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# Christianity and Conviction: Gustav Mahler and the Meanings of Jewish Conversion in Central Europe

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CHRISTIANITY AND CONVICTION:  
GUSTAV MAHLER AND THE MEANINGS OF JEWISH CONVERSION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Spaces of Multiple Belonging  
Jewish Topographies in Modernity – The Case of Gustav Mahler  
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On February 23, 1897, Gustav Mahler walked into the Kleine Michaeliskirche in Hamburg and was “received” or baptized into the Roman Catholic faith. The rite of conversion, Mahler believed would clear away a major stumbling block as a prerequisite for being named principal director of the Vienna Hofoper, the Court Opera, today’s Vienna State Opera, and a position for which he and his supporters had been discreetly campaigning for many months. Certainly Alma Mahler, who shared the cultural anti-Semitism of so many (including Jews) in nineteenth-century Central Europe, but an affinity for personal relationships with creative and intellectual Jews, chalked up the conversion to worldly concerns. If so, it was not untypical. Mahler followed many converts in Austria, Hungary, and Germany. Heinrich Heine had famously cited baptism as the ticket of admission (*entreebillet*) to gentile society.

The timing and disclosure of Mahler’s intention was apparently calculated to keep the world of friends (and perhaps of gossip) from learning that the step was imminent, but at the same time to suggest to the officials in Vienna that he had undergone baptism earlier for its own sake and not just to become eligible to fill the vacancy. In letters to his sister Justine three years earlier and to his friend Friedrich Löhr about a year later, he acknowledged the obstacle of his Jewishness to his career but gave no intention of conversion, indeed seemed genuinely depressed by the opportunities foreclosed. Letters as late as early 1897 suggest no intention of baptism, but they may well have been written from tactical reasons lest public knowledge of the forthcoming step derail the lobbying efforts in Vienna; for his sister Justine, who decided to share his conversion, revealed to her friend, Ernestine Löhr as of early December 1896, that the siblings were undergoing Catholic religious instruction in view of the Vienna opera position.<sup>1</sup>

Mahler’s formal conversion was opportunistic and apparently not devoid of pricks of conscience. As he wrote his Hungarian journalist supporter Ludwig Karpath, it “cost me a great deal.” Allow for exaggeration; still, what exactly did it cost? Just the sense of attachment to his family’s Jewish tradition? Perhaps a sense of deserting a beleaguered minority? (On the other hand, he preferred to wear identities lightly even if the anti-Semitic press made this an effort.<sup>2</sup> If he could not summon up acceptance of Catholic dogma – Justine admitted she could not -- perhaps distress at the pretense required? Perhaps distaste about denying to friends that it was impending or claiming to court circles that it had long since taken place. In the religious instruction required prior to baptism, he apparently had engaged in a real dialogue -- perhaps even a bit of a contest -- with the priest who taught him, so his intellect and commitments must have been partially involved.

1. Mahler left his friends fragmentary statements of belief, and the limits of his belief, but it is doubtful that any such efforts to sum up personal creed are unchanging or precise. Not that they are false: they are just one of the layers of our onion-like sense of self that peel off under the different circumstances in which we are compelled to construct a coherent narrative of our life, whether the circumstances spring from creative ecstasy, worldly opportunity, falling in love, or fear of death. So one could start this paper by exploring Mahler's conversion although there is no full record of what happened inside that church, nor despite reams of commentary, little of what was really going on inside Mahler's head. Nor can I add anything to the extensive discussion of Mahler's Jewishness and post-Jewishness to what Leon Botstein, Thalia Pecker Berio, the biographer Jens Malte Fischer, and most recently Carl Niekerk have ventured.<sup>3</sup> Still, if scholars and commentators continually ask, how Jewish was Mahler, we should also ask, how Christian was Mahler? And not only Mahler, but other Jews who elected conversion.

There are several reasons to pose the question. First, it often remains difficult for Christians and perhaps even more so for Jews really to believe that conversion from Judaism to Christianity takes place as the result of authentic religious conviction. Can the convert really believe in the divinity of Jesus, his resurrection, and the authority of the Church? And even if and when beliefs evolve, Jews and often Christians tend to talk as if Jewish "identity," while not racial, still retains dimensions beyond (or more fundamental than) any confession of faith. To what degree does the convert cease to be Jewish? The Christian clergyman may feel conversion has followed from the simple illumination of the convert's soul; indeed until the Second Vatican Council Catholic liturgy prayed for such illumination on a large scale. Most of the convert's acquaintances, however, tend to attribute non-religious motivation -- perhaps the desire on the part of a spouse or loved one matched by desire for the beloved on the part of the convert; perhaps the advantages of worldly advancement in societies where prejudice against Jews often remained general and residual, as it did in Western countries deep into the twentieth century. If conversion seems to be meaningful and authentic, sometimes the mental robustness of the convert is questioned -- perhaps, one suspects, fear of death and the Christian promise of some spiritual life after physical life ceases has played a role.

Even if the affirmation follows from extraneous motivation, that, too, is a sociological, psychological fact also worth investigation. What was going on in the convert's head or "heart and mind"? Normally such questions strongly motivate adolescents, but middle-aged adults learn they may never be resolved. Nonetheless, conversion remains to challenge explanation, and constitutes an important theme in Central European Jewish history. Some Christian sources attribute Jewish conversion to the unproblematic acceptance of the New Testament -- seeing the truth of revelation and acting upon it; converts themselves have described their journey. Nonetheless these histories often disquiet serious Jewish observers, if the convert's friends and family are relatively religiously indifferent and/or remain connected to the convert by friendship or family ties, they still cannot understand the new religious conviction very easily.

Conversion, to be sure, does not describe just the renunciation of one faith for another; the term also applies to the process of being "born again" or awakening from religious indifference to spirituality whether from one formal affiliation to another or

within the same denomination. Testimonies suggest that the awakening comes suddenly and with tremendous force – blinding Saul, summoning Augustine – “*tolle lege*” -- from sex to scripture. In this sense Mahler does seem to have had a genuine moment of spiritual awakening three years before his baptism – not one that then suggested he should formally become a Christian, but nonetheless an experience that he described in terms compatible with a Christian message. This intense moment of liminality – call it Mahler’s authentic conversion -- occurred at Hans von Bülow’s funeral service in March 1894, and not the formal baptism that he underwent for his career three years later. Not surprisingly, it came as a flash of artistic inspiration as well as spiritual illumination. As he described the moment in a letter written only a week before his baptism, when he heard the hymn based on Klopstock’s poem that became the basis for the finale of his second “Resurrection” symphony: “It flashed on me like lightning, and everything became clear in my mind! It was the flash that all creative artists wait for – ‘conceiving by the holy ghost’.” In the case of Mahler, I think, there is evidence of a sufficient convergence between the Christian promise and the assurances he might draw from musical inspiration to understand how he might accept the “larger” message. Four years after his testimony of 1897, he further filled out the vision (we cannot say, of course, that it was the original illumination) in program notes for a Dresden performance of the Second Symphony: “Softly there rings out a chorus of the holy and the heavenly. ‘Risen again, yea thou shalt be risen again!’ There appears the glory of God! A wonderful gentle light permeates us to our very heart – all is quiet and blissful! – And behold there is no judgement. – There is no sinner, no righteous man – no great and no small—There is no punishment and no reward! An almighty feeling of love illumines us with blessed knowing and being.”<sup>4</sup>

At the very time Mahler was writing these program notes for Dresden, William James was concluding his British lectures that became the great book, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Although his accents were robustly American, James likewise argued that religion certainly meant more than morality, that it involved a trans-rational element he termed the Divine, but the Divine loomed in many forms. For James, conversion was one of the crucial experiences of the religious life – involving a sense of personal impasse, then self-surrender and the conviction of being born again. Among other testimonies he cited the emotionally fraught testimony of a free-thinking French Jew, Alphonse Ratisbonne who left a description of his conversion to Catholicism in 1842.<sup>5</sup>

For James, “the further limits of our being plunge...into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely ‘understandable’ world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you choose... God is the natural appellation, for us Christians at least, for the supreme reality, so I will call this higher part of the universe by the name of God. We and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled.” James invoked the newly labeled notion of the subconscious as a source of this experience, which did not, however, exclude its divine origins. God did not explain the natural world; God “falls short of being an hypothesis of this more useful order.” But, as pragmatist – and a sixty-year old obviously seeking to comprehend his own beliefs -- he was willing to wager on the existence of a “some characteristic realm of fact as its very own.” “All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our

conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step.”<sup>6</sup> For Mahler the next step was always a musical one.

2. In what follows, I want to explore the range of possible experience that conversion might have had for Mahler and for other Jews who underwent it. Of course, at one level the disabilities of being Jewish in the German lands were a powerful incentive to seek an alternative official identity. Mahler described his adherence to the Church at different junctures rather cynically: baptism for the job. Doubtless other Jews did as well: Heine and Marx were removing taints not adding beliefs.

Still, earlier converts might well have found some redeeming emancipatory value by accepting the religious framework of the vast majority. In 1848 King Frederick William IV had declared that Prussia would dissolve into a larger Germany: *Preussen geht in Deutschland auf*. For some Jews conversion represented an analogous liberating flow into a larger structure, whether of the Christian West or of German modernity. This was a crucial factor in Central Europe: German culture – Protestant above all, but in Austria, urban, Josephinist Catholic to a degree -- represented the Enlightenment and progress. After 1867, the Hungarian national entity offered an analogous opportunity within the framework of Habsburg dualism. Conversion had a different valence in different decades. Early in the nineteenth century before Haskala or the Jewish Enlightenment was widespread, while legal restrictions still marked some jurisdictions, Christianity beckoned as a movement, a vector; and indeed its contemporary theologians such as Schleiermacher asserted that revelation itself was a work in progress. Judaism meant tradition and preservation; as Arnold Toynbee later put it so cruelly, it was a fossil. For the convert in this era, Jewish culture remained laden with communal and pre-rational baggage, constrained by innumerable prohibitions and rites in an antique language, confining its males into non-honorific occupations, keeping them outside what counted for progress in the era of science and nationalism. By the second half the century, after legal with legal emancipation achieved and a Reform alternative gaining strength, it was probably the national community as such that exerted its attraction.

A brief word about the nationalism that attracted assimilationist Jews, including, but not only, those who underwent conversion or left their officially registered communities. Historians have distinguished nationalist ideologies that were expressed by civic and constitutional values from those that have stressed ethnic or later “racial” identity – supposedly a French model from a German one.<sup>7</sup> This distinction – based on official and programmatic discourse – is probably far too rigid. What assimilationist Jews beheld in the national emergence in Central Europe was not what anti-Semites envisioned. The national state, even when it was asserting its claims within an imperial shell, as in Prussian Germany, German Austria, Habsburg Bohemia-Moravia, or the post-Ausgleich Kingdom of Hungary, (even across the ocean in America) was the vehicle for a secularizing modernity – a structure that was progressively dissolving older, restrictive communities, allowing civil marriage and secular education, and offering intellectually or entrepreneurially gifted individuals who acquired the national language and/or business skills or technical expertise to link their social ascent to the new community. “Symbiosis” is a sentimentalizing term which implies that two co-equal communities effected a cultural merger. Rather the assimilation-minded among the Jewish communities, whether migrating from the locally dense and encompassing communities

as in small-town Galicia or Prussia's Polish borderland, or arriving in increasing numbers into the metropolises, were like passengers at a small station platform waiting to get on a modern, fast-moving train. Reaction, never absent, soon set in, of course, on both sides; the national exuberance that was so promising produced ethnic exclusivity from the late 1870s (and alternative Jewish nationalisms from the 1880s) – but not so overwhelming as to derail the aspirations of the “main chance” or the arguments of love and marriage until the 1930s. Ultimately the trains would lead elsewhere but that outcome was unimagined earlier, and the histories of assimilation should not be written as if it were foreordained.

Jewish historians may not escape the idea that the convert has somehow “defected” from a community under siege and there was something unworthy or opportunistic about the life-choice. They conventionally attribute the reasons to intermarriage or worldly ambition, or perhaps discomfort at remaining within a religion that seemed only a generation away from what the surrounding world deemed one of strange rites, and self-imposed exile from the world of secular learning of the European Enlightenment. That world meant unattractive cultural traits such as a penchant for bargaining, a persistence of quasi-tribal attributes of speaking in a sing-song language – allegedly, anti-Semites explained, a West Yiddish if not the full Yiddish of East Central Europe, typical rising inflections, and a vigorous use of gestures when speaking. Even Mahler, so successful in a world of Christian attainment, worried about escaping these attributes; he famously wrote Alma of his dismay about being “related” to the Polish Jews in Lvov.<sup>8</sup>

Jewish observers have often feared that assimilation accompanied by intermarriage would mean the slow disappearance of Jews as an organized ethnic and/or religious force. Commentators have often used stigmatizing language, such as the term, Jewish self-hatred. Deborah Herz's history follows conversions until 1833, after which the proportion of converts fell, with evident disapproval. “Our converts set a model for a truly craven style of assimilation, and the self-hatred among the ambitious can be seen among Jewish Germans long after Rahel [van Varnhagen] died in 1833.”<sup>9</sup> Steven Beller is less censorious about Viennese Jews, although he describes conversion and a title of nobility as the best paths to acceptance. The goal was to fade in. “Jews tried, almost literally, to merge into the landscape.”<sup>10</sup> He cites dress, including the Freud family's peasant hiking clothes -- but yes, of course, Jews proposed to dress as did the Christian majority; they were not maintaining the caftans, earlocks or *pais*, of the Chassidic villages or even the larger towns of East Central Europe such as Lemburg (Lv'iv) or Vilna. But then hiking was a sport that already suggested assimilation. The more serious point Beller makes is that for the Jewish liberal bourgeoisie, Vienna represented not a Baroque Catholic city, as its architecture might have suggested, but the city of German national cultural ideals. The Jewish population was culturally pan-German. Indeed Mahler was Viennese only for a relatively brief period: if he had a home after Iglau, it was a series of cities that had opera theaters, including Prague, and Hamburg where he was formally baptized. According to his recent biographer, he was stamped not by the Vienna of 1900, but 1875.<sup>11</sup> The cultural institutions par excellence for the Viennese *Bildungsbürgertum* were the Hofoper, the Burgtheater, and the *Neue Freie Presse*—and the latter featured liberal journalists of Jewish origin, including the critic, Eduard Hanslick whom Wagner derided in *Meistersinger*. But leadership of the Court Opera, unlike the city theater or the liberals' newspaper, demanded the price of conversion.

Assimilation is an open-ended word. Americans use it today to mean a general adoption of the customs of the religious majority and sometimes an abandonment of earlier observances such as keeping kosher or abstention from Saturday labor. Although some studies of Central European Jewry usually confine it to intermarriage or conversion, I use assimilation to mean a more general interaction with gentiles, whether attendance at universities, practicing a profession, or taking part in political organizations. Assimilation did not have to entail secularism and the abandonment of Jewish rituals. It did tend to mean dropping visible ethnic markers in the way of clothes. Often it included observing at least the secular side of Christian holidays, such as Christmas. It certainly meant mastering the academic and artistic attainments of gentile society, whether mathematics and science, vernacular literature and journalism and music. In Vienna's districts I, II, and IX (and especially where these districts converged), the school classes were from 40 to 80 percent Jewish, but there were still crucifixes on classroom walls and classes were held on Saturdays.<sup>12</sup>

To judge from the recordings of Berlin Reform Jewish synagogue music that George Mosse's father made toward 1930, German music, the Bach tradition that Mendelssohn helped to revive, was a patrimony that could serve Jews as Jews. By the early twentieth century, Jews as Jews could have, or believed that they might have access to all of German modernity, the universities, the professions. In Eastern Europe assimilation often meant a more militant break with any organized religion and was often accompanied by militant political commitments on the Left whether to Menshevism, Bolshevism, or the Socialist Labor Movement. In Germany and Austria assimilation could entail the simple disuse of Jewish religious practice without any scornful rejection.

Upper-class assimilation – as measured by either conversion or intermarriage or in the more general sense of adopting gentile folkways (even if preserving Jewish religious observance) – was as advanced in Budapest as in German-speaking Europe. Linguistic assimilation, mastery of Hungarian was an important dimension. In 1880 over two fifths of the Hungarian Jewish population still listed a non-Magyar mother tongue; for 35 percent it was German. (The pre-assimilation Jews of Galicia grew up with Yiddish, but Galicia was part of Austrian Cisleithania, not the Kingdom of Hungary.) By 1910 over 75% listed Magyar as their mother tongue while those listing German had fallen to 22 percent. Above all the Reform Jews or Neologs supported the Hungarian state and the favor was returned because Jews could be counted as Magyar in the censuses that were important for electoral and educational politics.

Nonetheless, as the complaints about Mahler's service at the Budapest opera on the Andrassy boulevard revealed, anti-Semitism remained a major current, evolving, so John Lukacs suggests, from the more tolerant (though still guarded) attitude of the earlier or mid-nineteenth-century liberal into a harsher populism after 1900.<sup>13</sup> In the aftermath of the Third Reich, historians, memoirists, and commentators on religion have naturally emphasized the setbacks to assimilation -- the continuing waves of reaction, the populist prejudices that might be tapped, certainly in Prussia, in Austria, in Hungary, in France -- recall Dreyfus -- and in the United States, especially in the South -- remember the lynching of Leo Frank in 1911. Even in regions and times where anti-Semitism faded, the Jewish-gentile divide remained always in consciousness. As Arthur Schnitzler wrote in his memoirs, "It was not possible, especially not for a Jew in public life, to ignore the fact that he was a Jew; nobody else was doing so, not the Gentiles, and even less the

Jews.”<sup>14</sup> This held true after conversion, and it led to contradictory emotions. Members of the Jewish community could remain proud of their converts as residual Jews. Disraeli, Heine, Mendelssohn, Mahler – “well, aren’t their achievements Jewish achievements, despite everything?” Shouldn’t Jews take some satisfaction that “our people” have produced such genius? Critics and admirers alike asked whether Mahler’s music wasn’t somehow indelibly Jewish?<sup>15</sup> But closer to home, conversion and even intermarriage might involve prolonged conflicts of conscience and conflicts or strained relations with family (as in the case of Moses Mendelssohn’s children, thus Felix’s parents).

Conversion in the Mendelssohn family, to judge from the indirect evidence of conversion, marriage and in Dorothea’s case remarriage, testifies to private storminess as well as a story of extreme acculturation.<sup>16</sup> Abraham’s insistence that Felix take the name, Bartholdy, and Felix’s adult refusal to abandon Mendelssohn was just one sign.

For this reason assimilation and even more so conversion has often evoked the ugly epithet of self-hatred. The imprecise term of “Jewish self-hatred,” however, usually involved a fear that the precarious bourgeois respectability the assimilated had achieved was threatened by their religious or ethnic identification with the Jews who had not shed traditional dress or hairstyle or speech patterns of their older communities. It was an internalized socio-religious snobbery retained even by Jews who did not convert or intermarry. It is a commonplace observation that a cultural and social divide separated the Jews of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (including Galicia), which was partitioned in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, from the Jews of the lands to the West. Whether in late nineteenth-century Berlin – where the former Scheunenviertel and Spandauer Vorort menaced Charlottenburg; or in Vienna – where the Leopoldstaat in Bezirk 2 dismayed the acculturated Jews across the Donaukanal; or in London, where East European Jews arrived in the East End in the late nineteenth century; or Manhattan – where Hester Street threatened Central Park West and Park Avenue; or in Paris – where the Polish arrivals in the Rue des Rosiers unsettled the earlier Alsatian communities; or in Pest, demeaned by anti-Semites as “Judapest,” the earlier arrivals, who had mastered German, English, Hungarian and French whether two centuries earlier or perhaps just in the preceding generation, perceived the post-1848 or 1867 Jewish migrants as uncultured, foreign, and a threat to their own earlier acquired position. Stephen Birmingham’s *Our Crowd*, George Clare’s *Last Waltz in Vienna*, and recently, Edmund de Waal’s *The Hare with the Auburn Eyes* all record this gulf. It is what Mahler himself supposedly felt when he encountered his co-religionists in Lemburg and remembered with dismay that he was one of them. Ashkenaz, in short, comprised at least two mutually suspicious cultures after the eighteenth century and except for some liturgical practices, they were further apart than the Germanizing or Magyarizing Jewish elite was from its host society.

3. The issue here, however, is not just assimilation, but conversion. Conversion (and baptism) was not the same as disaffiliation from the Jewish community. In Germany and Austria citizens were registered with one or another religious “communities” each of which had the right to church tax proceeds. The Prussian Jewish law of 1847 allowed Jews to leave their congregation, which had a legal corporate existence, only if they entered another religious corporation. This usually meant baptism and being received into a Christian congregation, although a few orthodox Jewish communities established themselves by this route, which suggests that more congregations were drifting into the



liberal or Reform movement (characterized by shorter services, more liturgy in the vernacular, and seating of men and women together). Legislation in 1873 allowed exit from the community without conversion although for another three years it required a declaration of intent to leave Judaism as such, but even when this provision was relaxed in 1876, any Jew wanting to exit the community had to make a court appearance and declare he or she had religious motivations for the decision, (as was the case since 1868 in Austria). Producing a baptism certificate before the court was taken as evidence, although the synagogue community was given notice and could seek to delay the exit from the congregation (and loss of the relevant title).<sup>17</sup> Only under the Weimar Republic did legislation allow disaffiliation without citing religious grounds.

Disaffiliation might suffice for Jews who in conscience did not want to be considered members of a religious congregation and/or objected to being tithed for its maintenance. Conversion made a stronger statement and, of course, required tax payments intended for a different community. A major motive in Habsburg Austria was intermarriage. Not all converts married, and not all Jews who married outside the faith converted, but the two actions often went together above all in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire. Christians could marry Jews in Prussia and the German Reich and in the post-1867 Kingdom of Hungary in civil ceremonies and each could stay inscribed in the religious *Gemeinde* to which subjects were normally assigned for the purpose of assessing church taxes. But mixed marriage, where each partner retained his or her original religion was not possible in Austria, which meant that one of the partners had to list himself or herself as *Konfessionslos* or adopt the religion of the fiancé(e), an option that almost always meant baptism for the Jewish intended. Mahler, of course, did not have to undergo this rite for love; he had had been baptized almost five years earlier when he and Alma were married in the Vienna Karlskirche on February 9, 1902. But other Austrians, and Germans, did. Their beloveds were worth a mass.

At the turn of the century the percentage of Jews undergoing baptism in Austria was about three times as large as in Germany. Although sometimes ascribed to a higher degree of assimilation pressures, the marriage requirement is the factor that probably produced a higher conversion rate.<sup>18</sup> Ninety-five percent of Austrian Jews lived in Vienna (vs. one third of Germany's in Berlin). The pressure of the community would have tended to inhibit conversion; and so too, the German-Austrian population was a smaller share of the urban mix than the German share in Berlin. All of which meant that the hurdle of interfaith marriage was all the more likely to account for the conversion ratio. In second-tier cities with a high Jewish population (Prussia's Breslau and Habsburg Prague) there was also a three-times higher conversion rate in the Habsburg metropolis. Confirming the requirements of marriage as the chief pressure for conversion was the fact that in Prussia, Jewish parents could have their children baptized (as had Felix Mendelssohn's father) without themselves converting, and a number chose this route. In Austria parents had to go to the font with their children if they wanted them converted.<sup>19</sup>

In all the surveys, one finds that although the number of conversions (or childhood baptisms) was a small percentage of the Jewish community as a whole, but a significant number of the elite – whether intellectual or financial elite. Particularly in the Kingdom of Hungary alliances between Magyar nobility and well-to-do Jewish women seemed a notable pattern – *on a doré le blason* across faiths and not just classes -- and after 1867 name changes among the Jewish elite – from the German choices made or

imposed during the reign of Joseph II to the Magyar names favored after the Ausgleich of 1867.

The marriage numbers look as follows: in Vienna in 1895, 5.0 percent of Jewish men and 2.6 percent of Jewish women (or in aggregate, 3.8 percent) contracted marriages to non-Jews. By 1910, the numbers were 9.4 percent of men, 6.8 percent of women, 8.1 percent overall. The rate therefore was twice as high, but still under ten percent. The growth of the Jewish population from 1848, largely from migration, was far more rapid. (Eighty percent of Vienna's Jews in 1900 had been born outside the capital in contrast with 55 percent of the city's inhabitants as a whole. Like other cities in industrializing Europe and North America, residents flocked from elsewhere, but Jewish immigration was particularly high).<sup>20</sup>

In Prussia, and after 1870 in Germany as a whole, according to Steven Lowenstein's studies -- which differ from Rozenblit's estimates for Berlin -- the intermarriage rate went up from about 5 percent in 1880 to 8 percent in 1900 and for Germany as a whole, to about 11 percent in 1910 and to almost 22 percent by the second half of the 1920s. But these marriages were no more than 0.3 percent of all the marriages in Germany.<sup>21</sup> The high intermarriage rate of over a third of Jewish marriages in 1915 as well as spurts of intermarriage later, reflect, according to Lowenstein, the declining number of Jewish marriages overall. The fewer marriages contracted by Jews, the higher the percentage of intermarriages. The years of economic turmoil in the early 1920s and then the Depression meant the postponement of marriage -- intra-Jewish even more than non-Jewish.

The lag of Viennese intermarriages with respect to Germany can be at least partially attributed to the fact that unlike Prussia, Austria prohibited mixed marriages. One of the partners had to convert or formally disaffiliate himself or herself from the community of religious registration and taxation and declare himself as *konfessionslos*. Rozenblit also believes that the network of Jewish associations was stronger in Vienna and thus preserved both opportunities and pressures for endogamy. The different requirements may also explain that the conversion rate in Vienna was higher than in Berlin (roughly 9,000 in Vienna between 1868 and 1903, vs. 2,800 in Berlin during roughly the same time span) and indeed higher than anywhere else in the Dual Monarchy or in Europe. Still, conversion lagged far behind intermarriage. In 1900 Vienna, 559 Jews converted or 0.04% of the 140,000 Jewish population.<sup>22</sup>

In the lands of Cisleithania, i.e. the Austrian half of the post-1867 Dual Monarchy, where Catholicism was the far larger Christian faith, the choice of religion was still usually Protestantism (50 percent of those leaving the community in Vienna became Protestant, a quarter Catholic, a quarter left without conversion). Protestantism was apparently an easier spiritual destination unless the requirements of Catholic intermarriage or an official position, such as beckoned to Mahler, recommended the Roman church.

In sum, conversion thus seems in general a phenomenon produced by non-religious motivations. After 1870, when entry into the legal and other professions was liberalized in Austria, about 30 percent of converts returned to Judaism. Later even more re-converted when they may have learned that Judaism did not in fact wash out with a baptismal certificate. Perhaps as they aged, their former ancestral community may have exerted a stronger pull. Nonetheless conversion was and remains, a numerically

insignificant phenomenon with respect to the Jewish population as a whole; but among the recognizable cultural figures, there were many who crossed over or whose parents had crossed over, a decision that never failed to excite comment even among non-antisemites. If not the consequence of intermarriage, conversion remained an elite phenomenon that had a cultural signification far stronger than overall percentages might suggest. It is revealing that of Jewish males who intermarried, three quarters of a sample who simply left the community but did not convert were business employees or merchants, whereas of the converts two thirds were professionals, government employees or students. And males who converted were of a higher social status than those who were intermarrying.<sup>23</sup> In a society where status was at least partially correlated with educational level, the finding suggests that conversion must have prompted some serious intellectual consideration.

4. Back to the subjective dimension of this inquiry. For all the recognition that conversion served so often as an “entry ticket,” it remains a challenge to know what it demanded intellectually and spiritually. We can only speculate, and the speculations that follow can claim no scholarly authority. As noted at the beginning, conversion is a moment when the convert must provide a statement of belief. To be baptized as an adult Catholic requires answering yes to a Trinitarian creed, which is recited just before the central point in the Mass. The formal creed went back to Nicea in 325, in turn a codification of affirmations circulating for at least two centuries; Tridentine Catholicism – as practiced in Europe and America before the Second Vatican Council -- went back to the mid-sixteenth century, and it imposed ideas of authority, dogma and Papal spiritual supremacy that added to the challenge, whether for those converting, or those marrying a partner inside the Church who was required to have his or her children brought up in that creed. The Lutheran alternative demanded less for church authority, but a Trinitarian confession nonetheless.

Did the composer’s artistic gifts allow a special dimension to his declarations, a license to aestheticize the adherence to Christianity? Perhaps the convert subordinated the creed to liturgical richness and associated music and art – the frequent respectful allusions to the beauty of Catholic liturgy sometimes sound as mere apologia. Still, music is central to religious rite and presumably has been from its origins. No serious composer will wish to remain separate from music; and getting into the European musical mainstream – exploring the tonalities of the non-Jewish world – remained as compelling a challenge to composers of Jewish origin from the eighteenth century on as did getting into the mainstream of European mathematics and science. Sacred music had a special niche and was a special challenge. It had to be pure and worthy as well as an analogue of revelation. A generation after Mahler, Hans Pfitzner, the German nationalist, based his opera “Palestrina” on the legendary account of how the Italian composer had by the purity of his counterpoint kept the worthy bishops at Trent from condemning music in the mass. Church music had its rigorous forms: how did one achieve a range of suitable emotions within the texts allowed? Counterpoint perhaps reached one peak of perfection in the fifteenth century Low Countries, but the Protestant reformation liberated emotional solos and massed chorales. Perhaps the composer of religious music sensed that he was imparting a tremendous gift and mediating for the divine: “SDG: Soli Deo Gloria: To

God alone the Glory,” as Handel wrote at the end of his score for “Messiah” after a month of frantic composition and pastiching his earlier work.

Different religious sensibilities lead to different aesthetic responses. Although each of might have our own list, I would suggest five or six dimensions of spirituality that produce characteristic musical, visual or literary expressions: whether to take some disparate examples, the apparent spiritual transparency of, say, a Duccio or Schubert; the sense of abandonment and subsequent redemption captured by Caravaggio, Donne, or Verdi’s “Libera me”; the robustness of accepted faith in Handel; the exaltation of a mystical community (Beethoven’s Ninth); and the frank surrender to theatricality – so crucial a component of Baroque culture and therefore of Austrian and Roman religiosity. Certainly, great works and artists can combine these elements and others; Bach’s cantatas run the gamut. Artists do not pursue only one, although they are often outstanding in one or two of these dimensions, or can sustain them longer.

Thinking in terms of such dimensions, I would propose, helps us to intuit the content of Mahler’s religiosity and the implications of his Christianity. To do so, however, it helps to establish a comparison – in this case with Mendelssohn, another Jew by origin with a gift for sacred music. I don’t wish to rehearse the debate as to whether Felix, converted by his parents as a child, later felt torn by regrets or compunctions about the forswearing of Jewish roots that was made on his behalf. (This was another difference between the Prussian and Austrian religious regimes; in Austria parents could not have their children baptized without going to the font themselves.) Even if we believe Felix might later have felt he had been deprived of a choice and a legacy, he would not have had to blame himself for apostasy. As Leon Botstein emphasizes in his defense of Mendelssohn against the strictures, not only of Wagner’s and other accusations of genteel shallowness, but Heine’s sarcasm, Mendelssohn was at ease with Jewish origins even while sincere about his faith.<sup>24</sup> But neither could he record the sense of being reborn as Mahler claimed to have experienced in 1894. Mahler’s conversion-like experience, which yielded the finale of the Second Symphony taken from Klopstock’s Ode, was a celebration of resurrection, keyed to the Christian message, but did not have to be conceived of as a specifically Christian revelation. But if formal adherence to Christianity were to follow for the directorship of the Hofoper, Protestant conversion would not suffice; the path to Vienna went via Rome.

This despite the fact that Jews of Mahler’s era confronted a post-1870 Catholicism explicitly at war with liberalism and the national state, and as of 1897 deeply implicated in the growing scandal of the Dreyfus affair. (Even though Mahler’s personal friendship with his Dreyfusard fans in Paris dates from 1900, Jews throughout Central Europe were well aware of the Church’s unsavory role in the case as well as having to confront the demagogic anti-Semitism of the Lueger movement in Vienna.) Doubtless there were moments when Mahler swallowed hard, but the requirements, too, of a Catholic marriage to the beautiful Alma Schindler in 1902 also kept him nominally acquiescent. Ultimately the Church as institution meant little as had the rituals of Judaism that he left behind – but this did not mean that his personal religious experience had to atrophy. Indeed, when Mahler returned to explicitly religious themes in the Eighth symphony in 1906, he had gone beyond the redemptive promises of individual salvation to envisage a massive involvement of the entire cosmos, “Imagine that the universe

begins to resound and sing,” he wrote the Dutch conductor Wilhelm Mengelburg: “It’s no longer human voices but planets and suns that orbit in harmony.”<sup>25</sup>

5. It is at this point that comparison of the musical programs of Mahler and Mendelssohn might suggest what conversion meant to each. How did they come to terms with – indeed more than come to terms, but internalize -- a Christian message that they had agreed to affirm, even if in the one case a choice originally imposed by parents and in the other a confession formalized for worldly reasons? For Felix the alternation between dramatic questioning or challenges and choral affirmation was central. Consider though, not the confrontation of the prophet and the priests of Baal in *Elijah*, but the dramatic confrontation in Mendelssohn’s Second Symphony, the so-called “Lobesgesang,” as the tenor dramatically solos with the enigmatic text from Isaiah 21:11: “We wandered in darkness... We called out in the darkness, *Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin?*” Watchman, Is the night almost over? Mendelssohn’s musical setting is dramatic with the question repeated by a tenor in insistent and ascending tones. The response in Isaiah is mysterious. “And the watchman spoke, the morning cometh and the night. If ye will inquire, inquire. Return come.” For a clue, consider how the text struck Max Weber eighty years later in his great lecture: *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, “Scholarship as a Vocation.” At the end of his discussion, which emphasizes the austerity and intellectual discipline required to be a professional scholar, Weber wrote – in the English translation that most American students encounter: “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world.’ For the individual who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man, one must say make an intellectual sacrifice and return to religion.” But he who is committed to analytical thinking, Weber argues, is not allowed this recourse. Those who cannot face up to the bleak life of study without illusion, confront the situation described by “the beautiful Edomite watchman’s song of the period of exile that has been included among Isaiah’s oracles: He calleth to me out of Seir, ‘Watchman, what of the night? [This is the King James rendition, which for the unfamiliar loses the specificity of the question.] The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return come.” “The people to whom this was said,” Weber added, evidently referring to the Jews, “has enquired and tarried for more than two millennia, and we are shaken when we realize its fate” – as if collectively they were the protagonist in Kafka’s fable, “Vor dem Gesetz,” who keeps asking whether he can enter the gateway to the Law, and is always deterred, although the gate has always been opened just for him. So Weber concludes his stern summary, “From this we want to draw the lesson that nothing is gained by yearning and tarrying alone and we shall act differently.”<sup>26</sup> Mendelssohn had acted differently and found more hope. His tenor repeats his question over and over, but in the next triumphant chorus, his people sing: “*Die Nacht is hin*. Night has departed, the day has arrived, so let us set aside the work of darkness and take up the weapons of the light.”

The *Lobesgesang* was commissioned and performed in Leipzig in 1840, Mendelssohn’s home city as an adult, to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Johann Gutenberg, the Promethean figure who provided the light of printing that penetrated the darkness and facilitated the Reformation. A great deal has been written about the easy or agonizing reconciliation of Mendelssohn’s Jewish origins with his

Protestant upbringing and aesthetic vocation in a society that could not come to terms with hybridity.<sup>27</sup> Jews with intellectual and cultural ambitions like Mendelssohn, Heine, the two Marx's (Karl and A.B.) wanted to take up the weapons of the light. Mendelssohn's parents made the formal choice for him, and certainly Felix understood the Jewish baggage there from his grandfather Mendelssohn and his great-grandfather Itzig. Reform Judaism as an option with a congregation or a *minyán* was only five years old when he was converted. He'd not been of an age of reason, but he was clearly a spiritual being and -- to agree with Leon Botstein's interpretation -- he could come to believe the loyalties of his forefathers might flow into the new community of an emerging German nation. 1840 was in fact a year of awakening German nationalism thanks to a war scare with France that also produced the patriotic hymn, "The Watch on the Rhine." "The night was over; let us take up the weapons of the light." For better or worse, weapons would soon become as important as light.

Had Mahler's religious appeals rested with the Second Symphony and its finale, one might envisage a spiritual trajectory akin to Mendelssohn's: a willingness to envisage the promise of the New Testament and, in Mahler's case, even before the formal conversion three years later. But Mahler's engagement with Christianity, if we can take the Eighth Symphony as a landmark was not that of Protestant struggle and victory, but Catholic splendor in one part and then translation into the terms of redemption that Goethe grants Faust. The symphony is grand but bifurcated: the development of a Latin hymn, "Veni Creator," in the first movement, followed by the series of ascending mystical encounters taken from the end of Goethe's *Faust*, where the restless spirit is finally redeemed. Faust is rescued because he "strives," but the agents are the female spirits. Yet for both artists the texts and the music are openings to a world that was spiritually valid and identified with a particular Christian and Germanic potential -- the world of Bach and Protestant chorales and struggle for Mendelssohn, Baroque choruses and Faustian striving and redemption for Mahler. To attempt a distinction, however: Mendelssohn's religious struggle was dramatic but harmonic, Mahler's theatrical and like so much of his counterpoint, ultimately unresolved.

To conclude, let me make a further suggestion -- of course still subjective and tentative -- which may even sound flippant. The relation of each composer with the religious domain is significantly different. In brief, Mendelssohn writes as if he were in some sense "channeling" for God -- that is serving as a prophet, as a human intervener so that all of us as listeners, can pose questions to God, including the insistent question. "Watchman, is the night ending?" Whether as a conductor rediscovering the "St. Matthew Passion," or as a composer, he is in a serious, privileged, and wonderful conversation with the Divine. It is the artist's fortune to do so as a creative and spiritual being, whether that spirituality is Christian or Hebraic. As Mendelssohn's listeners, we are engaged along with him in several great dialogues, that of Paul -- the archetype of conversion -- or of Elijah with the priests of Baal, that ferociously dramatic confrontation. And then there is the clue provided by the insistent question: "Hüter ist die Nacht hin?" Mendelssohn's choral music asks over and over this Jewish question even though he is not merely a Jew: Is the night over? And he answers in line with so many of the sermons that expounded on this text over the centuries<sup>28</sup>: Yes, the night is over, if (as a Christian) you will act on the conviction that the daylight is at hand.

Which brings us back finally to Mahler. Mahler did not feel the need to pose the question, except by implication in his later song cycles, which imply far more interrogative stances toward assurances of resurrection – whether the Daoist inspired *Lied von der Erde* which proposes the earthly consolations of intoxication, not heavenly transcendence; or the desolate acceptance of loss in the *Rückertlieder* or the *Kindertotenlieder*. If Mendelssohn believed he might lead us all, Christian and Jew, to a dialogue with the divine, channeling, so to speak, for God, Mahler believes that the composer is tantamount to God, or that the creative process he embodies is all that Divinity can provide us. But this is enough: it encompasses the accumulated religious revelations including that of the Christian resurrection, whether attested to in the Second Symphony, or by the necessary personal confession of faith in his formal conversion in February 1897, or thereafter by the massive Latin anthem in the first half of the Eighth Symphony, and Goethe’s vision of progressive salvation in the second half of that work. Ultimately Mahler’s conversion, I speculate (who can do more?) did not cause credal conflict; he had been swept away by an intuitive sense of resurrection. But neither with its musical correlatives did it exact intellectual conviction. The aesthetic accomplishment was the divine.

But for those Jews who converted but did not have the artistic or the scholarly vocations, was there any religious authenticity to conversion? Was it just an entry ticket and no more? Of course. it is impossible to interrogate them, and I would not trust their or anyone’s capacity for self-knowledge. But it seems to me that in the hothouse of a Central Europe under such rapid transformation, one might accept in good faith, as it were, the totality of a new faith that seemed so integral to the national or even the imperial vocation and simply acquiesce in the difficult details – “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again” – without scrutiny. The package was visible and credible; one took the contents literally on faith. Is this conviction? As much as we get with many of our allegiances in life, whether to our homelands or our work and family or our futures.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The chronology is sorted out by Michael Haber, *Das Jüdische bei Gustav Mahler* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 50-58. See also Henry-Louis de la Grange, *Mahler*, Volume One (Garden City Doubleday & Co., 1973), 411-412. For Mahler's suggestion to those in charge of the search that he had already converted earlier, see the letter to Ödön vonMihalovich, the Intendant of the royal Music Academy in Budapest, Dec. 21, 1896, in Karl Josef Müller, *Mahler: Leben Werke Dokumente* (Piper, 1988), 142.

<sup>2</sup> The melodramatic statement famously attributed to Mahler about being thrice an exile -- as a Bohemian in Austria, as Austrian among the Germans, as a Jew throughout the world -- even if unembroidered in the telling, hardly characterized his workaholic transcendence (or disciplined denial) of identity issues. As his stage designer, Alfred Roller said, he didn't deny his Jewish formation, but it wasn't a source of pride either. And while he was well aware of the handicaps it created, it was an incentive to greater accomplishments, just as a physical handicap might serve to encourage disciplined achievement. See Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler, Der fremde Vertraute; Biographie* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2003), 323-24.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Botstein, "Whose Gustav Mahler? Reception, Interpretation, and History," in *Mahler and his World*, Karen Painter, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 1-53; Thalia Pecker Berio, "Mahler's Jewish Parable," in *ibid.*, pp. 87-110; Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, 312-337; Carl Niekerk, *Reading Mahler, German Culture and Jewish Identity in fin-de-siècle Vienna* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010). Useful at least as a source of apposite quotations is Michael Haber's M.A. thesis cited above: *Das Jüdische bei Gustav Mahler*.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Arthur Seidel, February 17, 1897, cited by Edward R. Reilly, "Totenfeier and the Second Symphony," in *The Mahler Companion*, Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 84-125, citation p.88; 1901 program notes cited, 125.

<sup>5</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (c.1902, New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1922), 189-258 on conversion and 223-226 for the testimony of Ratisbonne,

<sup>6</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 515-19. 525.

<sup>7</sup> See Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Mahler to Alma Mahler, March 31, 1903 in *Ein Glück ohne Ruh' Die Briefe Gustav Mahlers an Alma*, Henry-Louis de la Grange and Günter Weiss, eds. (Berlin: Goldmann Verlag btb, 1997), 144.

<sup>9</sup> Deborah Herz, *How Jews became Germans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 216. Herz admits that when she began her study her stance was sympathetic, but as research progressed, "I sometimes lost my sympathy and became disappointed with episodes of apparent hypocrisy, self-hatred, and crass self-promotion." 217.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews: A Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 179. – citing Freud's walking clothes or Kaethe Leichter's school clothes. See also Steven Beller, ed. *Rethinking Vienna 1900* (New York: Berghahn, 2001), William O. McCagg, jr., *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670-1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) suggests that Hungarian or Habsburg Jewry might have served as a middle way between assimilated German Jews partaking of the European Enlightenment and the Judaism of the East European (Polish-Russian-Galician) traditions.



<sup>11</sup> Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler: Der fremde Vertraute* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 200). 416.

<sup>12</sup> Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 124. The American equivalents up through the 1960s would have included Bronx Science High School and Erasmus Hall in Brooklyn.

<sup>13</sup> John Lukacs, *Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and its Culture* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 92-94, 190-196, on the rise of anti-Semitism among such figures as the novelist Miklos Bartha (“In the Land of the Khazars”), Bishop Otokar Prohászka. The poet Ady thought the Jews had the mission of awakening a sleepy Magyar people; but for many critics the new “hard” Jewish minority was seemed more unassimilable than the old “soft” minority. Among the elite, social and rowing clubs became more segregated, and, as in Vienna, a rising Catholic populism was increasingly anti-Semitic. See also Judit Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the Century Budapest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 80-88, on the Jews and modern urbanism, as exemplified in Budapest..

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Schnizler, *My Youth in Vienna*, trans., Catherine Hutter (NY, 1970), 6-7, cited in Marha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 9.

<sup>15</sup> On the politicized reactions to Mahler, cf. Karen Painter, *Symphonic Aspirations: German Music and Politics, 1900-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945). See also the collection of essays and critiques in *Mahler and his World*, Karen Painter, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). I am indebted to Professor Painter for having originally encouraged my research into Mahler’s multiple contexts.

<sup>16</sup> See Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 11-13; Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830* (New York, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Peter Honigmann, *Die Austritte aus der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlins, 1873-1941 Statistische Auswertung und historische Interpretation* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 11-19.

<sup>18</sup> Honigmann, *Die Austritte aus der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlins*, 77-81.

<sup>19</sup> Honigmann, *Die Austritte aus der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlins*, 57-59, 82-83. Conversion rates in Berlin were higher than formal exits from the Jewish Gemeinde for several reasons. Many Jews of smaller communities who felt social pressure against baptism arranged their ceremonies in Berlin (or other large cities) where they had greater anonymity. Also children under 14 baptized according to Jewish parental wishes did not have the right to petition for a formal exit from their Jewish community. (Baptism of newborns were simply listed as Christian baptisms, not conversions.)

<sup>20</sup> Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, p. 129 for marriage, p. 18 for population growth.

<sup>21</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, “Jewish Inter-marriage and Conversion in Germany and Austria,” in ----- (Oxford University Press, 2005), 23-61.

<sup>22</sup> Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 132.

<sup>23</sup> Lowenstein, “Jewish Inter-marriage and Conversion,” p. 39, citing Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 130-31, 136-140. Berlin saw a high professional component among those leaving the community, whether to convert or not is not clear.

<sup>24</sup> Leon Botstein, “The Aesthetics of Assimilation and Affirmation: Reconstructing the Career of Felix Mendelssohn,” and Michael P. Steinberg, “The Incidental Politics to Mendelssohn’s *Antigone*,” both in *Mendelssohn and his World*, Larry Todd, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5-42, and 137-57 – both insistent on Mendelssohn’s retention on some Jewish identity. Steinberg brackets the two conversions of Mendelssohn and Mahler, 142-143. See also Steinberg, “Mendelssohn and Judaism,” in *The*

*Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, Peter Mercer-Taylor, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2004), 26-41; and the controversy between Jeffrey Sposato, “Creative Writing: The [Self-] Identification of Mendelssohn as Jew,” *Musical Quarterly* 82 (1988): 190-209, and Leon Botstein, “Mendelssohn and the Jews,” *ibid.* 210-219. Sposato defends his view of Mendelssohn as troubled by his Jewish heritage in *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2006; and in “Mendelssohn and Assimilation: Two Case Studies,” in *Ars Lyrica*, 19 (2010): 1-26; also Paul-André Bempéchat, “Mendelssohn’s *Reformation* Symphony and the Culture of Assimilation,” *idem*, 27-56, on the limits of German culture to assimilation.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Mengelburg mid-August 1906, cited by Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, 635. I’ve translated freely: “Denken Sie sich, dass das Universum zu tönen und zu klingen beginnt. Es sind nicht mehr menschliche Stimmen, sondern Planeten und Sonnen, welche kreisen.”

<sup>26</sup> Max Weber, “Wissenschaft als Beruf,” – the English translation, “Science as a Vocation,” from the translation by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958),. 155-56.

<sup>27</sup> See the sources cited in note 24. At the origin of the post-1945 debate is Carl Dahlhaus, *Das Problem Mendelssohn* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1974).