); Raphael Mahler, *Divrei yemei Yisra'el: dorot aharonim*, 6 vols. (Merhavia, 1952–1976); id., *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment:*

were to be divided by their "objective" role in the progressive move toward emancipation and modernization. When Eisenbach asserted in his *magnum opus* on Jewish emancipation in Poland that "Hasidism became the stronghold of backwardness among the Jews and combated the secular, sometimes also emancipatory, tendencies,"[8] he was merely presenting a short summary of a long line of similar scholarly opinions. He was therefore genuinely surprised when criticized by a young historian and sociologist, Helena Datner-Śpiewak, for having not paid sufficient attention to the complexities of Orthodox Jewish life in Poland and thereby misrepresenting them by having focused on the external factors that had shaped their life. In response, Eisenbach rejected her assertion and highlighted that he had written extensively about the "demography and territorial spread of the Jewish population, as well as about their socio-economic and cultural stratification, worldviews, and activities of different groups, their social and political activities."[9] Since privileging "objectivist" categories over internal and cultural ones was indeed the trademark of his and his peers' approach, he simply could not understand the criticism of it.

The second, project-oriented approach was never particularly prominent in Polish-Jewish historiography, especially when compared to the burgeoning of these studies elsewhere. The reasons for this state of affairs are complex. First, for many historians of the Jewish nineteenth century it was not clear what belonged and what did not belong to Polish-Jewish history or even where Poland was. One also needs to remember that in its Anglo-Saxon and Israeli mainstream, Jewish historiography has tended to ignore the Jews of eastern Europe. A good example is the book edited by Jacob Katz entitled *Toward Modernity* (1987).[10] Of its nine chapters, only

Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia, 1985). Despite their impact on the field, the literature on the two historians is rather scarce. See Jacob Goldberg, "Artur Eisenbach – der letzte Historiker der Polnischen Juden aus der alten Schule," *Judaica* 52 (1996), 3: 190–195; on the early careers of Eisenbach and, especially, Mahler, see Natalia Aleksiun, "From Galicia to Warsaw: Interwar Historians of Polish Jewry," in Glenn Dynner, François Guesnet (eds.), *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis. Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky* (Leiden, 2015), 376–381.

[8] Artur Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich 1785–1870 na tle europejskim* (Warsaw, 1989), 47.

[9] Artur Eisenbach, "Wokół niektórych zagadnień procesu emancypacji Żydów w Polsce," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 41 (1990), 1: 101; see also Helena Datner-Śpiewak, "Fragment naszej historii," *Nowe Książki* (1988), 11: 27–29.

[10] Jacob Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick–Oxford, 1987).

two are devoted to eastern Europe: one on Galicia and one on the Russian Empire; it contains no study on the Kingdom of Poland, Lithuania, or Romania. The chapters on Galicia and Russia discuss the Haskalah only and omit other paths to modernity, both ideological and non-ideological, including profound social, economic, and cultural transformations occurring at the time among east European Jews.

The emphasis on the Jewish Enlightenment to the exclusion of other factors points to another shortcoming of the field. In fact, scholars until recently almost unanimously equated Jewish modernity in eastern Europe with the Haskalah. Moreover, in the study of the Haskalah there was a clear focus on its ideological and literary expressions, undervaluing its social or economic basis. The classic literary studies, ranging from those of Israel Zinberg to Shmuel Werses, are perfect illustrations of this trend.[11] What is more, many studies of the Haskalah were infected with a clear ideological bias as to which historical phenomena were to be judged either as genuinely Jewish Enlightenment or as sinister assimilation, and hence whether they should be accepted as legitimate objects of historical study.[12]

Altogether, the limitations of both approaches created a situation in which the space for reconsideration of their interdependence and, more generally, of the underlying concepts of modernity and their consequences was surprisingly narrow.

Criticism

The criticism of the modernization theory came to Polish-Jewish historiography together with a more general shift, and changed much in our understanding and use of the concept of modernity. The context of the change was provided by criticism from postmodern historians, though much of the shift in Polish-Jewish studies has had nothing to do with postmodern theory itself, as it has still only marginally influenced the field.

[11] See Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, trans. Bernard Martin, 12 vols. (Cincinnati–New York, 1972–1978); Shmuel Werses, *Megamot ve-tsurot be-sifrut ha-haskalah* (Jerusalem, 1990); id., *'Hakitsah ami': Sifrut ha-haskalah be-'idan ha-modernizatsyah* (Jerusalem, 2001).

[12] On this, see Shmuel Feiner, "The Pseudo-Enlightenment and the Question of Jewish Modernisation," *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1996/7), 1: 62–88; Marcin Wodziński, "Good Maskilim and Bad Assimilationists: Toward a New Historiography of the Haskalah in Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* 10 (2003/4), 3: 87–122.

The first and most obvious argument brought against the concept of modernity was aimed at the unidirectional—indeed teleological—vision of modernity as leading from a "primitive society" to a Western-style social, economic, and political order. For historians of eastern Europe, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, this criticism coincided with their older objection to the occidental perspective for its obviously arrogant, imperialistic character and looking down at east European societies; it was therefore easily accepted. For many old-generation Jewish historians this criticism was, in addition, infused with their nationalist rejection of Western modernity as having led to "assimilation" and the abandonment of Jewish identity.[13] With the decline of nationalist Jewish historiography after the 1980s, and with the increasing irrelevance of the responses provided by Dubnow, Ettinger, and Mahler, possibly the most prominent contemporary reaction to this challenge has been the spread of the notion "that there was not one but many European Jewish modernities."[14] If there was never one unified Jewish culture, it is easy to accept that there was more than one road to modernity for these different cultures.[15]

This reevaluation has proved to be of great consequence. Both Graetz and Dubnow placed the advent of modernity outside eastern Europe (in Germany or France, respectively) and clearly linked it with the spread of Western influences and Western cultural or political patterns to the East, even if at the same time critical of these influences. The rejection of this occidental perspective and the anti-colonial reformulation attempted by the historians of Jewish Poland thus shook the very foundations of the traditional concept of modernity and required a redefinition of Jewish modernity in Poland.

This, the greatest advantage, turned out for many, however, also to be the greatest obstacle. Even if, ostensibly, widely accepted, the notion has gone against a very old tradition of occidental progressivist

[13] Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews," 5–15.

[14] Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2004), 2. For similar approaches, see David E. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York, 1995); Tomasz Gąsowski, *Między gettem a światem: Dylematy ideowe Żydów galicyjskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Kraków, 1996). For the ramifications of this reformulation, see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129 (2000), 1–30.

[15] This argument has also been widely accepted, since it goes hand in hand with a wider reassessment of the concept of the one and universal Jewish culture. For the most prominent expression of this trend, see David Biale (ed.), *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York, 2002).

ideologies, present in Polish and Polish-Jewish public discourse at least since the eighteenth century and lingering in some ways until today. Polish Enlightenment reformers and also some Jewish adherents of modernization viewed the traditional Jewish community in Poland as obscurantist, backward, and reactionary, and saw the process of modernization as synonymous with raising the population from barbarism and cultural primitivism to the better and, mainly, modern, higher-level Western culture. In other words, modernization or, as they often termed it, "civilization" was synonymous with progressive culture modeled on the civilization of the west European societies.[16] These views, even when supposedly rejected, still linger in Polish-Jewish scholarly discourse and, transferred by Mahler, Eisenbach, and students inspired by their work (though neither Mahler nor Eisenbach had true disciples), they have informed segments of Polish-Jewish historiography until today. A good example is the debate about the Warsaw Rabbinical School (1826–1862) as being an agent of modernization and social integration. Many of the arguments in this debate do not refer to the school as it was, but rather to the constructed image of a Western-style rabbinical seminary, which it actually never even attempted to become.[17]

Another aspect of the criticism of the modernization theory, which found expression in recent Polish-Jewish historiography, is a more empirical criticism of the optimistic understanding of modernity as a continuous process of social, political, or cultural improvement. A wave of studies on the counterintuitive, sinister, or paradoxical aspects of modernity, inspired by, among others, Shmuel Eisenstadt, postcolonial theorists, gender and women's studies, and, perhaps most prominently, Zygmunt Bauman, resulted in a number of recent works on the discontents and ambiguities

[16] A discussion of the changing conceptions of the term can be found in Jerzy Jedlicki, *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują: Studia z dziejów idei i wyobraźni XIX wieku* (Warsaw, 1988), 27–28, 34–35; Marian Henryk Serejski, "Początki i dzieje słów 'kultura' i 'cywilizacja' w Polsce," in id., *Przeszłość a teraźniejszość: Szkice i studia historiograficzne* (Wrocław, 1965), 237–249. For a discussion of the concept in the Jewish context, see Marcin Wodziński, "'Civil Christians': Debates on the Reform of the Jews in Poland, 1789–1830," in Benjamin Nathans, Gabriella Safran (eds.), *Culture Front: Representing Jews in Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia, 2008), 46–76.

[17] Zofia Borzymińska, "Przyczynek do dziejów szkolnictwa żydowskiego w Warszawie w XIX wieku, czyli jeszcze o Szkole Rabinów," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (1984), 3–4: 183–196; Sabina Lewin, "Beit-ha-sefer le-rabanim be-Varshah ba-shanim 1826–1863," *Gal-Ed* 11 (1989), 35–58; Antony Polonsky, "Warszawska Szkoła Rabinów: orędowniczka narodowej integracji w Królestwie Polskim," in Michał Galas (ed.), *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce* (Kraków, 2000), 287–307.

of the modernization project.[18] Maybe not so paradoxically, it partly builds on earlier research by Raphael Mahler and Artur Eisenbach, whose focus on the discontents of the bourgeois program of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment modernizers provided a useful reference point for further criticism of the modernist ideologies. But, obviously, research on the discontents of modernization goes far beyond Mahler and Eisenbach. Scott Ury's fascinating study of the emergence of the Jewish public sphere in Warsaw in the early twentieth century emphasizes "the dialectical aspects of the larger (Jewish) encounter with modernity," which he illustrates with the fact that "quintessentially modern processes like democratization went hand-in-hand with the construction of disciplined political communities of ethnic self-empowerment and exclusion."[19] As Ury demonstrates, modernity and violence were not casual fellow-travelers but two sides of the same coin.[20] In a very different, but equally fascinating way, Iris Parush in her analysis of reading practices of east European Jewish women has demonstrated that the marginality of their education and, more broadly, of their cultural capital contributed to their relatively fast and thorough modernization.[21]

Another related point of criticism of the modernization theory was that "modernity" is not, nor ever has been, an analytical category; rather, it is a value-laden term that obscures past realities by favoring some processes and stigmatizing others. This criticism has its roots in the paradoxes of the processual vision of modernity, since it allowed scholars to decide which past phenomena were modern and which were not. If, for example, we look again at Ury's views about modernity in early twentieth-century Warsaw,

[18] For the most important formulations, see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1999); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1991).

[19] Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, 2012), 268.

[20] This has an interesting parallel in the study of antisemitism, which has strongly integrated the notion of the rise of modern chauvinism and xenophobia with the advent of modernity itself. Studies by Brian Porter on the emergence of exclusive nationalism in late nineteenth-century Poland and by Maria Janion on the antisemitic fantasies of the late Polish Enlightenment became especially influential. These studies were also important because they analyzed the historical paths leading to the eventual merger of antisemitism and modernity. See Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York, 2000), 3–4; Maria Janion, *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (Warsaw, 2000); ead., "Mit założycielski polskiego antysemityzmu," in *Społeczeństwa europejskie i Holocaust* (Warsaw, 2004), 11–48.

[21] See Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (Hanover–London, 2004).

we need to ask why democratization is more "quintessentially modern" than, say, ethnic exclusion or popular violence. Ury himself demonstrates that it is not. And even if we take his statement about "the very spirit and essence of modernity"[22] to be merely a figure of speech, one still needs to admit the arbitrariness of such definitions. The distinction between the noble Haskalah and corrupt assimilation took this to the extreme. For Jacob Shatzky, for example, the title of maskil was based purely on moral judgment: Jacob Tugendhold could not be a maskil, because he was a "careerist and cynical opportunist, . . . and in addition was a great coward and taker of bribes," and Antoni Eisenbaum was "a two-faced collaborator with the tsarist secret police,"[23] so not a maskil either.

Perhaps the most radical response to this conceptual trap was offered by Gershon D. Hundert in *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (2004). In the introduction, which is really an anti-modernist manifesto, Hundert explains: "I propose to empty the term 'modernity' of all but its chronological content and to define it merely as roughly the past two centuries. Anyone inhabiting that time period is thus, by definition, 'modern.'"[24]

Similarly, but less radically, Moshe Rosman in his *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* (2007) offered a definition of "non-philosophical modernity" by developing Michael Meyer's proposal of a "constellational definition" of modernity, "that is rather than emphasize a single process . . . that epitomizes Jewish modernity, we might posit that all of the thoughtful suggestions have merit and highlight a constellation of processes that were important and worked synergistically in forming modern Jewry."[25]

Both Hundert and Rosman attempted to empty the definition of "modernity" of its value-laden content; indeed, Hundert attempted to empty it completely. But it is not clear what would be left after such an operation, and hence it is not clear whether the concept of modernity would remain viable. Nor is it clear whether such a radical reformulation is even possible. On the same page as his definition, Hundert writes about "developments associated with modernity" and lists "the rise of the bourgeoisie, technological change, and the Enlightenment,"

[22] Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 271–272.

[23] Yaakov Shatzky, "Yidn un der poylisher oyfshtand fun 1831," *Historishe shriftn fun YIVO* 2 (1937), 362–364.

[24] Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 2004), 3.

[25] Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History?*, 63.

and, shortly after that, asks when Jews "encountered modernity."[26] His understanding of modernity clearly comprises much more than "roughly the past two centuries," even if limited to technological change or new social stratifications.

Rosman builds a more complex definition based on the distinction between modern and postmodern phases, and among his "constellation of processes" he lists demographic growth, geographic spread, political and legal emancipation, nationalism, economic integration, and voluntary community. But, as he also teaches us, the selection of the processes he made is not, after all, blind, and is clearly dictated by a certain vision of what the Jewish people and its history are, or at least that such an entity exists, however we define it. "Non-philosophical modernity" is not therefore free of its inherent ideology.

All in all, it is not certain that these reassessments by Hundert, Rosman, and others are able to provide a final, enduring definition. But what they do is to remove value-judgment from the term "modernity." This is one of the most prominent features of recent studies of Jewish modernity in Poland and eastern Europe.[27] Together, these reassessments offer a concept of modernity informed not by a positive attitude toward modernist ideology but by engagement with forms of modern life, the modern state, rationalization, depersonification of administrative procedures, and so forth. Such an approach contains a clear Weberian element, which, I think, is very much needed, especially in Polish and Polish-Jewish historiography, both of which are still insufficiently infused with broader social reflection.

Test Case I: Hasidism

An interesting test case for the reassessment of the concept of modernity has been provided by the recent historiography of Hasidism, especially relevant to our analysis because of the location of modern Hasidism predominantly in Polish lands.

Hasidism has been traditionally viewed as the epitome of traditionalism, obscurantism, and reactionism, and the arch-opponent of any forms of modernity, as we saw in the statement by Eisenbach. From the 1990s an increasing number of books and articles focused not only on Hasidism's

[26] Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 3.

[27] See Eli Lederhendler, "Modernity without Emancipation or Assimilation? The Case of Russian Jewry," in Frankel, Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community*, 324–343.

rejection of modernity, but also on its engagement with it, in part inspired by the groundbreaking studies by Jacob Katz and his discussion of Hasidism as an east European form of modernity.[28] In dialogue with founding fathers of Jewish historiography, Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow, Katz accepted the vision of Hasidism as existing in parallel to west European modernity, but unlike Graetz, he did not portray it as being antithetical to modernity, but rather as another form of engagement with it. Similarly, Naftali Loewenthal argued that the advent of twentieth-century contemplative prayer in Habad Hasidism was a direct response to the challenges of modernity, whereas a 1994 article by David Assaf and Israel Bartal analyzed nineteenth-century Hasidic intercession (*shtadlanut*) as a form of modern political activity.[29] The latter article became especially influential, since the political activity of the Hasidim, especially in the Kingdom of Poland, Russia, and Galicia, has become a major topic of Hasidic studies in the last two decades.[30]

It seemed only natural that the notion of engagement with modernity would soon be reformulated into the notion of Hasidism as an expression of modernity. Historians have stressed that the political world of nineteenth-century Europe, even in its eastern reaches, differed fundamentally from

[28] See Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Bernard D. Cooperman (New York, 1993). See also Shaul Magid, "'A Thread of Blue': Rabbi Gershon Henoch Leiner of Radzyń and his Search for Continuity in Response to Modernity," *Polin* 11 (1998), 31–52; Edward K. Kaplan, "Abraham Joshua Heschel in Poland: Hasidism Enters Modernity," *Polin* 13 (2000), 383–398; Ira Robinson, "Hasidic Hagiography and Jewish Modernity," in Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, David N. Myers (eds.), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover–London, 1998), 405–412.

[29] See Naftali Loewenthal, "Bein mistikah le-moderniut: Avodat ha-shem ha-habadit ba-me'a-ha-'esrim," in Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, Josef Dan (eds.), *Mehkarei hasidut* (Jerusalem, 1999), 235–260; David Assaf, Israel Bartal, "Shetadlanut ve-'ortodoksiyah: Tsadikei Polin be-mifgash im ha-zemanim ha-hadashim," in Rachel Elior, Israel Bartal, Chone Shmeruk (eds.), *Tsadikim ve-'anshei ma'aseh: mehkarim be-hasidut Polin* (Jerusalem, 1994), 65–90. For a similar analysis of the economic foundations of Hasidism, see also Israel Bartal, "Le'an halakh tseror ha-kesef? Ha-bikoret ha-maskilit al hebeteha ha-kalkaliyim shel ha-hasidut," in Menahem Ben-Sasson (ed.), *Dat ve-kalkalah: Yahasei gomelin. Shay le-Ya'akov Kats bi-melot lo tish'im shana. Kovets ma'amarim* (Jerusalem, 1995), 375–385.

[30] See the pioneering book by Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, chaps. 3–4, and, of a number of newer studies, Gershon C. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem, 1996); Rachel Manekin, "Hasidism and the Habsburg Empire 1788–1867," *Jewish History* 27 (2013), 2–4: 271–297; David Assaf, Gadi Sagiv, "Hasidism in Tsarist Russia: Historical and Social Aspects," *Jewish History* 27 (2013), 2–4: 241–269; Ilia Lurie, *Edah u-medinah: Hasidut habad ba-'imperia ha-Rusit 5588–5643* (Jerusalem, 2006), 65–92; Marcin Wodziński, *Hasidism and Politics: The Kingdom of Poland, 1815–1864* (Oxford–Portland, 2013).

premodern politics as practiced in the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[31] In such conditions, those interested in politics were forced to seek contemporary political tools and began to apply them. In the nineteenth century the Hasidic movement experienced a profound evolution of political engagement because of its adoption of forms of modern political activity, which in many respects heralded the birth of contemporary Jewish politics at the end of the century. As a result, Hasidic political representatives achieved exceptional political competence, first in defending their own community and later, through elaborate interventions, in broadening their sphere of influence and increasing their effectiveness. This in itself indicated a certain form of modernization, though only in a technical sense, not in an ideological one. For an anti-modernist social group like the Hasidim, this process of applying elements of modernity to preserve its anti-modernist values and character can reasonably be called "defensive modernization," a term introduced by Hans-Ulrich Wehler for a different socio-political context but perfectly applicable here.[32]

This does not mean of course that Hasidism became an ideologically modern movement and accepted the characteristics of modernity. Modernization in the sense of adopting modern political methods did not necessarily imply modernization across the board. On the contrary, while they accepted that their representatives in the political arena would use modern methods of political activity, the Hasidim vigorously rejected the values of the modernizing world and clung to its traditionalist, indeed anti-modernist self-perception. Hasidism was and still is a self-conscious anti-modernist movement striving to preserve its traditions against the detrimental influences of modernity. Being anti-modernist has not meant, however, being non-modern in a technical sense. An attempt to defend premodern ways of life has usually required the application of distinctively modern social techniques and a significant transformation of the "defended" society, especially its most active and most articulate defenders. This inherent discrepancy between the means and ends of the

[31] A broad discussion of the political parameters of modernity, including the opinions of Max Weber on the subject, is presented in Piotr Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change* (Oxford, 1993), chap. 5. For the classic formulation, see Max Weber, *On Law in Economy and Society*, ed. Max Rheinstein (Cambridge, 1954), 354.

[32] The term was introduced by Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 1: *Vom Feudalismus des Alten Reiches bis zur defensiven Modernisierung der Reformaera, 1700–1815* (Munich, 1987). For its application to Hasidic politics and a further discussion, see Wodziński, *Hasidism and Politics*.

anti-modernist, but distinctively modern, Hasidic movement might thus be conveniently called "anti-modernist modernity."

The final formulation of the "inherent modernity" of Hasidism was offered by Moshe Rosman. His 2007 article "Hasidism as a Modern Phenomenon" has been both very influential on and very representative of a wider trend in contemporary writing on Hasidism. In the article, Rosman traces how reflections on the modernity of Hasidism gradually became divorced both from the old limiting periodization and, more importantly, from the progressivist paradigm of modernity as being synonymous with secularization and modernist ideologies.[33] This, as he shows, allows us to reformulate the conceptual paradigm in which historians look at Hasidism and to focus on the quintessentially modern characteristics of the movement, "a step toward an appreciation of Hasidism's significant participation in the process of Jewish modernization."[34] Rosman persuasively identifies the limitations of a project-oriented perspective on modernity, which he describes as the "unsophisticated view that modernist ideology gave birth to modernity and was the engine of modernization," and he asserts: "The criterion for membership in the *club moderna* should . . . be not declared belief in modernity but engagement with it."[35] This is certainly a powerful declaration in support of the processual understanding of modernity, which is aimed at liberating the study of modernity from the ideology of those participating in the process, and it is very much in line, as we have seen, with his position on the non-philosophical parameters of modernity. But, as I have suggested, it does not escape the process-*versus*-project paradox, since it ultimately does not liberate the subject from the historian's own ideological choice of what modernity is or is not.

Altogether, it seems that the remarkable reconsideration of the Hasidic engagement with modernity has provided the most important tool for defining the distinguishing features of the Polish version of Jewish modernity. Unlike in France, Germany, or even non-Polish Russia (that is, beyond the lands of the former Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth), Jewish modernity in Poland has been predominantly defined by the spectacular engagement of Hasidism and the prominence of non-ideological, indeed anti-modernist, approaches to the modernity project.

[33] Moshe Rosman, "Hasidism as a Modern Phenomenon: The Paradox of Modernization without Secularization," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts / Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007), 215–224.

[34] Ibid., 216.

[35] Ibid., 220–221.

Modernity as Project

Many of the recent works on the history of Hasidism as well as on the history of nineteenth-century Polish Jews take the processual approach. This does not mean, however, that the heroes of contemporary Polish-Jewish historiography are Artur Eisenbach and Raphael Mahler. Quite the contrary, it seems that criticizing Mahler and Eisenbach has become something of a conventional departure point for most of the current studies of nineteenth-century Hasidism and Jewish eastern Europe in general. To be sure, both scholars deserve the criticism meted out to them, but, to paraphrase something I was taught, "He whom he loves, He criticizes" (Prov. 3:12); it seems to me that this criticism is evidence of the engagement of contemporary historians with the research of these two pioneers, and is thus also evidence of the enduring—if problematic—relevance and importance of their contributions. Tongue-in-cheek, I would even dare to say that there are too few studies that continue the tradition of Eisenbach and Mahler with their emphasis on legal emancipation, institutional history, and macrohistorical processes.[36] With new sources, new approaches, and new methods, these could produce original findings. What is possibly the most monumental work on Polish-Jewish history written in this generation, Antony Polonsky's *The Jews in Poland and Russia* (2010 and 2012), not only clearly displays, but also openly admits, having been considerably inspired by Mahler and, especially, by Eisenbach in its nineteenth-century section.[37]

The best new studies of political history revisit both processual and project-oriented approaches. But instead of putting them into the Procrustean bed of Marxist methodology, they offer fresh views of the interdependence between modernity as a project and modernity as a process. When Rachel Manekin extensively investigates aspects of State policy toward the Jews in Galicia, she apparently adopts a project approach. But what makes her research particularly valuable is the emphasis on the Jews' negotiation of modernity, their processual transformation, as

[36] Of the most notable, see, for the Kingdom of Poland, François Guesnet, *Polnische Juden im 19. Jahrhundert: Lebensbedingungen, Rechtsnormen und Organisation im Wandel* (Cologne, 1998), and, for Galicia, Małgorzata Śliż, *Galicyjscy Żydzi na drodze do równouprawnienia (1848–1914): Aspekt prawny procesu emancypacji Żydów w Galicji* (Kraków, 2006).

[37] See Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, 3 vols. (Oxford–Portland, 2010 and 2012).

well as the surprising forms and paradoxical agents of their modernization, including Catholic nunneries.[38] An equally paradoxical agent of modernization was considered by Yohanan Petrovsky-Shern in his book on Jews in the Tsarist Russian military.[39] Similarly, Eugene M. Avrutin demonstrated the significance of the State's administrative apparatus in helping to modernize Russian Jewry.[40]

These approaches, however, have their limits. Though less value-laden, the approaches do not entirely resolve the volitional nature of the definition, still dependent on the *a priori* decision of a scholar as to what is and what is not modern. A noteworthy response to this challenge has been a significant reversal from process-oriented to project-oriented research. Until some twenty years ago this reversal was rather modestly represented, but it now constitutes the fastest developing area of the Polish-Jewish historiography of modern times. The underlying assumption seems to be that since one cannot break free from the arbitrariness of the definition of modernity, one should study what the actors themselves understood under this rubric and how it shaped their lives and activities.

From among the many noteworthy new publications exhibiting this trend, one would point to an impressive development in the study of the emergence of the Jewish public sphere and associated agents of modernization, especially the press.[41] By contrast, the printing industry and book culture in nineteenth-century Poland, apparently a topic closely connected to the interest in the press, is still relatively neglected, with some research

[38] Rachel Manekin, *Yehudei Galitsiyah ve-ha-hukah ha-Ostrit: Reshitah shel politikah yehudit modernit* (Jerusalem, 2015). For a notable predecessor, see Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York–Oxford, 1989). Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia, 1983), though similar in approach, goes a step further, promising to "avoid the use of any terms such as 'modernization'" (p. xiii).

[39] Yohanan Petrovsky-Shern, *Jews in the Russian Army, 1827–1917: Drafted into Modernity* (Cambridge, 2009).

[40] Eugene M. Avrutin, *Jews and the Imperial State: Identification Politics in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2010).

[41] On the press and the Jewish public sphere in Poland, see Ury, *Barricades and Banners*; Ela Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews: The Development of Nahum Sokolow's Political Thought* (Jerusalem, 2005); Stein, *Making Jews Modern*; Zuzanna Kołodziejska, *"Izraelita" (1866–1915): Znaczenie kulturowe i literackie czasopisma* (Kraków, 2014); Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov (ed.), *Studia z dziejów trójjęzycznej prasy żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich (XIX–XX w.)* (Warsaw, 2012). For the interwar period, see Katrin Steffen, *Jüdische Polonität: Ethnizität und Nation im Spiegel der polnischsprachigen jüdischen Presse 1918–1939* (Göttingen, 2004).

on the printing industry in the Russian Empire but virtually nothing new for the Kingdom of Poland, the Poznań area, and Galicia.[42]

Another noteworthy trend has resulted in new perspectives on modernity as an identity project, both the Haskalah ideology and a variety of post-maskilic ideologies. Even if for many scholars eastern Europe continues to be an amorphous creature without political, social, or cultural boundaries (either internal or external), there has been a wave of praiseworthy recent publications that take a more rigorous look at the Haskalah in its various east European contexts, starting with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and extending to Galicia, the Russian Empire, and the Kingdom of Poland.[43] Equally importantly, new studies on the post-maskilic modernist movements not only deeply contextualize these movements, but also attempt to overcome the limitations of the project-oriented perspective, by focusing on the interdependence between process and project. Agnieszka Jagodzińska, for example, compares the statements of the Jewish integrationists of Warsaw with their social practices, whether linguistic, onomastic, or sartorial.[44] This allows her to demonstrate the complex interdependence between what the integrationists claimed and the empirical changes within that community.

Test Case II: Liberal Judaism

Until recently, liberal Judaism in Poland was off the historians' radar. When, in 2000, Stephen D. Corrsin published his survey article on so-called

[42] On Russia, see Dmitry A. Elyashevich, *Pravitel'stvennaya politika i evreyskaya pechat' v Rossii 1797–1917: Ocherki istorii tsenzury* (St. Petersburg–Jerusalem, 1999). For a notable exception in works about the Kingdom of Poland, see Nathan Cohen, "Distributing Knowledge: Warsaw as a Center of Jewish Publishing, 1850–1914," in Dynner, Guesnet (eds.), *Warsaw*, 180–206.

[43] See Immanuel Etkes (ed.), *Ha-dat ve-ha-hayim: tenu'at ha-haskalah ha-yehudit be-mizrah Eiropah* (Jerusalem, 1993); Shmuel Feiner, David Sorkin (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London–Portland, 2001); Shmuel Feiner, Israel Bartal (eds.), *Ha-haskalah li-gevaneha: iyunim hadashim be-toledot ha-haskalah u-ve-sifrutah* (Jerusalem, 2005); Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, trans. Chaya Naor, Sondra Silverston (Oxford–Portland, 2002); Nancy B. Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands* (Providence, 2004); Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*, trans. Sarah Cozens (Oxford, 2005); Mordekhai Zalkin, *Ba'alot ha-shahar: ha-haskalah ha-Yehudit be-'imperia ha-Rusit ba-me'ah ha-tesha esre* (Jerusalem, 2000).

[44] Agnieszka Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy: Akulturacja Żydów Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* (Wrocław, 2008).

Progressive Judaism in Poland, he could mention few works apart from those of Hilary Nussbaum, Majer Bałaban, and Alexander Guterman.[45] For decades, scholars had avoided the topic.

The greatest challenge facing scholars has been—and remains—the lack of terminological and conceptual clarity in the literature on this subject. For scholars in the field it is still unclear where the boundaries lie (if they exist at all) between liberal, or "Progressive" or "Reform," Judaism and Haskalah, and between those various forms of Judaism (if they are indeed different), between secularization and modernization, social integration and acculturation, all collectively known as "enlightenment," or "progress" and, from the 1880s on, as "assimilation" too.

Defining these boundaries has been truly difficult, since the very same people at different stages of their lives or in different circumstances were exponents of the ideological positions mentioned here collectively, but in fact differed. Hence, one could be led to believe that liberal ideologies create a set of integrally linked attitudes and behaviors and that the boundaries between them are fluid and essentially unimportant. Liberal Judaism seen in this light did not differ from social and political liberalism, from an enlightenment or post-enlightenment ideology of social reform, or from a program of social integration and acculturation.

The impossibility of comparing the dominant, especially German and American, models of reform with the paths of liberal Judaism in eastern Europe has been also an analytical problem identified by scholars of liberal Judaism.[46] Critics have focused in particular on the lack of basic institutions of reform, both at the national level (for example, conventions of rabbis, conferences, ideological platforms) and at the local level (for example, isolated congregations, liturgical differences between specific synagogues). Some historians have concluded from this that there was never any liberal Judaism in Poland.

[45] See Stephen D. Corrsin, "Progressive Judaism in Poland: Dilemmas of Modernity and Identity," in Zvi Gitelman et al. (eds.), *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk* (Cambridge, 2000), 89–99. Of the publications discussed by Corrsin, see Hilary Nussbaum, *Historia Żydów od Mojżesza do epoki obecnej*, vol. 5: *Żydzi w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1890); id., *Z teki weterana Warszawskiej Gminy Starozakonnych* (Warsaw, 1880); Majer Bałaban, *Historia projektu Szkoły Rabinów i nauki religii mojżeszowej na ziemiach polskich* (Lwów, 1907); Alexander Guterman, *Me-hitbolelut le-leumiut: Perakim be-toldot bet-ha-kneset ha-gadol ha-sinagoga be-Varsha* (Tel Aviv, 1997); id., *Perakim be-toledot Yehudei Polin ba-'et ha-hadashah* (Jerusalem, 1999).

[46] See Corrsin, "Progressive Judaism in Poland," 89–99. See also Michał Galas, "The Influence of Progressive Judaism in Poland: An Outline," *Shofar* 29 (2011), 3: 55–67.

But, as Samuel Henryk Peltyn, the editor-in-chief of the leading tribune of the liberal Jewish community in Poland, the weekly *Izraelita*, stated, changes in Polish Judaism took place imperceptibly without adopting radical forms, but that does not mean that they did not take place. Several new publications seem to follow Peltyn in this conviction. They are good examples of how one can overcome prevailing limitations on studying east-European liberal Judaism and what one can discover both about liberal Judaism itself and about the post-maskilic community of Jewish modernizers in Poland and beyond.[47] As they indicate, despite all the limitations, the religious changes taking place in the liberal Jewish community in the Polish lands can reasonably be seen as a slow but successful revolution. The reformers were afraid of change that would be too radical and could, on the one hand, arouse opposition from conservative circles and expose the reformers to a charge of usurpation, and, on the other, encourage those who had already moved away from practicing their religion to leave Judaism even more rapidly.[48] Nevertheless, changes were gradually introduced that created obviously new forms of worship and new social relations. In interiors modeled on German Reform synagogues, prayers were said following Sulzer's prayer book, to the accompaniment of a choir, and maintaining modern decorum.[49] And most important, the so-called progressive synagogues in the great cities of nineteenth-century Poland created powerful communities with unambiguous, modernist self-awareness and progressive ideology.

Liberal Judaism in the Polish lands is interesting not because it was a key phenomenon in the processes of modernizing Jews in the Polish lands in the nineteenth century. Quite the contrary. However we define liberal Judaism, its reach in the Polish lands remained small. Liberal Judaism is important because it provides an illustration of the convoluted paths of modernization and the lack of precision in defining what belongs to it and what is simply a casual attendant phenomenon. It shows also that a careful analysis of the available sources, free from excessively ideological assumptions, can lead us to answers to questions even as difficult as

[47] See Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*; Kołodziejska, *"Izraelita"*; Agnieszka Jagodzińska, Marcin Wodziński (eds.), *"Izraelita" 1866–1915: Wybór źródeł* (Kraków–Budapest, 2015).

[48] See A. K., "Głos z gminy," *Izraelita* (1884), 40: 317–318. For an in-depth analysis, see Marcin Wodziński, "Religia i jej reforma," in Jagodzińska, Wodziński (eds.), *"Izraelita" 1866–1915*, 173–202.

[49] See Benjamin Matis, "Theology in Translation: Progressive Judaism in the Kingdom of Poland," *Polin* 27 (2014), 257–271.

the existence or absence of liberal Judaism in the Polish lands, and mainly to the introduction of a web of concepts that are more specific than what has hitherto been the case. The result has been a wave of publications on the subject of liberal preachers, the communities of liberal synagogues and schools in Lwów, Warsaw, and Kraków in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth,[50] and, more generally, the impressive development of knowledge on the subject of Jewish programs of modernization and on the liberal, so-called progressive Jewish population in the Polish lands.

Conclusions

As a last example of what might happen to the modernity discourse under the pressure of contemporary criticism, one should look at studies of historical demography. At first blush they are not so far from Raphael Mahler's and Artur Eisenbach's pioneering studies of the historical demography of Polish Jews. But, interestingly, the publications by a cohort of mostly young historians, such as Artur Markowski, Tomasz Jankowski, and, most prominently, Shaul Stampfer, proceed without using the modernity paradigm at all. Instead, they develop an extensive functionalist analysis of family structure, discuss John Hajnal's east-west division of Europe, and debate about which side of the line Poland or specific parts of Polish Jewry fall.[51]

One should not, however, draw far-reaching conclusions from this still rather modest group of demographical studies and other publications that avoid the use of the term and concept "modernity." They bear no trace of influence from the radical rejection of the concept of modernity by Gershon Hundert, nor do they engage with re-conceptualizations

[50] Michael Stanislawski, *A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton, 2007); Michał Galas, *Rabbi Marcus Jastrow and His Vision for the Reform of Judaism: A Study in the History of Judaism in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, 2013); id. (ed.), *Izaak Cylkow (1841–1908): Życie i dzieło* (Kraków–Budapest, 2010); Alicja Maślak-Maciejewska, *Rabin Szymon Dankowicz (1834–1910) – życie i działalność* (Kraków, 2013); Shoshana Ronen, *A Prophet of Consolation on the Threshold of Destruction: Yehoshua Ozjasz Thon. An Intellectual Portrait* (Warsaw, 2015).

[51] See Shaul Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis and Education: Traditional Jewish Society in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe* (Oxford–Portland, 2010); Artur Markowski, *Między Wschodem a Zachodem: Rodzina i gospodarstwo domowe Żydów suwalskich w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku* (Warsaw, 2008); Tomasz Jankowski, "Ludność żydowska Piotrkowa Trybunalskiego, 1808–1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wrocław, 2013).

offered by Moshe Rosman and others. And, most important, they need not be representative of anything broader. Still, they might indeed suggest that the concept of modernity is not as necessary or central for understanding Polish-Jewish history as previous generations of scholars believed. The extensive catalogue of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, mentioned at the beginning of this article, even though it called one of its exhibitions "Encounters with Modernity," does not use the concept of modernity as an analytical tool in describing Jewish life in nineteenth-century Poland. In fact, in the whole of the long chapter on the nineteenth century it mentions modernity only twice, each time in discussion of its discontents and paradoxical aspects.[52] It therefore seems that the concept of modernity, at least in Polish-Jewish historiography, has been undergoing the same transformation as many other once central concepts, which increasingly fall into disuse because of their vagueness, inherent value judgments, and ideological biases. The case in point is antisemitism and assimilation, both once central, but now the former is under serious scrutiny and the latter almost banned from scholarly language.[53]

But even if the concept of modernity stays with us, recent studies indicate that, if employed, it might be used in a more rigorous, analytically useful way than has hitherto been the case. It seems the criticism of the once dominant paradigm has already led to its liberation from its progressivist, occidental, colonial perspective. More important, the outcome of this reformulation is the notion of many modernities and the uniqueness of each of them. In Polish-Jewish historiography, it is Hasidism in particular, with its anti-modernist modernity, which, quite surprisingly, has become central to the description of Jewish modernity in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Poland. Another significant strand of recent publications looks at modernity projects in order to chart out the great variety of modernization strategies, ideologies, and institutions, far beyond the once

[52] Antony Polonsky, "Encounters with Modernity, 1772–1914," in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Antony Polonsky (eds.), *POLIN: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews* (Warsaw, 2014), 181, 201.

[53] On antisemitism, see David Engel, "Away from a Definition of Antisemitism: An Essay in the Semantics of Historical Description," in Jeremy Cohen, Moshe Rosman (eds.), *Rethinking European Jewish History* (Oxford, 2009), 30–53; on assimilation, see Agnieszka Jagodzińska, "Asymilacja, czyli bezradność historyka: O krytyce terminu i pojęcia," in Konrad Zieliński (ed.), *Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich* (Lublin, 2010), 15–31.

dominant focus on the Haskalah.[54] It is quite clear now that the Haskalah was not the only modernization project of the Polish Jews or even a dominant one. Integration, acculturation, emancipation movements, liberal Judaism, to name only a few, created a wide canvas of ideological, social, and cultural programs in competition for the soul of the Polish Jews. All those reassessments lead one to believe that we might eventually come to a much wider, methodologically rigorous, and factually informed understanding of what modernity really meant for nineteenth-century Polish Jews. One can only hope that this will come soon and in our time.

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[54] Frankel noted the prominence of this tendency already in the 1990s. See Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews," 23–24.