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This syllabus is a work in progress and the section on Secularist Jewish Thought Today is yet to be completed. The syllabus is provided courtesy of The Center for Cultural Judaism.

THE EMERGENCE AND CONTENT OF JEWISH SECULAR THOUGHT

(1-2) THE AGENDA OF TRADITIONAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY (FROM SAADIA GAON TO SPINOZA)

- (a) The use of philosophical arguments to defend revealed religion.
- (b) The need to reconcile science and philosophy with the authority of the Bible and the methods of interpretation devised to achieve that goal.
- (c) Principal theological issues: divine omniscience v. human freedom; creation v. eternal existence of the world; prophecy v. philosophy; miracles and divine intervention v. the laws of nature.
- (d) The role of religion and religious law (*halacha*) in pre-modern Jewish political philosophy.
- (e) Doctrines of *principles of faith* (*Ikarim*) as a response to the fluidity of Jewish identity in difficult times.

(3-4) THE GRADUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF THE OLD AGENDA UNDER THE CRITIQUE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

- (a) The concept of critique in 18th century. This concept is directed against the blind acceptance of any authority (against blind adherence to Aristotle as well as against unquestioned acceptance of the veracity of the content of “sacred books” of all revealed religions).
- (b) The superiority of “the book of nature” to all other books. The “book of nature” is read and interpreted by close observation and inductive reasoning which are the only bases for scientific progress.
- (c) The glorification of the concept of “nature” and the plurality of domains in which it is called upon to act as the standard and supreme judge. “Natural religion” and “natural light” v. revealed religion and divine inspiration; “Natural” law v. positive law; Concepts of human “nature” and “natural” right.
- (d) Theories of social contract (from Hobbes to Spinoza and Rousseau) as an implicit answer to the question posed by *medieval* philosophy (see 1-2, d): how can social peace and harmony survive the loss of faith in divine retribution?

(5) THE IDEA OF THE MORAL AUTONOMY OF MAN

- (a) The negative aspect of the notion of autonomy: rejection of man's subjugation to any authority (social, political or religious) "external" to his own nature (and judgement).
- (b) The positive aspect of that notion: willing adherence to the laws of (human) morality legislated by Man himself.
- (c) The new demarcation of the domains of Morality, Law, Religion and State involved in, and implied by, the new notion.

(6) THE CAUTIOUS INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW CONCEPTS INTO JEWISH THOUGHT: MENDELSSOHN AND THE BERLIN ENLIGHTENMENT

- (a) *Mendelssohn's* full acceptance of the notions of reason, natural light, natural religion and universal morality. All these belong to all humans and are decisive in forming the enlightened and tolerant state by inspiring its laws and manners.
- (b) He reconciles this acceptance with his acknowledgement of revelation and his observance of *halachic* law on two levels: (1) On the theoretical level by claiming that God is both the origin of the revelation at Sinai as well as the source and origin of Reason from which natural (i.e. universal) religion is derived. (2) On the practical and political level by claiming that the *halachic* system is just a particular privilege the Jews entertain for the sake of moral education and enlightened life. It should never contradict or interfere with laws derived from universal morality or particular laws of a particular enlightened (i.e. tolerant) state.
- (c) The partial secularization involved in Mendelssohn's approach is derived from his acknowledgement of domains of thought and action that have their own rules and logic and, by their own nature, cannot be subject to the laws or practices of any revealed religion or religious tradition. These are: (a) Science and (b) the State.

(7-8) THE RE-INVENTION OF JUDAISM AS A CONFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY WITHIN THE NEW STATE: THE REFORM MOVEMENT AND NEO-ORTHODOXY IN GERMANY

- (a) The reform-movement as well as neo-orthodoxy born in response to it are both offshoots of the Berlin-Enlightenment and both maintain the partial secularization of Jewish life initiated by it.
- (b) Despite their different approaches to issues of *halachic* life, both represent an attempt at re-modelling (actually re-inventing Judaism as a confessional religious community within the (new, liberal) state, parallel on all four to Catholicism or Protestantism.
- (c) This re-modelling is a re-invention of Judaism in both movements because the attempt to eradicate (in the reform-movement) or to play down (in neo-orthodoxy) the nationalist (*volkish*) elements of traditional Jewish culture and to keep only its purely religious ones, is a complete innovation. Jewish religiosity and Jewish nationalism were inseparable in the past and formed a kind of unreflected symbiosis in pre-modernity.

- (d) Yet despite the “purification” of Judaism of all glaringly nationalistic elements, the new conception of it as religious congregation entails a compromise with secularism which is much more far-reaching than anything that existed in Jewish thought so far. First, the liberal state is recognized as religiously neutral - i.e. secular- domain, and this domain implies also the liberation of “manners” (*derekh-eretz*) and elements of ethics from religion. Second, Jewish religion has to be re-modelled in order to fit “progress” (in the case of the reform) or to find ways of co-existence with a non-Jewish politia (in the case of neo-orthodoxy) and these two imply and encourage the participation of Jews in the secular life of the general community. This by itself defines not only economy and politics but also the sciences and the arts as essentially secular.

(9) THE "WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUM'S" GROUP AND THE BIRTH OF A CRITICAL SCHOLARLY APPROACH TO JEWISH CULTURE

- (a) The study of all texts (and lives) of past Jewish tradition, is done (by Zunz, Steinschneider, Geiger and others) in an historic framework. Such framework questions, by necessity, all claim for divine a-historical and supernatural intervention in human affairs. Hence, the claims of the religious tradition itself –the object of study- are at least neutralised –if not wholly rejected- for the sake of a rationalist explanation.
- (b) This methodological “secularist” attitude is kept in the scholarly, critical history of the Jewish people by Graetz, who is heavily inspired by the spirit of the new approach.
- (c) The ideological motive behind the great scholarly endeavor is to manifest that there is nothing in Jewish traditions and culture that prevents them from entering the new secular, tolerant and enlightened state as equals to others. Hence the attempt to rationalize and, so to speak, "philosophize" Jewish faith and to turn it from an irrational belief into a rational moral school.

(10) THE CRITIQUE OF THE BERLIN-ENLIGHTENMENT BY THE HEBREW LITERARY INTELLECTUALS OF RUSSIA AND EAST-EUROPE

- (a) Peretz Smolenskin opposition to *Mendelssohn* and his followers. He follows Moses Hess in affirming the national character of Jewish life and culture and in pointing to the absurdity of regarding Judaism as nothing but a religious congregation. The feeling of belonging to a specific nation is more primordial for the Jew than the holding of certain beliefs and views. The partial secularism of his thought is in his seeing the Jewish religion as one product of Jewish nationalism (and not the other way around).
- (b) Lilienblum open rebellion against religion. From a demand for *halachic* reform accompanied by insistence that the Talmud is a human creation, he moves to the recognition that the Bible too is a human creation, and to the conviction that no reform will help the Jewish people in modern times. For him too Judaism is a nation rather than a religious congregation. Hence, radical secularism and even atheism does not endanger the future of the Jewish people. Quite the contrary. Obsolete habits and beliefs pose such danger in modern times.

**(11-12) THE SECOND RE-INVENTION (OR RE-MODELLING) OF JUDAISM:
JUDAISM AS THE CULTURE OF A NATIONAL HISTORICAL COLLECTIVE
UNATTACHED TO ANY SPECIFIC FAITH OR WELTANSCHAUUNG.**

(a) A radicalization of Smolenskin's position is carried on by the two generations of Hebrew literary figures who follow his steps: Ahad Ha-am, Berdichevsky and Brenner. Criticizing a Jewish French thinker who claims to be a patriotic member of the French nation yet prefers Jewish faith because of its cultural superiority to other cultural traditions, Ahad Ha-am writes:

"I at least have no need to exalt my people to Heaven, to trumpet its superiority above all other nations, in order to find a justification for its existence. I at least know "why I remain a Jew" – or, rather, I can find no meaning in such a question, anymore than if I were asked why I remain my father's son. I at least can speak my mind concerning the beliefs and the opinions which I have inherited from my ancestors, without fearing to snap the bond that unites me to my people" ("Slavery and Freedom," in "Selected Essays of Ahad Ha-am" edited by Leon Simon, Meridian Books, 1962, pp. 193-194).

(b) Establishing the model of an inter-generational "FAMILY" to understand Jewish culture is an open challenge to all ideological attempts to present Judaism as one SCHOOL OF THOUGHT among others. The (historical) family and the (perennial) school of thought may be regarded as the two opposing models of understanding Jewish culture developed respectively by East-European and by West-European Jewish thought.

(c) Ahad Ha-am withdraws later from his daring declaration by trying to find some common denominator for all creative periods of Jewish history. Such a common denominator will manifest more uniformity than the changing views of a family yet less uniformity than a specific "closed" doctrine of principles of faith. Such common denominators are to be found in essays discussing the concept of "national morality" or the concept of "the domination of the intellect."

(d) Berdichevsky criticizes Ahad Ha-am for his later compromises. To his mind all attempts to define an essentialist common denominator for all periods of Jewish cultural creativity are artificial ideological constructs. As against Ahad Ha-am's view that admiration for intellect and morality are two basic traits of Jewish culture at all times, he stresses the fact that Biblical poetry is an original Jewish creation while philosophical speculation penetrated Jewish culture only later and under the influence of Islam. As against the claim concerning Jewish permanent pre-occupation with morality he draws an unedited and uncensored picture of the life of Israelites in ancient times when "the sword was more important than the book."

(e) Berdichevsky views Jewish history as a series of spiritual and cultural raptures. Biblical times, "Yavneh" and the times of the Talmud, Jewish philosophy in the middle-ages, Jewish mystical trends such as the *kabbala* and Hassidism and enlightened modernity are all different cultures. The seeming homogeneity (or unified "essence") of Jewish thought and cultures derives in ancient times from rabbinic successful repressions and censorships and in modern times from the plethora of Jewish ideologies. The only unifying "ground" of all these Weltanschauungen is the fact that all of them were created by the same people aware of its persistence and historical continuity. "We were one people and thought in one way or another but we were not a people BECAUSE we thought in one way or another." This phrase is a

direct provocative challenge against the first phrase in Saadia Gaon's book ("The Principles of Beliefs and Opinions") that opens Jewish philosophy: "Our people is (one and the same) people only because of its doctrines (*torot*)."

(13-14) CONSIDERATION OF TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

(a) Are the two basic models for studying the history of Jewish culture - the "school" and the "family"- nothing but a reflection of the different conditions of Jewish life in the West and East of Europe? Or are there simply the two logical-methodological possibilities to study Jewish intellectual history?

(b) Why does a classical secularist statement highly typical of 18th century European Enlightenment such as Ahad Ha-am's statement that he can think on all issues as "he pleases without being deterred by the thoughts of his ancestors on these issues," enter Jewish culture so late only at the period of "national awakening" and not earlier?

(c) To answer the first question we have to compare the economic, social and political situation of the Jews in East-Europe to that of West-Europe: (1) In the Russian empire and to a lesser degree also in the Austro-Hungarian ("Habsburg") empire many different peoples live, many languages are spoken, and there is no dominant national culture to which all of them aspire to assimilate. (2) The Jews have given up their hope of emancipation and the large majority of them are living in thoroughly Jewish surroundings in the "pale of settlement." Their legal status and economic poverty prevent them from moving into the big cities. (3) As a result of the first factor there is an instinctive certainty among Russian or Galician Jews of the survival of their specific national identity and as a result of the second - assimilation is not a real option for the large majority of them. Hence there is no need to construct an "essential Judaism" to maintain and guard their particular community. (4) On the other hand, in West-Europe, emancipation is fully given to the Jews at least legally. They live in big towns and cities and mix with non-Jews in neighborhoods and occupations. Full assimilation is a real option for many young Jews. An ideology has to be created to justify their ongoing particularity and their refusal to a complete assimilation. Hence the pre-occupation with cultural "essences."

To answer the second question we have to consider the specific nature of the Jewish (and especially the Hebrew) Enlightenment. This Enlightenment-movement was highly critical of many aspects of traditional Jewish life: It protested against the narrow curriculum of Jewish education in the *Heder* or in the Yeshiva. That curriculum included nothing but the study of the *halacha* and its interpretation. The enlighteners demanded the study of Jewish and universal history, foreign languages, a full study of the Bible and Hebrew grammar, geography and the sciences. Later they added physical training, and knowledge of the arts. They protested against arranged marriages at a young age and insisted on the teaching of "productive" professions and skills to the young to enable them to raise families without becoming dependent on charity. They recommended new, open attitudes to aesthetics, European culture and civil society. But they never were as radical and innovative with the abstract and philosophical issues concerning religious faith and the value of tradition. In Germany, Galicia or Russia the majority of the most active Jewish enlighteners were themselves rabbis and their ideas of "improvements" (*tikkunim*) never put into question the continuous survival of Jewish religion in one form or another. They could not conceive the continuous survival of the Jewish community without it. That is why no declarations – similar to that of European enlighteners - like Hume, Voltaire or Kant- concerning the need to strike

against all religious traditions a “new beginning” ever came from the pen of a Jewish or even a Hebrew enlightener. In their mind such a declaration would endanger the survival of the Jewish community. It is only on the basis of a wholly different paradigm of Judaism – the nationalistic paradigm – that the value of the whole tradition could be put into question and a new perspective could be maintained from which Jewish religion could be regarded by some as an unnecessary “annex” to national culture and by others even as an obstacle for a cultural renewal.

(15) ATTRIBUTES OF JEWISH IDENTITY FROM A SECULARIST POINT OF VIEW: HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS (GRAETZ AND DUBNOV).

(a) For historians reflecting on the present and future of Jewish existence, passive secularism, i.e. the disappearance of observance among modern Jews, posed a problem. In their pre-occupation with the Jewish past they focused on an historical community that avoided ordinary classification of nations and religions. For many centuries, Jewish collective existence was, as stated before, an unreflected and unreflective symbiosis of religiosity and nationalism. Separating the two components was unthinkable. In the words of Spinoza:

"Everyone who fell away from religion ceased to be a citizen, and was on that ground alone, accounted an enemy: those who died for the sake of religion, were held to have died for their country. (A Theologico-Political Treatise in Works of Spinoza, translated by R. H. M. Elwes, Volume 1, Dover publications, 1951, pp. 219-20)."

Because of the weight of the past most historians were sceptical about the future of the two movements trying to re-interpret, (actually, remake) Jewish existence in a way that would conform exclusively to the traits of a normal religious community (Reform) or a normal nationalism (Zionism). These seemed to them both artificial and utopian. Yet they could not avoid realizing that the religious component of the old symbiosis is losing ground especially with the younger generations. Occupation with the history of Judaism (or the Jews) and the cultivation of historical self-consciousness among Jews seemed to them a way out of an impasse.

(b) Graetz in his essay "The Structure of Jewish History" acknowledged the two components of Jewish identity which he called the political and the religious and used them for distinguishing the pre-exilic and the post-exilic periods of Jewish history by claiming that in the first period the religious is subjugated to the political while in the second period the political is subjugated to the religious. Yet coming to his own time –the third period in his periodization of all Jewish history- he offers a third "synthetic" principle, the principle of an historical reflection or self-understanding. Unable to see a future for the dominance of religion in the post-emancipatory era and uncertain about the future of Jewish nationalism in this era – his understanding of his own era leaves room for radical different interpretation of his position: was he a proto-Zionist or a conservative and autonomist? The only unambiguous motive in his thought is that rationalist (secular) understanding of Jewish history is a central requisite for the Jewish future.

(c) Dubnov too in his “Letters on Old and New Judaism” is somewhat ambiguous on what should be and what would be the content of future Jewish culture. Against Zionism on one hand and assimilation on the other hand he claims that Jewish nationalism transcended the territorial phase, to his mind, the primitive phase, of nationalism. The Jews do not need a territory of their own but an acknowledgement of the unique nature of their national culture and the opportunity to develop it. As an ex-territorial and non-territorial nation they should

struggle to achieve equal rights to members of other nationalities both as individual citizens of liberal post-nationalistic states and as a collective group entitled to develop their own cultural, educational and linguistic autonomy. Like his friend and opponent Ahad Ha'am, Dubnov too regards religion as one product and one feature of the national "spirit" or culture. Like him, he too regards the process of secularization as inevitable and irreversible. But as against Ahad Ha'am, he does not envisage any national project heading towards the future that will give "content" to the Jewish present. Therefore it seems that once the cultural autonomy is achieved for all Jewish communities the main content of its educational institutions will be the study of the history of Jewish culture. So with him too as with so many scholars of the Wissenschaft's group and Graetz following them, **historical self-consciousness** (or **self-knowledge**), becomes the ultimate goal of the new Judaism.

(16) ATTRIBUTES OF JEWISH IDENTITY FROM A SECULARIST POINT OF VIEW: THE HEBREW LANGUAGE (THE DIALECTICS OF THE HEBREW ENLIGHTENMENT)

When we speak of the "revival" of the Hebrew language we usually mean simultaneously two things: (a) The modernization of Hebrew as a written language: the processes, events and persons that made it into a language which can express, represent or discuss everything that is represented, expressed or discussed in a European "living" language. (b) Its becoming – after 1500 years of muteness - a spoken language and the central organ of a whole community. The second "phase" of the "revival" is inseparable from the processes that brought hundreds of thousands -later millions- of Jews to immigrate to the land of Israel. We are not dealing with it here. Here we deal only with the first phase of the "revival": the modernization of the written language, as this bears direct and indirect relation to the issue of secularism.

(a) IDEOLOGY. During the years 1850-1880 the ideas of the Enlightenment penetrated East-European Jewry. Unlike the Jewish movement for Enlightenment in Germany, the Russian movement preceded any step or even "signs" of emancipation and was engaged with bringing it about rather than with responding to it. The Hebrew enlighteners – novelists, essayists, poets, liberal rabbis and scholars of all sorts - were part of a more general movement that expressed its aspirations and values also in Russian and Yiddish. Yet they were well-entrenched in the Jewish community and very influential with the younger generation and their Hebrew efforts distinguished them from the other elements in the movement. Modernization of the Hebrew language had double significance for them. First, they were eager to prove to the liberal part of Russian public opinion (often also to the authorities) that the Jews were a "normal," creative people who could write, discuss and create anything that existed in the literatures and cultures of other European nations. They believed a modern Hebrew literature would enhance acceptance of the Jews as equals to others, people worthy of becoming citizens. Secondly, they believed that East-European Jewish culture was cut off from the main trends of enlightened modern culture and by developing a modern Hebrew literature, they hoped to close that gap and educate the people to adopt new values. Modernization of Hebrew meant, by necessity, secularization of the language since the semantic domains that needed developing were outside the realm of religious practice or *halacha*. They were tied to the representation of reality in everyday life or to the expression of ideas and sentiments "borrowed" from contemporary European philosophy, sciences, politics and fiction.

(b) SOCIOLOGY. Surprisingly enough they achieved almost the impossible in the last two decades of the century. An audience of more than a hundred thousand readers eagerly purchased and consumed a variety of secular Hebrew publications: novels, short stories, satirical works, historical, scholarly and technical publications, periodicals and even a daily Hebrew newspaper published in St. Petersburg. The reasons for the Hebrew "explosion" were sociological rather than ideological. In the seventies, eighties and nineties, tens –perhaps hundreds- of thousands of Jewish youth were leaving the traditional orthodox institutes of education, the *Yeshivot*, eager to get a modern secular education to complement or to substitute their traditional Jewish education. No European language was available to them and the only language that could serve them in this process of Europeanization was the Hebrew they knew from their former studies. The success of the first phase of the Hebrew "revival" had, therefore, very little to do with the later spread of nationalism culminating in Zionism. Almost to the contrary, Hebrew flourished because it acted as a bridge to Europe. It was a transitional language that satisfied the cultural needs of secularizing generations of young Jews before they acquired the ability to read fluently a European language (usually Russian or German or both). Hence the decay and deep crisis of Hebrew in the first two decades of the 20th century before it was "revived" for the second time, this time as both a modern and a spoken language, thanks to the creation of a Hebrew community in Palestine or the land of Israel.

(c) THE DIALECTICS of the Hebrew Enlightenment is therefore similar to the one that Gershom Scholem was able to point out in connection with the "Wissenschaft" group. As with the German-centered group, tremendous intellectual work was done to pave the way to assimilation or at least integration of the Jews in their countries of residence. And here as there it aroused vivid and intense interest in the Jewish past and all the forms of Jewish literary and cultural creativity and as such, encouraged nationalist sentiments. Here this dialectic is even more powerful. The ancient language was modernized to fit "European" standards and serve the integration of the Jews in an improved Europe. But in fact, it helped in creating the modern and secularized Hebrew readership that a generation later, after the experiences of 1881-2, would be able to absorb and spread the new nationalist ideologies preaching the exodus from Europe. During all these developments and ideological upheavals only one thing clearly remained constant - that the modernization and revival of Hebrew was both the product and the agent of processes of secularization among Jews.

(17) ATTRIBUTES OF JEWISH IDENTITY FROM A SECULARIST POINT OF VIEW: LAND (ZIONISM AND TERRITORIALISM)

(a) More than any other concept the concept of the Land of Israel (*Eretz-Israel*) testifies to the absolute symbiosis of nationalism and religion that pervaded all trends of traditional Jewish thought. The land acquired its significance and "sacredness" from a divine order (to Abraham) and a divine repeated promise (to him and his children). But the fulfilment of that order and promise led to the golden age of a nation and served as the utopian locus of a national renaissance. With the advent of secularism in its partial or complete forms, the symbiosis of the two aspects of the "land" is torn apart. One modern re-interpretation of Judaism, the Reform, is trying hard to get rid of nationalism: to spiritualize and allegorize the concepts of "Jerusalem," "Zion" or the "Land of Israel" and make them lose their attachment to a particular concrete territory. The other re-interpretation of Judaism, Zionism, celebrates the "Land of Israel" as the locus of both the memory of an independent and sovereign Jewish polity and the locus of a hope for a possible realization of a national revival, a promise that will be fulfilled this time by the rational planning and rational efforts of humans.

(b) For Zionism "the land" meant always a concrete material territory in which the Jews would be able to establish their own autonomous community, and later also a state of their own. Yet this movement that defined a peculiar modern nationalism not in terms of ownership of a certain territory but rather by and because of the consciousness of the lack of it, was not always tied to the land of Israel. One of its founders, Leon Pinsker spotted three possible loci for the realization of Jewish auto-emancipation, the land of Israel being only one of them. Another founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl thought for a while of Uganda as the place for the ingathering of the Jews. No doubt, the majority of Zionists rejected any other place and Palestine or the land of Israel proved to be the only place under the sun to which some tens of thousands of pioneers emigrated with the explicit wish to create a Jewish homeland. But the episodes of Pinsker, Herzl and the territorialist movement that emerged from the Zionist crisis over Uganda point to the modern and wholly secular meaning of the concept of "land" in Zionism.

(c) The implicit secularism of the whole Zionist movement finds its best explicit expression in Religious Zionism, always a minority movement within the general movement. Its thinkers (Rabbi Reines and Y.M. Pines are two of the best known) justified their co-operation with atheists in the Zionist movement by the clear demarcation of Zionism and Messianism. Zionist activity was aimed at solving terrestrial worries of Jews – social, political and economic- not at bringing a messianic redemption. Herzl's acceptance of their demand not to deal with any cultural or philosophical issues within the movement (such as the meaning of Jewish history, Zionist attitude to tradition etc.) derived from his wish to create a movement that transcended all cultural and religious disputes among Jews. Yet this admission that Zionism should not be identified with one conception of past-Judaism or one vision of its future (orthodox, traditional or revolutionary) in and by itself was acknowledging and encouraging the existence of Jewish pluralism within the framework of a modern secular national movement.

(d) The historical significance of Zionism as a secularizing agent of Jewish culture is reflected in the place allotted to it by various thinkers. While rejected by some major German-Jewish thinkers such as Herman Cohen or Franz Rosenzweig for substituting the transcendental sublime messianic idea of Jewish tradition for "happiness, here and now, in this world" it was seen by Russian-Jewish thinkers as an agent of national renewal. Broadly speaking, this controversy reflected the old debate between those who regarded Judaism as a religious, philosophical or ethical "school" and those who regarded it as the living (and changing) culture of an historical-national group. Yet it had also a more immediate and direct relation to the issue of secularism. The German thinkers either did not conceive of religion as fading away (Rosenzweig) or were looking in the direction of the construction of some philosophical system to substitute it (Cohen). The Russians were either looking with favor on the fading away of religion (Lilienblum, the young Berdichevsky, Brenner) or accepting it as inevitable and looking in the direction of Zionism to substitute it in its historical role as the agent of Jewish unity. This, for example, was the significance of Zionism for Ahad Ha-am. For him the common struggle for the acquisition of land created this desired unity even before that land was acquired and this is the meaning of "cultural" or "spiritual" often used to distinguish his brand of Zionism.

(18-20) SOCIALIST-ZIONISM AND ITS ATTITUDE TO RELIGION : HESS, SYRKIN, BOROCHOV, A.D. GORDON AND THE LABOR-MOVEMENT

(a) Within Zionism and later in Palestine and Israel, Socialist-Zionism succeeded in being the only principled secularist movement that recruited massive support. Indeed it was regarded by the ultra-Orthodox as their worst opponent, despite and perhaps because it was regarded by others as forming a kind of a secularised religion, having its own holidays and rituals, using new texts and new secular contents for some of the Jewish traditional holidays (such as Pentacost [Shavuot] or Passover), not celebrating the purely religious holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur and introducing new holidays such as the first of May, Bialik and Herzl days, Tel-Hai day etc. Yet though secular in principle, and of course as far from the life of observance as possible, the ideological founders of Socialist-Zionism as well as the chief political leaders of the labor movement did not entertain the same attitudes towards religion and tradition. We shall try to draw a spectrum of themes and motives that characterized Zionist-Socialist thought and the labor movement.

(b) Moses Hess, the earliest thinker of Socialist Zionism, had changed his evaluation of Jewish religion several times during his literary and political career. Though secularist from the beginning, a persistent admirer of Spinoza from his youth onwards, and a violent critic of both rabbinic doctrines and rabbinic practice – he presented in his early publications the ancient Mosaic Biblical religion as a model for a future socialist society because of the spirit of equality and social justice that pervaded it. Yet later he came to concentrate on the issue of faith rather than the issue of law and became one of the most bitter enemies of religion – of Christianity no less than of Judaism - in the history of human thought. He was the teacher – rather than the student- of Karl Marx in viewing religious faith at one and the same time as psychological compensation for the social evils of all non-egalitarian societies, a mystification hiding from the mystified masses the nature of reality and the real causes of their sufferings and a social force defending the privileged classes against revolution. The only difference between Hess and Marx in this period of his thinking was the grading of the two monotheistic religions. Hess, unlike Marx, thought that Christianity was outdoing Judaism in persuading miserable people that redemption is to be found only in heaven and the afterlife. Even at that time he remembered that Biblical religion that did not believe in the afterlife still advanced ideas of social justice and human dignity "in this life."

(c) In "Rome and Jerusalem," the pioneer-book of Zionist-Socialist thought, Hess moderated his judgment of traditional Judaism. He did it mainly by taking into consideration historical factors. Yet his point of departure is wholly secularist: the Jews are a people and not a confessional religion like Protestantism or Catholicism. Jewish religion is only one of many creations by the Jewish people and its positive aspects were tied to the preservation of a nation-in-exile. In modern times when supernatural faith, by necessity, fades away, Jews should recognize the real miserable state of their existence. In the capitalist era they are doubly oppressed as members of an ethnic minority and as members of the poor middle class or the working-class. Even socialism will not be able to prevent tensions between them and members of the national majority. The only way open to them is the creation of their own socialist society in their historical homeland.

(d) Hess, like Herzl after him, was eager to suggest historical factors that would prevent his vision from remaining utopian. His dependence on the assistance of France is the obsolete part of his vision but his insistence that Zionism will be realized only when large segments of the Jewish working-class will join it and these will be able to benefit from national funds, inspired the actual road taken by the Zionist-socialist pioneers of the second and third *aliyot*

from 1904 to 1921. This is the part of his doctrine that deeply influenced his followers, especially Nachman Syrkin and Berl Katznelson.

(e) Syrkin's analysis follows Hess in insisting that "the Jewish Problem" is a national -and not a religious- one. In his evaluation of Jewish religious heritage, he too points to the sense of social justice in some Biblical laws and criticizes in even sharper terms than Hess, the negative role of rabbinic leadership both in former times and in modernity. Yet he differs from Hess in his analysis of anti-Semitism and in identifying the motivation of the possible Zionist-socialist *olim*. Being openly non - and even - anti-Marxist, he recognises motives of Jew-hatred that are not derived from the nature of class-society and psychological motives that would bring poor young Jews lacking solid professions and economical or social status to prefer immigration to Palestine to all other places. Nourished by the messianic aspirations of the tradition and secularizing them, many young Jews would prefer even the hardships of life in an Asiatic deserted country to the material allures of more civilized countries because they would prefer joining the creation of a new national and classless society to the joining, as a despised minority, an already existing repulsive society. Yet, as a socialist, Syrkin could not rely solely on idealism. Beside the processes that forced Russian Jews to leave East-Europe and emigrate in their millions he points also to the factors that would create Jewish national funds and institutions that would try to control and direct the blind immigration. But despite the participation of all Jewish classes in the Zionist enterprise, the reservoir of immigrants to Palestine is to be found only within the cultured and idealistic youth that own nothing. These people will come to Palestine with the hope of creating a new society, hence "Zionism will be realized by the working-class or it will not be realized at all."

(f) Borochof offers another version of socialist-Zionism. His teaching is based on Marx's analysis of the class-struggle revised and arguably "twisted" by Borochof to fit the "abnormal" case of the Jewish people. As against the classical distinction of orthodox Marxism between "means of production" and "forces of production," (i.e. social classes), Borochof introduces a triple distinction by adding to the two categories a third one, "conditions of production." These "conditions" include common territory, common language and all other attributes of national culture. The Jews - a people, not a religion- are lacking these conditions and cannot develop a "normal" class-struggle leading to a classless, socialist society. Therefore on the way to form such a society they must pass through a period marked by a co-operation of all classes to obtain for themselves a common territory. The immigration of millions of East-European Jews is an inevitable historical phenomenon caused by inevitable massive impoverishment of the Jews. The inevitability of the two processes derives from the penetration of capitalist modes of production and marketing to Russia, Poland and Romania. The Jew, usually a peddler, a small merchant or a small artisan, cannot compete with the new modes and loses his foothold in life. Large numbers of Jews fall from the low middle class to the working-class. There they encounter the competition, envy and hatred of the gentiles and cannot be loyal to their national culture because for example, of the necessity to work on *Shabbat* and holidays. Borochof teaches that the only solution for the Jewish workers is to move to a place where they will be able to dominate the primary branches of production (industry and agriculture) and this will lead a large part of them to the promised land.

(g) Marxist "optimistic" prophecies like these as well as the "idealistic" ones of Syrkin concerning the future direction of Jewish immigration failed to be realized (even though the negative predictions of the Zionists-socialists concerning the growth of anti-Semitism and massive impoverishment of the Jews proved themselves accurate). Mass immigration up to the thirties of the 20th century was heading mainly to the new world and partly to Western-

Europe and not to Palestine (three million compared to somewhat less than hundreds of thousands). Hence the pragmatic, improvisational character of the labor-movement in the land of Israel. The stress shifted from a swift creation of a national homeland for millions on a communal basis to the qualitative domain: the creation of a "new" exemplary Jewish, or rather "Hebrew" community that would only later serve as the infrastructure for a full-fledged national homeland of millions. "New" and "exemplary" because of the national spirit of solidarity pervading it, the revival of a forgotten national language, the achievement of cultural autonomy and the introduction of new values to Jewish life such as the positive value of physical labor, openness to nature, self-defence against enemies and political democratic organization. Secularism pervades all these new values and in many cases they called for bitter attacks on traditionalism.

(h) The architect of the Palestinian improvisation on the old Zionist-socialist doctrines was Berl Katsanelson. "Constructive Socialism" meant stressing the need to create a powerful working-class rich with institutions and possessions that serve it struggling in full cooperation with all other classes of the Jewish people and at the expense of the class struggle. This allowed for the establishment of co-operatives, moshavim and kibbutzim where workers became –with national-Zionist blessings–owners of land and other means of production. At the end both classical teachers of socialist-Zionism, Syrkin and Borochoy had to accept this deviation of understanding – that without "Constructive Socialism" there was no future to the movement, as the salary of these unskilled employees would otherwise not be sufficient for the pioneers to raise families and survive the hardships of the land.

(i) During the difficult period of 1904-1921 it was mainly the original and somewhat eccentric teaching of A.D. Gordon that influenced the labor movement. Gordon placed the focus of his teaching on the redemption of the Jewish individual not only as a means to the problematic "redemption" of the whole people but as an end in itself. The young Jew moving from degraded urbane culture of modern times and degrading job at the bourse where he produces no primary product, to the life of productive physical labor in nature is already "redeemed." This romantic doctrine helped raise the self-esteem of the pioneers at the time when realistic minds could not believe in the ingathering of millions in the land of Israel. Still the majority of the socialist-Zionists did believe that eventually there would come a day when hundreds of thousands would follow them and it was their role to prepare the infrastructure for their absorption in the country. That is the origin of the high value attached to the *Halutz* (pioneer) sometimes to the point of almost mythical glorification. It is important to note that though an enemy of *Galut*-mentality and though the teacher of a pantheistic non-orthodox religiosity, Gordon viewed Zionism as coming "from within Judaism" and advocating a return of the nation to its own pure cultural origins rather than as a movement who aspired to "imitate" normal modern nations and carry the Jews away from their particularity to universal history and universal culture. On this he was close to Ahad Ha-am and differed from most Zionists openly quarrelling with such "westernizers" as Berdichevsky and Brenner.

(21) NON-ZIONIST AND ANTI-ZIONIST JEWISH SOCIALISM: THE “BUND”

(a) In its time, between the two world-wars, the “Bund” was even more successful than Zionist-socialism ever was in creating a massive secular movement with hundreds of thousands of members, "a messianic secularist movement," based on some basic Marxist principles. The coming of a world-revolution in the very near future was not only a "scientific certainty" for the Bundists but an article of faith one believed in with an emotional intensity typical of religious messianic movements. As a Marxist movement the thinkers of the "Bund" accepted the orthodox Marxian assessment and evaluation of religion without any reservations: Born out of the feeling of the powerlessness of man and his inability to understand and control his destiny – religion forges a comforting delusion; yet belief in the "afterworld" is a poor and false compensation for the miseries of this world; religion hides from its believers the main source of misery: the class-structure of social reality and in doing so it "objectively" serves the ruling privileged classes; emancipation from it is a necessity for the revolutionary worker.

(b) But though the Bundists –unlike Marxist Zionists like Borochoy- did not add any innovation to Marxist theories – their practice was flexible and innovative (compared to the traditions of other social-democratic parties). They conducted strikes on the right of Jewish workers to avoid working on *Shabbat* and Jewish holidays and to keep all other traditional customs. In their practice they often regarded Jewish religious traditions as part of a specific national culture that should be kept (even after the revolution) and be allowed even for an internationalist revolutionary. Often Bundist literature would offer a kind of a Marxian version of Dubnov's or Ahad Ha-am's "bourgeois" theories and view the Jewish religion as one among other cultural products of the Jewish people. Viewing religion as a creation of the Jewish people in ancient times (popular imagination etc.) moderates of course their judgement of it. Still the enlightened worker does not have a need or a use for it and it may harm his struggle for full emancipation.

(22) RADICAL AND MILITANT SECULARISM (Y.H. BRENNER AND Z. JABOTINSKY)

(a) One should distinguish not only between partial and full secularism but also between moderate and radical or militant secularism. The first pair is related to society, social thought and social processes and does not involve necessarily issues of faith. The second pair relates to individuals and their beliefs and concerns the evaluation of the value of the existence, or lack of existence, of faith.

(b) The concept of *speculum* meant first of all the designation of an area or domain in the state that should be kept outside the jurisdiction of religious authorities. In Western philosophical tradition even religious thinkers usually recognized the need for such a domain (e.g. in Maimonides' political philosophy and his *halachic* teachings judgments concerning the waging of war and the making of peace should be made by the (secular) king not by the Sanhedrin or any other religious authority). One may say that the denial of such a domain is the feature that separates Islamic and Jewish fundamentalism from the western rationalist tradition.

(c) From the era of Enlightenment onwards debates occurred as to the size or scope of this domain. Full separation of state and church that delegated the whole issue of religion to the personal domain (the soul of the citizen) came later and at different countries in different

times. In Judaism, in Israel as well as in other Jewish communities, such full separation did not occur. Therefore the size and scope of the speculum both in ideologies or the recommendations of a policy or in social and political reality help us in distinguishing "partial" from "full" secularism. One can fix according to this distinction not only the spectrum of political parties, views or trends of public opinion in Israel. Positions that were taken in many intellectual debates in modern Jewish thought can be arranged to form a similar spectrum.

(d) On the other hand, the distinction between "moderate" and "radical" or "militant" secularism touches a different meaning of the word "secular." Here we do not deal with how big the public area is which is "free" from religious intervention but with global assessment of the positive or negative value of religion, religious traditions and practices and religious faith to an individual or a culture. Most Jewish thinkers in modern times had mixed feelings and nuanced views about the issues of faith and religious tradition even when representing and advocating full and complete secularism for all issues of the public sphere. This majority includes not only the "agnostic" Ahad Ha-am but also the "heretic" Berdichevsky; not only the autonomist Dubnov but also the Zionists-socialists and even the Bundists. Two important and highly influential intellectuals are clearly exceptions: Y.H. Brenner and B.Z. Jabotinsky.

(23) THE "BRENNER EVENT"

(a) In 1909 the writer and critic Y.H. Brenner had published a review-essay in the weekly *Hapoel Hatzair* ("The Young Worker") in Palestine, reviewing the Jewish press of the previous year. Stating that all the Jewish press concentrated on the issue of conversion (*shmad*), he expressed his view that this particular phenomenon did not deserve that amount of attention. Briefly his arguments were that those that converted had nothing to do with the life of the people even before they took the "last step," and that this was just a symptom of the general Jewish situation of constant immigration, unemployment of unskilled and non-professional intellectuals, crisis of all old forms of life, decay of national languages, lack of intense cultural activities to struggle against assimilation etc. But the most provocative part of his essay dealt with the futility of the attempt to dissuade candidates of conversion by showing them the superiority of Judaism over Christianity.

(b) Brenner claimed that (1) he does not see any unbridgeable gap between many religious and ethical doctrines of the new testament and some trends of the Judaism of Jesus' time inscribed in Talmud and *midrash*, (2) as a modern man he is free not only from most doctrines of both the Jewish and the Christian religions but he is also free of the hypnosis of the Hebrew Bible and there are some modern books that are more meaningful to him than the Bible. (3) Nevertheless he would not exclude from the Jewish people any one that the Christian legend on Jesus (which he, Brenner, hates as he hates "all false things") invokes in him "a religious tremor," (4) that even a person who feels like that as long as he is an Hebrew-speaking worker in Palestine contributes more to the real existential struggle for survival of the Jewish people than any writer who publishes volumes in German or English or French on the merits of Judaism. (5) One should therefore recognize the absolute freedom of every modern Jewish individual to think the way he thinks and believe what he can believe. One should not confuse philosophical uniformity for national solidarity. Pluralism of beliefs is not a hindrance to Jewish solidarity. Just the contrary - in modern post-emancipatory times it is conducive to it. (This is a Berdichevsky motive elaborated by Brenner with an additional sensitivity to historical, economical and sociological factors).

(c) However, it is important to note that Brenner did not argue in favor of including in the Jewish people someone who was actually baptized. It is plausible to assume that in the famous case of "Brother Daniel," he would join the majority in the Israeli Supreme Court who decided that a converted person cannot be regarded as a member of the Jewish people simply because the majority of contemporary Jews regard the two identities as incompatible. The argument of Brenner was limited to issues of thought and feeling. His evident (and provocative) aim was to stretch the "metaphysical" freedom of opinion of modern Jews as far as possible. By using some provocative formulations he succeeded in starting a debate that went on and on in all the Jewish press for several years. It was eventually halted only by the war.

(d) The debate started with a sharp response by Ahad Ha-am, condemning this "new *Tora* from Zion." It went on with cutting donations for the journal by his Odessa-circle. This was followed by a protest of all Palestinian writers and teachers against Ahad Ha-am. It is important to note that most of them expressed, alongside their full solidarity with Brenner's right to write what he wants, serious reservations concerning his radical position. Brenner's position - though fully consistent, and may be just because of this- will sound radical even today to many readers.

(24) JABOTINSKY AND INTEGRAL NATIONALISM

(a) Even before he became a leader of a large segment of the Zionist movement Jabotinsky was a significant tri-lingual writer and essayist who wrote novels, poems and journalistic essays in Yiddish, Russian and Hebrew. His thought was rightly called "integral nationalism," refusing the fusion of the national principle with any other component (such as socialism). Yet his famous Hebrew slogan "CHAD-NESS" ("one flag") was aimed against the fusion of Jewish nationalism with Jewish religion as much as it was aimed at fusion with socialism.

(b) Though coming from a wholly different background – a family close to assimilation to Russian culture- Jabotinsky was close in some of his beliefs to the Hebrew writers of the *fin de siecle*. Like Berdichevsky or Tchernichovsky he saw the Biblical period as (culturally and spiritually, not only politically) superior to the rabbinic period. He admired Biblical law for taking care of social justice, rights of slaves, day of rest for workers while admitting property rights and opposing socialism. To his mind the Mosaic law was not only the most advanced law of its time, but in some of its aspects it was still a perennial inspiration for legislation.

(c) He regarded the rabbinic period as a period of decline of the national spirit. More than any other Jewish thinker of modernity he saw the prospect of a national renewal tied to the return from the spirit of the Talmud to the spirit of the Bible. As a poet and translator of poetry he avoided as far as possible the use of post-Biblical language and conceived of the revival of Hebrew basically as the process of modernizing and widening of Biblical forms and Biblical vocabulary. Like his rival for the leadership of the Zionist movement, David Ben-Gurion, he wished to skip over all exilic Jewish literature and start again from the Bible and in still greater stress than him, he blamed religion for softening the Jewish national spirit to the extent that political slavery became acceptable to Jews.

(d) The leaders that followed Jabotinsky in the movement he created and especially Menachem Begin muted the militant anti-religious component of his integral nationalism. They did it partly because they thought differently on these issues but partly also because a

large part of their followers were religious traditional Jews of oriental origin. That is why his views on religious issues -like those of Herzl- come as a surprise to so many readers.

(25) SECULARIST JEWISH THOUGHT TODAY

Provided courtesy of
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