Forms of Remigration: Émigré Jewish Mathematicians and Germany in the Immediate Postwar Period

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Dedicated to the memory of Klaus Peters

Historians of mathematics are only just beginning to address the history of mathematics in Germany in the immediate postwar period. I discussed the relationship between émigré Jewish mathematicians and mathematicians in Germany briefly in my contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture*.[1] In this article I build and expand on this.

Although some of the figures featured in this story are well known—for instance Richard Courant, who came to New York in 1936 with the whole Göttingen tradition en suite; Wilhelm Süss, who as president of the *German Mathematical Association* expelled Jewish members in 1938–1939 and founded the *Mathematisches Forschungsinstitut Oberwolfach* in late 1944; Abraham Fraenkel, a Zionist who had already taught as guest professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1929–1930 before emigrating to Jerusalem in 1933; and Ludwig Bieberbach, gifted mathematician and mouthpiece of the *Deutsche Mathematik* movement in the Nazi period—others are less prominent; brief biographical information appears in the endnotes.

A few days after Japan's capitulation (September 2, 1945) and the final end of World War II, Abraham Fraenkel in Jerusalem sharpened his pen and wrote to Courant in New York, whom he knew from the old days when they both were professors in Germany. Because of anti-Jewish legislation, Fraenkel had lost his professorship in Kiel in April 1933 and Courant had been kicked out of Göttingen the same year. Fraenkel had emigrated to Jerusalem in 1933 while Courant went to New York via Cambridge. In his letter, written in English as he refused to use German, Fraenkel raised an issue that was very much on the minds of Jewish émigrés all over the world, namely how to deal

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with the Germans and Germany now that the war was finished and now that more and more facts about the Nazi crimes had become known. In his letter Fraenkel directly addressed the question of "our attitude to German mathematicians." He wrote:

> Excuse me if I say frankly: I should not want to have any more connections to men or women of a people having murdered 6 millions [sic] of the Jewish people in the most cruel and deliberate manner (including many of my wife's Dutch family, but that is not decisive at all)—except the men who obviously have themselves opposed the Nazi policy or suffered from it (I have in mind men like Siegel and Neugebauer but also like Scholz, Kamke, Cl. Schaefer).[2] But even if you do not go as far as that: wouldn't it be useful to find out which men have behaved like Bieberbach (e.g. I do not know anything about Brouwer, Weitzenböck etc.)?[3] Possibly you have already discussed questions like that with the many colleagues in the USA who have easier relations (than we Palestinians) with the situation in Europe, and I shall be grateful to have your view.[4]

Indeed, Courant was in the middle of such discussions, and in October 1945 he reassured Fraenkel that,

> I share your opinion that we should definitely distinguish between the various types among our former colleagues but it is quite hard to pass definite judgment about actions and omissions of individuals. The world development during these recent months makes me feel more and more how dangerous the policy of retaliation and strict accounting is and will be if the idea of collective guilt and collective responsibility is made the ideological basis. As far as I am concerned, I would rather have many, many real Nazis shot without trial instead of the present very doubtful procedures and I would pursue a much more conciliatory policy towards the inert masses which alone would give a chance for purification from the inside.
>
> As to individuals, I do not think that anyone behaved as crazily as Bieberbach. I cannot help feeling that he is and always was just crazy but not really dangerous. Much more dangerous are people such as Brouwer who has been an ardent collaborationist and has been deposed. Hasse, also, was a fanatic and vicious Nazi and he has been deposed. Weitzenbock [sic] was also, apparently, a Nazi and has been deposed. Rellich, who has been anti-Nazi, is now director of the Institute of Mathematics in Goettingen which has been reopened. I have heard nothing about Bessel-Hagen whom I respect most of all for his unyielding honesty. I had a long letter from Eberhard Hopf, copy of which I am enclosing without comment. Also, there were letters from van der Waerden who, as you know, threw in his lot with the Nazis, certainly not being one, and who now has gone back to Holland, apparently under not too pleasant circumstances.[5]

Fraenkel was very clear in his stance that he would only be willing to get in touch with those mathematicians in Germany who had stood their ground during the Nazi period. In early 1947 he thought that only a handful had done so (Erich Hecke, Erich Kamke, Oskar Perron, and Heinrich Scholz).[6] Courant was much more generous in considering individual circumstances, but he was never shy about openly addressing these questions. When his old friend van der Waerden wrote in November 1945 to get in touch again, informing him about the calamities of his postwar life without mentioning the Nazi period, Courant, writing in English as he usually did when he used his secretary, kindly rebuffed him, making it clear that he would not let him off so easily:

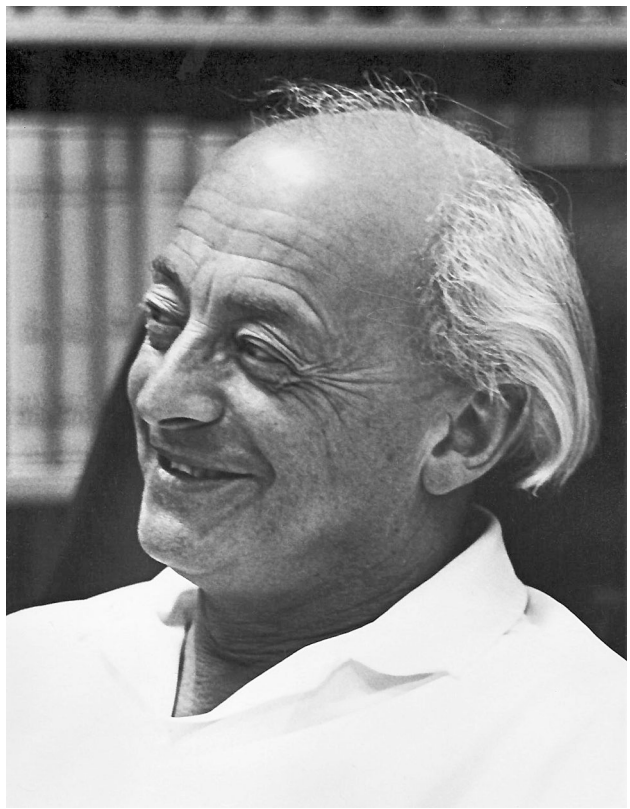


Figure 1. Reinhold Baer. Photograph: *Transcending Traditions.*

> I wish very much that there were an opportunity of talking to you personally and for that matter to other old friends who have been in Germany during the war. Of course, so much will have to be explained before one can resume where one left off. Your friends in America, for example, could not understand why you as a Dutchman chose to stay with the Nazis. Writing letters is a rather poor medium for picking up all the old threads.[7]

Naturally, van der Waerden had an explanation for Courant, which need not concern us here.[8] The point is that such questions surfaced virtually everywhere, as many émigré mathematicians through their professional upbringing and socialization had emotional ties to mathematics and mathematicians in Germany.[9] Quite often these collegial ties, not to speak of those to family and friends in or near Germany, turned out to be difficult to cut.

However, after 1945 many émigrés understandably never considered going back to Germany at all.[10] Fraenkel was very explicit about this. When asked by the University of Kiel in March 1946 whether he would be interested in

returning to his former position, he refused (in Hebrew with an English translation as a courtesy) because, as he later put it: "In a country being responsible of the cruel murder of five million Jews I could not breathe."[11] It was even doubtful whether any Jewish remigrés would or should be able to live in Germany, as Fraenkel's colleague Gershom Scholem, professor of Jewish mysticism at Hebrew University, critically pointed out to the historian of religion Hans-Joachim Schoeps, who had returned to Germany in 1946: "I am astonished that you can breathe in this air."[12] For this essay the essential question to be drawn from Scholem's remark is why Jewish émigré mathematicians would consider returning to Germany at all. Surely to return to the land of Nazi crimes, lying in ruins, was not a very attractive enterprise, fraught as it was with psychological, bureaucratic, and material obstacles. But there is also the other side of the coin, the reverse question: why did mathematicians in Germany support Jewish colleagues in their wish to return, be it as visitors or on a permanent basis? There are some obvious answers, but at the same time these simple questions lead directly into the complex web of relations between Jewish émigré mathematicians and mathematicians in Germany after 1945.

Since the mid-1990s there has been a steady flow of historical studies on remigration into Germany in the immediate postwar period. Some of these have touched on academic settings and on the universities in Germany, in particular. They have described three main forms of remigration after World War II, understood in a very broad sense, which I'll illustrate by examples:

- returning for guest lectures and academic visits;
- returning as visiting professors, while assessing the situation in Germany without any obligation to stay;
- returning to universities in Germany on a permanent basis as professors.

Returning for Guest Lectures and Academic Visits

For all émigrés, facing their former German colleagues and acquaintances was a difficult prospect. Very often we do not have any details about these first meetings. Although it is known that Bernard H. Neumann, a student of Issai Schur who had emigrated to Great Britain in 1933, came to Germany in 1945 as a member of the Intelligence Corps of the British Army, as did John Todd, who was accompanied by his wife Olga Taussky-Todd, nothing is known about their reception and the feelings their trips may have stirred up.[13] Neumann returned "frequently"—for instance he was in Göttingen for 3 weeks in 1948[14]—but he never considered going back to Germany permanently.[15] Quite a few émigré mathematicians went to Germany in the immediate postwar years related to missions for the military. For instance, Courant and Hans Lewy, who had been teaching in Berkeley since 1935, went overseas for the U.S. Office of Naval Research in 1947. Courant also traveled in Germany in June and July 1947 with Natascha Artin and met many of his old colleagues and students.[16] Although his travel diary does not report his immediate feelings about them, the reactions on the German side testify to the fact that some of the meetings must have been awkward. Helmut Hasse, who had given much of his energies and enthusiasm to the Nazi state, wrote to Wilhelm Süss, the founder of the Mathematical Research Institute in Oberwolfach, who fell into the same political category as Hasse, in September 1947:

> There is not much to report from Berlin. Courant has been here briefly. He has looked in my office for about a minute, said hello and that he did not have time. Apparently he has treated others in a similar way. He seems to have spoken to F. K. Schmidt longer.[17]

Süss confirmed this negative impression. Courant, he told Hasse, had been to see his old Göttingen assistant Alwin Walther in Darmstadt, whose institute had been deeply involved in calculation for the German rocket project, and, according to Süss, had given political lectures ("viele Fragen politischer Schulmeisterei") to Walther and Walther's son, Courant's godson. Also, Courant was said to have passed through Heidelberg without even visiting topologists Herbert Seifert and William Threlfall in the mathematics institute. According to Süss, and here he was not mistaken, Courant was looking for suitable young candidates for a Rockefeller grant to the United States and would probably seek advice, to the chagrin of Süss, exclusively from his old friend Franz Rellich and Friedrich Karl Schmidt, his successor as an advisor to the Springer publishing house.[18]

In light of this it is not surprising that, after returning to New York, Courant remarked that he "found very few people in Germany with whom an immediate natural contact was possible."[19] In fact, even between old friends such as Franz Rellich in Göttingen and Hans Lewy, the first steps were difficult. Lewy had visited Rellich in Göttingen in October 1947 and, as Rellich wrote to Courant shortly after the reunion, the first hour was rather unpleasant:

> Lewy shouted that he only wanted to see me and Arnold Schmidt and that he wanted to leave this disgusting Nazi country as quickly as possible. On top of that he gave me a socio-historical lecture on why all Germans except the emigrants (and Arnold Schmidt and my humble self) were criminals. I became pretty rueful, but after this greeting we got along excellently.[20]

Apart from these semiofficial trips (with respect to mathematics), guest lectures were a way of returning to Germany on a temporary basis. For Jewish émigré mathematicians, they opened up a way to obtain permission (not a triviality in the early postwar years) to travel to Germany for a short time and to be paid for the trip—often to look for surviving friends and family, or to deal with family affairs or compensation matters. At the same time the guest lectures were a chance to get in touch again with colleagues in Germany. Naturally some émigrés, such as Hans Heilbronn and Alfred Brauer, were determined never again to set a foot on German soil. Brauer revised his stance later and went to Berlin in 1960 to commemorate his thesis advisor Issai Schur. But other Jewish émigré mathematicians came frequently, thus supporting first cautious steps to reintegrate mathematicians in Germany into the international community. On the German side this

clearly was a major objective in inviting émigré mathematicians for guest lectures.

In Göttingen Courant's friend Franz Rellich highlighted this aspect in an application for money for guest lectures in May 1947:

> Personal contact with mathematicians, from Germany and abroad, has always been an essential part of the work at our institute. […] In the coming years we'll have the chance by inviting them for guest lectures to get in touch again with our colleagues who have emigrated for political reasons. The Science Faculty has commissioned me to invite those colleagues for guest lectures who have refused to return to Göttingen. Professor Courant will come in June, Professor Hans Lewy is considering the possibility, and Professor Weyl will be happy to come at some point in the future.[21]

Indeed, Paul Bernays, Courant, Hans Hamburger, and Hans Lewy went to Göttingen for guest lectures in 1947.

In Oberwolfach, the founder and director of the Mathematical Institute, Wilhelm Süss, systematically invited Jewish émigré mathematicians for conferences and as guests beginning in 1948.[22] Of the three workshops held in 1949, two were centered around eminent Jewish mathematicians; the attraction of the topology workshop in April, for example, was Heinz Hopf, who had taught in Zürich since 1931 and first visited Oberwolfach in 1946. The meeting on mathematical logic was presided over by Paul Bernays, who had lost his position in Göttingen in 1933. These workshops, along with a Franco-German meeting in August 1949, were of great importance for the reintegration of German mathematicians into the international community. Süss also invited the émigrés Baer, Levi, and Bernard Neumann, whose reactions to his invitations were positive. Levi first came to Oberwolfach in 1950 and Baer in 1952 (not having managed to incorporate it into his travel plans in 1950). In 1951 Neumann came with his wife Hanna; he organized his first conference on group theory in Oberwolfach in 1955. As we'll see later, for Baer and Levi the early visits in Germany and Oberwolfach were their important first steps on their way back to Germany.

Returning as Visiting Professor

Visiting professorships were another way to reestablish contact between the mathematical community in Germany and émigré mathematicians. And this was exactly what both sides had in mind. For the visiting professors, they were a chance to return to Germany without any obligation to stay or to give up their new positions. Sometimes they were a first step to remigration. A case in point is Ernst Jacobsthal (1882–1965), who had been a *gymnasium* teacher but had also taught at the Technical University of Berlin from 1913 to 1934. He emigrated to Norway and became a professor at Trondheim.[23] Between 1950 and 1957 he spent every summer as visiting professor at the Free University in Berlin (founded in 1948), teaching courses in number theory and set theory, among other topics.[24] After retiring from Trondheim he moved back to Germany.

The case of Jacobsthal nicely illustrates some of the advantages of having visiting professors from abroad: they helped fill the gaps in the course catalogue (essential at the Free University), and they paved the way to further international contacts. The particular case of Jacobsthal was also instrumental in a political sense, namely in legitimizing the rather floating association of Alexander Dinghas and his mathematics group at the Free University with Ludwig Bieberbach. Thus when in 1951 the Jewish Student Union protested against Bieberbach being active at the Free University, it was Jacobsthal who calmed them down, seconded by Courant and Alexander Ostrowski in Basel.[25]

Given this support for Bieberbach it is rather strange that Emil Julius Gumbel (1891–1966), who had been kicked out of Heidelberg University in 1932 because of Nazi pressure, was another frequent visiting professor at the Free University. Between 1953 and 1956 he taught statistics and probability theory during the summer terms.[26] Although it is unclear exactly how Jacobsthal became associated with the Free University, the mayor of West Berlin, the Social Democrat Ernst Reuter, suggested Gumbel's invitation.[27] Gumbel and Reuter had both been members of the pacifist group *Bund Neues Vaterland* in World War I, along with Albert Einstein.

Possibly the most active group of mathematicians in Germany trying to support Jewish émigrés was in Frankfurt/Main. There the mathematicians Wolfgang Franz and Ruth Moufang, who had been a Ph.D. student of Max Dehn, and historian of science Willy Hartner, who had been part of the famous Frankfurt history of mathematics seminar in the 1920s and early 1930s, were actively trying to support Dehn, who had been fired in Frankfurt in 1935 and who now taught under rather modest circumstances at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In February 1951, after long consultations with the various levels of administration involved, they finally succeeded in making the ministry pay a pension to Dehn, who was 73 by then.[28] In early 1952 C. L. Siegel reported that Dehn would be interested in visiting Germany in September. Hartner immediately got in touch with Dehn and invited him to come to Frankfurt for 2 months. They soon agreed that Dehn would coteach a seminar on the history of mathematics with Franz, Hartner, and Moufang, taking up the brilliant Frankfurt tradition of this "mathematisch-historisches Seminar." However, this did not happen, as Dehn died that summer. In a letter to her former fellow Ph.D. student Max Frommer, Ruth Moufang described her feelings about Dehn in March 1953: "It is difficult to get over Dehn's death. The gap, which he is leaving can never be filled by another personality. […] The history seminar will never live again."[29]

Without doubt, circumstances in Frankfurt were atypical. Already in 1946 the Frankfurt group, with the support of Siegel, who had been close to Dehn and Ernst Hellinger, dismissed in Frankfurt in 1935, since their joint Frankfurt years, tried hard to push their claims for compensation—which was a rather unexplored field in the early postwar years. I do not want to go into the frustrating administrative details of their unrelenting efforts to achieve some material benefits for Dehn and Hellinger, because these details do not shed much light on the relationship between mathematicians in Germany and émigré mathematicians. It appears that in the late 1940s Dehn and Hellinger were pessimistic about obtaining any kind of material

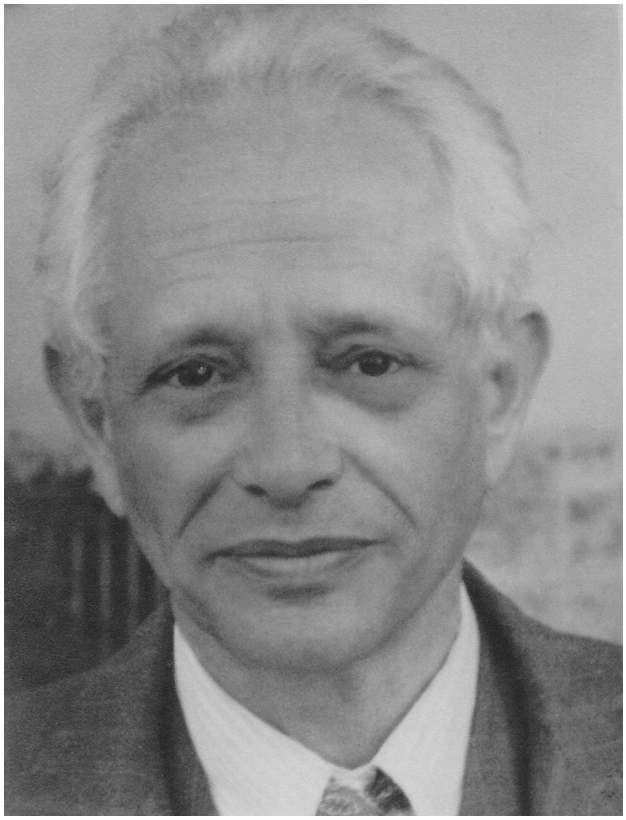


Figure 2. Max Dehn. From the papers of Max Frommer in possession of his grandson, Andreas Frommer (Wuppertal).

Figure 3. Ernst Hellinger. From the papers of Max Frommer in possession of his grandson, Andreas Frommer (Wuppertal).

compensation.[30] Perhaps they rather wished for symbolic gestures. An instance of this can be found in their correspondence with Willy Hartner. On Christmas 1947 Dehn wrote to Hartner to let him know that together with the community at Black Mountain College he had dispatched four care packages to Frankfurt to be distributed to professors and students. He wrote:

> This is only a small gift. But we could, perhaps, send more when we know what is needed most […]. We have shortened our Christmas meal, cut down expenses for the Christmas party and opened other little sources to meet the expense for the packages. We know that it may rather be the spirit (Gesinnung) than the gift itself, which may have some value. […] In us, the ones directly and indirectly affected, there must be enough love to let pale the evil pictures of the past.[31]

Dehn continued (and Ernst Hellinger took up on this aspect 2 weeks later):

> I am curious how the relationship to the Frankfurt Science Faculty will finally develop. At other places, Marburg for instance, the expelled colleagues have been included in the course catalogue in an appropriate way, for example "currently in Chicago." That makes quite a good impression. On the other hand I do understand well that you have more important problems to deal with. […] But, as I said, I am just curious, it is not important for me.

Dehn and Hellinger were finally included in the course catalogue for the winter semester 1948–1949 with a note that they did not teach ("liest nicht").[32]

Returning Permanently to Universities in Germany

Eventually, only three Jewish émigré mathematicians returned to permanent positions in a German university: Friedrich Wilhelm Levi went to West Berlin in 1952 and retired in 1956; Hans Hamburger returned to Cologne in 1953 (where he had taught up to 1935); and Reinhold Baer accepted a professorship in Frankfurt in 1956. Although Hamburger succeeded in reclaiming his old position in Cologne, this was not an option for Baer and Levi, who had not held permanent positions when they emigrated. They made their way back to Germany through what one might call the "standard procedure" of visiting professorships and lecturing trips while considering the option of a possible return. Both found colleagues in Germany who supported their wish to come back.[33]

Hamburger had been full professor in Cologne from 1924 to 1935. He emigrated to Great Britain in 1939 and from 1941 taught as a lecturer at Southampton University College. From 1947 to 1953 he was full professor in Ankara before returning to his former position in Cologne.[34] When officially asked whether he would be interested in returning to Cologne University in March 1946, Hamburger responded that he would be happy to come back, but at the same time suggested postponing his return until October 1947 to have time to finish his book on the theory of Hilbert space (published by Cambridge University Press

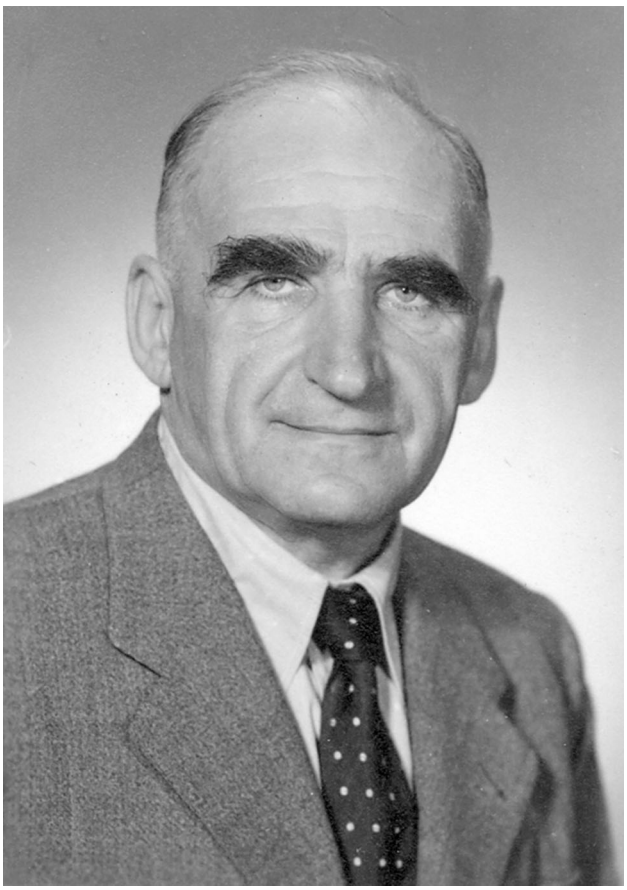


Figure 4. Friedrich Wilhelm Levi, 1951. Freie Universität Berlin, Universitätsarchiv, Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät.

in 1951, 2nd edition 1956).[35] His coauthor Margaret Grimshaw later recalled that the prospect of a "return to Cologne gave him great pleasure, for his mathematical loyalty had remained centred in Germany."[36] Indeed, Hamburger time and again stressed this aspect in his letters to Cologne. He presented a series of lectures in Göttingen in October 1947 and was, to my knowledge, the only émigré to take part in the first meeting of the newly founded German Mathematical Association in Cologne in 1949. However, in 1947 he chose to go to Ankara and not to Cologne because he was convinced that working and living conditions would be much better there than in heavily damaged Cologne. The ensuing years were filled with constant negotiations regarding when he would eventually return to Cologne. It seems that he was nervous about working and living conditions there and that the administration became increasingly annoyed by his hesitation. Hamburger returned to Cologne in 1953.

Levi did not have a permanent position in Leipzig when he was fired in 1935.[37] In January 1936 he took up the position as *Hardinge Professor of Higher Mathematics* at the University of Calcutta. After 1945 he was interested in getting in touch with mathematicians in Germany—even though his mother and sister had been murdered in the Holocaust. One of the reasons may have been that he, like Hamburger, felt deeply attached to the mathematical culture in Germany, and access to German mathematical literature was difficult in India. After reaching the retirement age of 60 in Calcutta in 1948, Levi had secured temporary contracts at the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research in Bombay. Although he was well respected in India, he was keen on returning to Europe, because he was increasingly unhappy with his situation in India (his health suffered from the climate, his pension was modest, and the political situation was volatile). Thus he traveled to Europe in 1950 and gave a series of talks in England, the Netherlands, and Germany, where he also visited Oberwolfach. One result of his lecturing trip was the offer of a visiting professorship in Freiburg during the summer of 1951.

It was well known that Levi wished to return to Germany. In Berlin, Hermann Ludwig Schmid had taken it upon himself to help Levi obtain a permanent position at the recently founded Free University, and he pressed the issue with Courant.[38] Courant, to whom Levi had written about this in August 1950, stressing that in Germany he had been "very kindly received by my colleagues," was also very active in this regard.[39] In early November 1950, F. K. Schmidt wrote to Courant about Levi, too. He had been in close contact with Courant since 1934, gradually growing into Courant's position as an advisor to the Springer publishing house. In November, Schmidt heard from Hermann Ludwig Schmid that Courant might be willing to throw his weight in for Levi and to intervene with the political authorities, namely to find a way to approach the mayor of West Berlin, Ernst Reuter, and Schmidt urged Courant to go ahead.[40]

Later in November Courant wrote to Süss in Oberwolfach that he had become "interested in F. Levi's problem, and I am just writing a letter to one of the trustees of the Free University in Berlin" adding that he would discuss the issue with Heinrich Behnke in Münster and Rellich in Göttingen.[41] His go-between to the Free University was Tönjes Lange at Springer, who had safeguarded the Springer publishing house after it had been "Aryanized" by the Nazis. Courant requested him "to find out whether such an appointment [at the Free University] is feasible or desirable under the circumstances, and whether you could help him."[42] It seems that Courant had also mentioned this in his response to the query about Bieberbach's position at the Free University by the Jewish Student Union in Berlin. The Union's spokesman, however, informed Courant that they had no possibilities for helping Levi and that, moreover, in principle they were against "the return of a Jew to Germany" ("dass wir gegen die Rückkehr eines Juden nach Deutschland sind").[43] Eventually, in 1952, Levi was appointed as full professor at the Free University in Berlin despite the initial opposition of the administration—a standard problem in all similar cases—who considered Levi to be too expensive, given that he was already 64 and that his retirement would be upcoming in 1956.[44]

On the surface this may look like a happy ending, and for all we know it was for Levi. However, a look from the other side is very revealing. From the records at the Free University it appears that Alexander Dinghas, who was the head of the mathematics group at the Free University, had not really intended that the position be filled by Levi, whom he had never even met when he put his name on

top of the list of three candidates.[45] Second on the list was Ludwig Bieberbach with the third position going to the logician Karl Schröter from East Berlin. From the files it is clear that since September 1950 Dinghas had wanted to lure Schröter away from Humboldt University to West Berlin, and he had the faculty's backing for this idea. Although it is unclear why they did not argue for Schröter openly (probably because of the strained political situation between East and West Berlin in the Cold War world), the logic behind their list was simple: Levi would not receive an offer because he was too old, Bieberbach did not stand a chance either, because of his Nazi past and his age, and hence Schröter would be the only choice. When the administration early on raised the issue of Levi's age, Dinghas told them that as an alternative he could suggest Richard von Mises (5 years Levi's senior!). At some point, however, the unforeseen happened and the administration agreed to hire Levi. I do not want to draw far-reaching conclusions from this affair, but just to present it as a reminder that the motives of those involved on the German side in processes of remigration need not at all be pure, but might well be inspired by other reasons.

The third instance of permanent remigration is Reinhold Baer.[46] In 1933 he lost his position as lecturer at Halle University and emigrated to the United States via Manchester. Baer spent 2 years at Princeton from 1935 to 1937 and became professor at the University of Illinois in 1938 (full professor in 1944). Baer definitely felt drawn back to Germany. In 1951 he wrote in a letter to Wilhelm Süss:

> As you know, I have for quite a while been entitled to a sabbatical year, and I would like to spend this year in the Central European realm of intellectual thought. There are many reasons: some sentimental and aesthetic, some intellectual and mathematical. And in order to squeeze the greatest benefit from this year, particularly concerning the latter reasons, I feel that I should once again fully integrate myself into the local academic community. […] I cannot quite estimate how such a temporary inclusion into German academia can be organized, and this is where I would be grateful for your advice.[47]

Eventually Baer spent 3 months of his sabbatical at Frankfurt University (January to March 1953), where, as we have already seen, Wolfgang Franz and Ruth Moufang, supported by historian of science Willy Hartner, were very active in building bridges toward Jewish émigré colleagues. In their application for the funding for Baer's visiting professorship, Franz and Moufang stressed that Baer had been educated in Germany and that he was more suited than most others "…to strengthen scientific and cultural links to foreign countries. In the field of mathematics, in particular, he could serve as an invaluable link in the current circumstances. […] It is imperative for German science ["deutsche Wissenschaft"], that he does not just deliver some guest lectures, but that he stays in Germany for an extended period of time."[48]

When, in 1954, the position of Max Dehn in Frankfurt could be filled again after 19 years, the offer went to Baer. The report praised his qualifications, but also stressed that he had maintained close contact with colleagues in Germany after he had left and that "…his general intellectual posture has always been inclined towards European culture and German culture in particular. Last but not least the Faculty nominates him for the re-established professorship, because it sees an opportunity to call back a scholar who has emigrated and has in the meanwhile gained wide-ranging respect."[49]

Figure 5. Ernst Jacobsthal (left) and Alexander Dinghas (right) at airport Berlin Tempelhof, late 1950s. Freie Universität Berlin, Universitätsarchiv, Nachlass Dinghas.

Baer accepted the offer and went to Frankfurt in 1956, where he then had almost thirty Ph.D. students before retiring in 1967. He became an essential part of the German mathematical community and was instrumental for the remigration of mathematical ideas and theories to Germany, in particular in the field of group theory. During the negotiations two critical points routinely arose, which could, however, both be resolved to Baer's satisfaction, namely the question of his pension and of his citizenship (he and his wife had been American citizens since 1944). Both problems were closely linked to the complex legal and administrative processes of formal compensation ["Wiedergutmachung"].[50]

Although Baer, Levi, and Hamburger were the only Jewish émigrés to return to professorships in Germany, other offers were made. Some were meant seriously, and

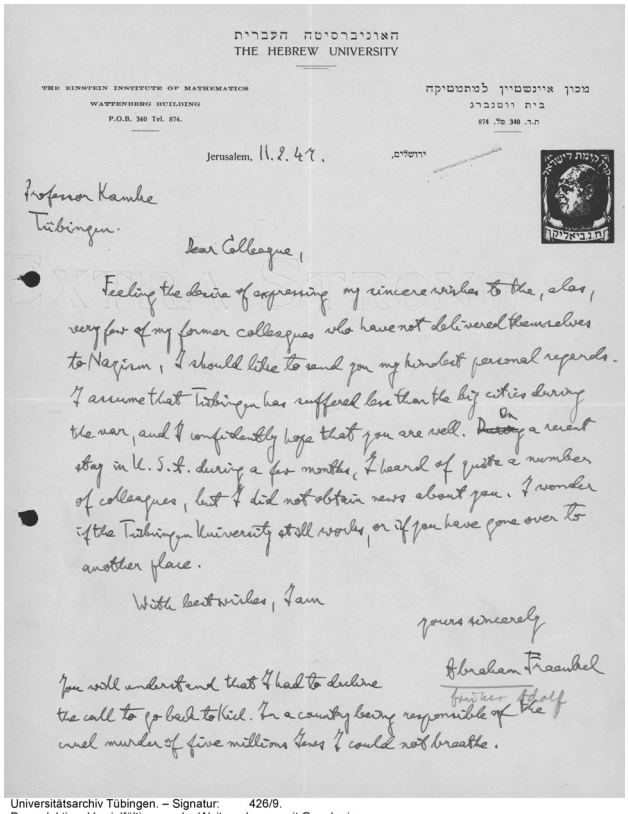
others came about under political pressure from military governments (especially so in the British occupation zone: for instance the invitations extended to William Feller and Fraenkel in Kiel and to Hamburger in Cologne). Some came early (Fraenkel in 1946) and some came too late, such as the Frankfurt offer to Ernst Hellinger in December 1949, 3 months before his death in March 1950.[51] However, even though Hellinger's pension in the United States was meager, he never seriously considered returning to Germany, as his friends Carl Ludwig Siegel and André Weil have reported.

Sometimes offers of restitution were made when positions happened to become vacant. In Heidelberg, for example, after Arthur Rosenthal's successor Udo Wegner had been dismissed as a Nazi supporter in 1945, the position was not offered to Rosenthal, who in the meanwhile had become professor at Purdue University.[52] The Heidelberg mathematician Herbert Seifert, when asked by the dean Karl Freudenberg whether an offer should be made to Rosenthal, was not too enthusiastic and replied that Rosenthal's "mathematical achievements had not really been of great importance."[53] The offer went to Seifert's friend William Threlfall, and only after the latter's death in 1949 did the Ministry of Education insist that Rosenthal be offered his old position in Heidelberg so as to avoid payments of compensation.[54] Rosenthal declined and as a consequence the Ministry of Education refused to pay any compensation until 1954. It was only at this point that the faculty reinstated Rosenthal in the course catalogue for the winter semester 1954–1955. Reinhard Siegmund-Schultze rightly described this procedure as a humiliation.[55]

Symbols and Strategies

We have seen a wide range of reasons why Jewish émigré mathematicians would consider returning to Germany. Naturally it is difficult to clearly separate them from one another, but they include familial and economic reasons, as well as an attachment (be it sentimental or practical) to academic culture in Germany, at times combined with a desire to help former colleagues. The highly problematic issue of formal compensation ("Wiedergutmachung"), perhaps, did not play a prominent role in the process of rapprochement between Jewish émigrés and mathematicians in Germany. Rather, as we have seen, symbolic gestures may have been what was expected and hoped for—as for instance, Hubert Cremer's touching letter to Levi of March 1947 or Erich Kamke's activities as president of the German Mathematicians Association (DMV).[56]

Conversely, what reasons did mathematicians in Germany have to support Jewish colleagues in their wish to return, be it as visitors or on a permanent basis? Of course, sometimes there was an honest desire to help in case help was needed (Dehn, Hellinger), but given the circumstances of the mathematical community in Germany in the late 1940s, mathematical care packages, if one may say so, were desperately sought because the mathematical infrastructure lay pretty much in ruins. Since 1944 there had been no mathematical journals in print, books and textbooks were often difficult to obtain, and mathematical literature and up-to-date knowledge from abroad did not easily flow into


האוניברסיטה העברית
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

THE EINSTEIN INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICS
WATTENBERG BUILDING
P.O.B. 340 Tel. 874.

מכון איינשטיין למתמטיקה
בית ווטנברג
ת.ד. 340 טל. 874

Jerusalem, 11.2.47. ירושלים,

Professor Kamke
Tübingen.

Dear Colleague,

Feeling the desire of expressing my sincere wishes to the, alas, very few of my former colleagues who have not delivered themselves to Nazism, I should like to send you my hendest personal regards. I assume that Tübingen has suffered less than the big cities during the war, and I confidently hope that you are well. On a recent stay in U.S.A. during a few months, I heard of quite a number of colleagues, but I did not obtain news about you. I wonder if the Tübingen University still works, or if you have gone over to another place.

With best wishes, I am

yours sincerely

Abraham Fraenkel

You will understand that I had to decline the call to go back to Kiel. In a country being responsible of the cruel murder of five millions Jews I could not breathe.

Figure 6. Letter from Abraham Fraenkel to Erich Kamke, February 11, 1947. Photograph: *Transcending Traditions*.

Germany.[57] Thus for mathematicians in Germany the reintegration of mathematics into the international community was a central goal. Indeed, at times, as in the case of Süss's deliberate invitations of Jewish émigrés to Oberwolfach, it is hard to escape the feeling that Jewish colleagues once again were considered as pawns in a game played on a German chessboard.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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1. Remmert, Volker R.: Jewish Émigré Mathematicians and Germany, in: Birgit Bergmann/Moritz Epple/Ruti Ungar (eds.): Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture. Heidelberg, 2012: Springer, 241–270.
2. Fraenkel refers to the mathematicians Carl Ludwig Siegel, Otto Neugebauer, Erich Kamke, and the physicist Clemens Schäfer, whom he had known in Breslau and Marburg in the 1920s.
3. Fraenkel refers to the mathematicians Luitzen E. J. Brouwer and Roland Weitzenböck.

4. Fraenkel to Courant, September 5, 1945, New York University Archives, Richard Courant Papers, MC 150, Series II, Box 42, Folder 9, Fraenkel 1945–1958.
5. Courant to Fraenkel, October 19, 1945, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 42, Folder 9, Fraenkel 1945–1958. Courant refers to Helmut Hasse, his old friend Franz Rellich, Erich Bessel-Hagen, close friend of Siegel, Eberhard Hopf, who had left a position at the MIT to return to Germany in 1936, and B. L. van der Waerden, who had stayed in Leipzig during the Nazi period.
6. Fraenkel to Kamke, September 28, 1947, Kamke Papers, University Archives Tübingen, 426/9.
7. Courant to van der Waerden, December 13, 1945, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 91, Folder 15: van der Waerden 1945–1964. Courant sent carbon copies to the émigré mathematicians Reinhold Baer and Hermann Weyl as well as to Oswald Veblen at the IAS.
8. Cf. van der Waerden to Courant, December 29, 1945, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 91, Folder 14.
9. On this, see Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 153–156.
10. Cf. Krauss, Marita: Jewish Remigration: An Overview of an Emerging Discipline, in: Leo Baeck Yearbook 49(2004), 107–119, on 107.
11. Fraenkel to Kamke, September 28, 1947, Kamke Papers, University Archives Tübingen, 426/9. Cf. Remmert, Volker R.: Jewish Émigré Mathematicians and Germany, in: Birgit Bergmann/Moritz Epple/Ruti Ungar (eds.): Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture. Heidelberg, 2012: Springer, 241–270, on 243f.
12. Scholem to Schoeps, November 6, 1949: ''Ich staune, daß Sie in dieser Luft atmen können.'' (Scholem, Gershom: Briefe II. 1948–1970, ed. Thomas Sparr, Munich: C. H. Beck 1995, 14).
13. Cf. Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 321.
14. Rellich to Courant, July 7, 1948, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 76, Folder 12: Rellich 1945–1957.
15. Cf. Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 328.
16. Cf. the diary of the trip in the Courant Papers, Series II, Box 25, Folder 13.
17. Cf. Hasse to Süss, September 3, 1947, University Archives Freiburg, Süss Papers, C 89/303: ''Von Berlin ist nicht viel Neues zu berichten. Courant tauchte ganz kurz dort auf. Bei mir im Zimmer liess er sich nur eine Minute blicken, sagte Guten Tag und 'Ich habe gar keine Zeit, muss gleich wieder gehen.' Bei anderen soll er es ähnlich gemacht haben. Mit F. K. Schmidt hat er wohl länger gesprochen.''
18. Cf. Süss to Hasse, September 10, 1947, University Archives Freiburg, Süss Papers, C 89/303: ''Was ich von dem Besuch von Courant z.B. bei Walther in Darmstadt gehört habe, war indessen weniger schön. Viele Fragen politischer Schulmeisterei z.B. auch bei dem Sohn Walthers, der Patenkind von Courant ist. […] Er war längere Zeit in Heidelberg bei dem Chemiker Freudenberg ohne Seifert und Threlfall zwei Minuten weiter im Mathematischen Institut aufgesucht zu haben. Er sucht Vorschläge von Kandidaten für ein Rockefeller Stipendium für ein Jahr nach USA. Die Mathematiker wird er sich wohl von Rellich und F. K. Schmidt angeben lassen.'' Courant's diary confirms the awkward situation with Walther: ''After discussions with Walther, a conversation with his son about ideology. Very discouraging statements about the origin of war (Kriege liegen nun halt mal in der Luft) and no ethical feeling whatsoever'' (Diary, 8).
19. Quoted from: Constance Reid: Courant in Göttingen and New York. The Story of an Improbable Mathematician, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1976, on 263.
20. Rellich to Courant, November 8, 1947, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 76, Folder 12: Rellich 1945–1957: ''Er war jede Sekunde Hans Lewy. Die erste Stunde unseres Beisammenseins gingen wir auf die Heinburg und dabei schrie er mich an, dass er ausschliesslich mich und Arnold Schmidt sehen wollte und so schnell wie möglich dieses widerliche Naziland verlassen wollte. Ausserdem gab es einen historisch sociologischen Vortrag zur Begründung dafür, dass alle Deutschen mit Ausnahme der Emigranten (und Arnold Schmidt und meine Wenigkeit) Verbrecher seien. Ich wurde ganz kleinlaut aber siehe da nach diesen Worten der Begrüssung haben wir uns aufs allerbeste verstanden.''
21. Rellich to the curator, May 14, 1947; University Archives Göttingen, R 4302a, Mittel für Gastvorlesungen: ''Persönliche Fühlungnahme mit auswärtigen Mathematikern (sowohl deutschen als auch ausländischen) war immer ein wesentlicher Bestandteil der Arbeit an unserem Institut. Sie hat stattgefunden durch Gastvorlesungen und durch einzelne Vorträge. In diesem und in den folgenden Jahren werden wir die Möglichkeit haben, mit unseren aus politischen Gründen emigrierten Kollegen auf diesem Wege die Beziehungen wieder aufzunehmen. Die Math. Nat. Fakultät hat mich beauftragt, insbesondere an diejenigen mathematischen Kollegen, die eine Rückkehr endgültig abgelehnt haben, mit der Bitte heranzutreten, uns wenigstens als Gäste am Mathematischen Institut Vorlesungen bzw. Vorträge zu halten. Vorläufig habe ich von Prof. Richard Courant (New York) eine Zusage für Ende Juni erhalten und eine halbe Zusage von Prof. Hans Lewy (Berkeley Calif.); Prof. Hermann Weyl (Princeton) hat ausgedrückt, dass er gerne gelegentlich als Besucher nach Göttingen kommen würde.'' I am grateful to Philipp Kranz for this information.
22. Regarding the following, see Remmert, Volker R.: Jewish Émigré Mathematicians and Germany, in: Birgit Bergmann/Moritz Epple/Ruti Ungar (eds.): Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture, Heidelberg, 2012: Springer, 241–270, on 260–264. The institute was founded in late 1944 as a National Institute for Mathematics (''Reichsinstitut für Mathematik'') geared at doing research important to the war effort, cf. Epple, Moritz/Karachalios, Andreas/Remmert, Volker R.: Aerodynamics and Mathematics in National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy: A Comparison of Research Institutes, in: Sachse, Carola/Walker, Mark (eds.): Politics and Science in Wartime: Comparative International Perspectives on the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes: Osiris 20(2005), 131–158, on 151–154.
23. On Jacobsthal, see Begehr, Heinrich: Mathematik in Berlin. Geschichte und Dokumentation, Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 1998, I, 317ff; Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 327f and 334f.

24. University Archives Berlin Free University, AA I, Ernst Jacobsthal.
25. Cf. University Archives Berlin Free University, Dinghas Papers, Box IV, correspondence B, Bieberbach.
26. University Archives Berlin Free University, AA I, Emil Julius Gumbel.
27. University Archives Berlin Free University, R 1551, Math.-Nat. Fak./Protokolle/38, meeting July 30, 1952.
28. University Archives Frankfurt, personal files of Max Dehn, PA Neue Folge Abt. 144/41 and PA Abt. 4/1124.
29. Moufang to Frommer, March 27, 1953. I thank Andreas Frommer (Wuppertal) for providing a copy of this letter to his grandfather.
30. Cf. Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 337–339.
31. Dehn to Hartner, December 25, 1947, University Archives Frankfurt, personal files of Dehn and Hellinger, Abt. 4/1297, p. 22: ''Es ist nur eine ganz kleine Gabe. Aber einmal können wir gleich noch einige Pakete mehr schicken, wenn wir wissen, welche Art am meisten benötigt ist[…]. Diesmal haben wir unser Weihnachtsessen verkürzt, Ausgaben für die Weihnachtsgesellschaft gestrichen und andere kleine Quellen geöffnet, um die Ausgaben für die Pakete zu bestreiten. Wir wissen, dass es mehr die Gesinnung als die Gabe ist, die vielleicht Wert hat. […] In uns, den mittelbar oder unmittelbar Getroffenen, muss die Liebe stark genug sein, um die schlimmen Bilder der Vergangenheit blasser zu machen. […] Ich bin neugierig, wie sich das Verhältnis zu der Frankfurter Naturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät endgültig regeln wird. Anderswo, zum Beispiel in Marburg, haben sie die vertriebenen Dozenten in passender Form, z.B. ''zur Zeit Chicago…'' wieder im Verzeichnis aufgeführt. Das macht einen recht guten Eindruck. Andererseits verstehe ich gut, dass Euch andere Probleme auf den Fingernägeln brennen. […] Aber, wie gesagt, ich bin bloss neugierig, es ist nicht wichtig für mich.'' Cf. Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 319.
32. University of Frankfurt, Personen- und Vorlesungs-Verzeichnis für das Wintersemster 1948/49, Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1948, 14.
33. Cf. Remmert, Volker R.: Jewish Émigré Mathematicians and Germany, in: Birgit Bergmann/Moritz Epple/Ruti Ungar (eds.): Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture, Heidelberg, 2012: Springer, 241–270, on 247–252.
34. On Hamburger, see the obituary by Grimshaw, Margaret: Hans Ludwig Hamburger, in: Journal of the London Mathematical Society 33(1958), 377–383.
35. Cf. University Archives Cologne, personal files Hans Hamburger (PA Hamburger Zug. 571/72; PA Hamburger, Zug. 317/III/712), and Golczewski, Frank: Kölner Universitätslehrer und der Nationalsozialismus. Personengeschichtliche Ansätze, Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau, 1988, 148–154.
36. Grimshaw, Margaret: Hans Ludwig Hamburger, in: Journal of the London Mathematical Society 33(1958), 377–383, 377f.
37. On Levi, see Kegel, Otto H./Remmert, Volker R.: Friedrich Wilhelm Daniel Levi (1888–1966), in: Sächsische Lebensbilder, vol. 5, ed. Gerald Wiemers, Leipzig/Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003, 395–403.
38. Schmid to Courant, July 17, 1950, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 79, Folder 13: H. L. Schmid, 1948–1957.
39. Levi to Courant, August 29, 1950, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 59, Folder 9: Levi.
40. Schmidt to Courant, November 4, 1950, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 79, Folder 15: F. K. Schmidt 1947–1960.
41. Courant to Süss, November 29, 1950, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 59, Folder 9: Levi.
42. Courant to Lange, November 29, 1950, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 59, Folder 9: Levi.
43. Majewski to Courant, February 1951, Courant Papers, Series II, Box 45, Folder 12.
44. On Levi and the Free University, see Begehr, Heinrich: Mathematik in Berlin. Geschichte und Dokumentation, Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 1998, I, 332–337.
45. Cf. the correspondence in University Archives Berlin Free University, Math.-Nat. Fak./PA Levi; R 1551; AA 1/Levi; and R 821.
46. On Baer, see the obituary by Gruenberg, Karl W.: Reinhold Baer, in: Bulletin of the London Mathematical Society 13(1981), 339–361.
47. Baer to Süss, June 26, 1951, University Archives Freiburg, Süss Papers, C 89/268: ''Wie Sie wissen, steht mir seit langem ein Urlaubsjahr zu; und ich möchte dieses gern im Mitteleuropäischen Geistesbezirk zubringen. Der Gründe sind viele; von sentimentalen und ästhetischen bis zum intellektuellen und mathematischen. Um besonders in letzterer Hinsicht alles nur mögliche aus einem solchen Urlaubsjahr herauszupressen, glaube ich, mich einmal wieder richtig der dortigen akademischen Gemeinde eingliedern zu sollen. […] Wie sich eine solche zeitweise Eingliederung in die Deutsche Akademia am besten organisieren läst, übersehe ich nicht ganz; und hier wäre ich für Ihren Rat sehr dankbar.''
48. Application of the Mathematical Institute, April 29, 1952, University Archives Frankfurt, personal file Reinhold Baer, Abt. 14/60, p. 84f.
49. Dean to the Ministry of Education, July 8, 1954, University Archives Frankfurt, Abt. 13/260, p. 42.
50. Details on the legal and practical side of compensation can be found in Gnirs, Otto: Die Wiedergutmachung im öffentlichen Dienst, in: Entschädigungsverfahren und sondergesetzliche Entschädigungsverfahren, eds. Hugo Finke et al., Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1987, 265–303; Goschler, Constantin: Schuld und Schulden. Die Politik der Wiedergutmachung für NS-Verfolgte seit 1945, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2005; for the case of Göttingen University, see Szabó, Anikó: Vertreibung, Rückkehr, Wiedergutmachung. Göttinger Hochschullehrer im Schatten des Nationalsozialismus, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000.
51. Rector of Frankfurt University to Hellinger, December 20, 1949, University Archives Frankfurt, Abt. 4/1297, p. 38. On Hellinger see Rovnyak, James: Ernst David Hellinger, 1883–1950: Göttingen, Frankfurt Idyll, and the New World, in: Topics in Operator Theory. Ernst D. Hellinger Memorial Volume, eds. L. de Branges et al., Basel: Birkhäuser, 1990, 1–47.
52. On Rosenthal see Mußgnug, Dorothee: Die vertriebenen Heidelberger Dozenten. Zur Geschichte der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität nach 1933, Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 1988, 70–73, 155f and 274–276.
53. Seifert to Freudenberg, October 10, 1945, University Archives Heidelberg, Rep. 14-599 (quoted from Jung, Florian: Das

Mathematische Institut der Universität Heidelberg im Dritten Reich, unpublished master's thesis, Heidelberg 1999, 84.) I am grateful to Philipp Kranz for this information.

54. Cf. personal files Arthur Rosenthal, University Archives Heidelberg, PA 5515.
55. Siegmund-Schultze, Reinhard: Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany. Individual Fates and Global Impact, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009, 324/29.
56. Remmert, Volker R.: Jewish Émigré Mathematicians and Germany, in: Birgit Bergmann/Moritz Epple/Ruti Ungar (eds.): Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture, Heidelberg, 2012: Springer, 241–270, on 253–259 and 265–268.
57. On this see, for example, Remmert, Volker/Schneider, Ute: Eine Disziplin und ihre Verleger—Disziplinenkultur und Publikationswesen der Mathematik in Deutschland, 1871–1949, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010, 265–267.

CIRCLE WORLD NO. 2

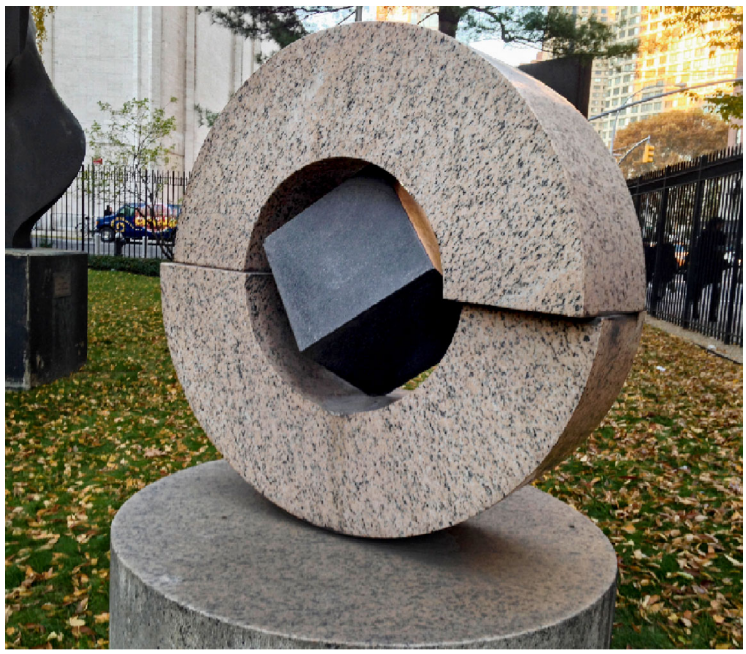

Photo by Stan Sherer

Work of the Japanese sculptor Masami Kodama from the garden of the Fordham University Law School, New York. Kodama is known for his strongly geometric minimalist marble sculptures. The circle surrounds a cubical center, but it is a broken circle.