

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Jewish Philosophy: A Study in Personalism*, by LEON D. STITSKIN (New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1976).

Reviewed by Marc D. Angel

Very often, Jewish philosophy has been viewed as an attempt to harmonize the faith of Judaism with the dictates of reason. It has been judged as a stepchild of Judaism, not as an intrinsic aspect of the religion. Dr. Leon Stitskin, Associate Editor of *TRADITION* and author of a number of books and articles, argues in his recent book that Jewish philosophy is an authentic, unique and integral part of Judaism. He sets the tone for his position at the very beginning of his book. "The Hebraic philosophic enterprise is just as organic and indigenous to *daat ha-Torah*, the Jewish ideological construct, as major portions of Halakhah."

This thesis is expounded in great detail. The core of Jewish philosophy, argues Dr. Stitskin, is embodied in the idea of personalism. Judaism recognizes the infinite value of each human being. It is precisely the Jewish emphasis on human personality that characterizes much of Jewish thought. Dr. Stitskin

writes: "Indeed, a study of the nature and destiny of man leads to the unfolding of the ultimate reality of existence . . ."

Dr. Stitskin discusses the writings of many Jewish philosophers, major and "minor." Through his study of these authors, Dr. Stitskin has found that the idea of personalism has been the underlying theme of authentic Jewish philosophy. He discusses the idea of personalism from a philosophic point of view, and also devotes a number of chapters to the religious component of Jewish personalism. The last chapters of the book deal with the doctrine of immortality, the idea of Messianism, the nature of the Mitzvah, and Personalism and Judaism.

Dr. Stitskin presents three basic assumptions of Personalism. First, man is central to the universe; man has the right to investigate and speculate, although we already have a revealed religion. Second, in the words of Dr. Stitskin, "man is both what he is and what he can become." Since we are uniquely en-

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dowed with the quality of *tselem elokim*, the human being may rise to great spiritual levels. The third assumption is that man's inner drive inevitably draws him into an authentic awareness of God and the world. Dr. Stitskin concludes: "Self-knowledge inevitably draws us to an awareness of the Divine

and of the universe."

Dr. Stitskin is to be commended for the many valuable sources which he brings together in this volume. His copious notes and the bibliography will be helpful to readers who are interested in pursuing his ideas further.

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*From Stereotype to Human Being—The Image of the Jew in American Literature: From Early Republic to Mass Immigration*, by LOUIS HARAP (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974).

*Reviewed by* Brana Gurewitsch

As a consequence of bicentennial celebrations it has become fashionable to emphasize our role in fashioning American history. The Founding Fathers' awareness of their Biblical heritage, the Jewish heroes of the colonial period, and the contributions of famous American Jews to American cultural life are widely commemorated. It is easy to slip into the illusion that because of common Biblical roots, because of significant Jewish activity and the respected place that Judaism now occupies as one of the major religious groupings in the United States, that this evaluation has been so perceived by others. Unfortunately, the written record of how the Jew has been viewed in America does not coincide with an objective evaluation of his role in the American experience. *The Image of the Jew in American Literature*

is a scholarly, highly detailed documentation of that fact.

Mr. Harap has limited his work to the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focusing on the literary background for the more familiar twentieth century. Perhaps the difficulties in obtaining source material prompted the author to avoid the seventeenth century, compressing his discussion into one paragraph and a passing reference to Cotton Mather. The inadequacy of this treatment is more than compensated for, however, by the truly exhaustive study of the two centuries which followed. Mr. Harap deals with the literature itself, quoting frequently, in order to analyze the way in which Jews appeared in the literature, regardless of authorship or of true literary value. Carefully distinguishing between the literary image and the real role of the Jew in American life, Mr. Harap traces the image of the Jew back to its

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earliest European origins in stereotyped forms. He also draws the relevant historical parallels with contemporary events and ideologies, thus putting the literature into proper perspective. The persistence of the stereotypes is more striking when considered against the changing backgrounds of events and ideologies of two hundred years.

The stereotypes are classic and familiar to any student of literature. They include, the Shylock character, the "Jewish" physical characteristics (nose, dark hair, eyes, an "Oriental" look), the Jew as rejecter of Christianity, the Jew as an associate of the Devil and of the lower strata of society, as the "exotic" Jewess of haunting beauty, and the "redemption" of the Jew through his conversion to Christianity. The use of these stereotypes was universal; such characterizations were literary convention, almost beneath critical notice. All forms of literature made use of the convention: the dime-store novel and the popular drama, sophisticated novels and polished verse, newspapers and magazines and Sunday School tracts. Even those writers concerned with social issues often used the conventional descriptions or resolved the moral issues raised by the presence of the Jewish characters in purely conventional terms.

Herman Melville, for example, whose early references to Jews were stereotyped, displayed in *Clarel* genuine sensitivity to the hardships of Palestinian Jews whom he observed while on a trip to the Middle East. His sensitivity to "Biblical" Jews, however, did not ex-

tend to contemporary Jews who suffered discrimination. This insensitivity was shared by many of the finest American authors. Notable exceptions were Oliver Wendell Holmes ("Christian and Jew . . . each is in heart a Man" p. 87), Mark Twain, who recognized the strong anti-Semitic undercurrent in American literature and tried to excise it from his own writings, and Bret Harte, who had a Jewish grandparent.

William Dean Howells, a product of the American middle class and Mid-West, friend of the Boston literary Brahmins and mentor of a generation of realistic writers at the end of the nineteenth century, is perhaps the most persuasive example of the inability of the Christian writer to cope with anti-Semitism. Howells was a Christian Socialist. He defended the Haymarket anarchists. He advocated prison reform. And he was one of the early sponsors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He encouraged Abraham Cahan, seeing in him a genuine American Jewish writer, precursor of a new *genre* of writing. Howells also attempted to delete from his own writings offensive references to Jews. Yet he evaded the moral issue raised by his "genteel" aversion to rich Jews in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. Concerning the Captain Dreyfus trial in France, (which Mr. Harap uses as a sort of litmus paper test of an author's true feelings), Howells was as silent as many other liberal American writers.

Mr. Harap successfully argues that even the best American au-

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thors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were "sensitive outsiders who looked in upon the Jewish scene, admired the Jewish past, tolerated the Jewish present, and were indifferent to the Jewish future" (p. 83). Only Jewish American authors were at all successful in depicting Jews as genuine people. In the period covered by this study such authors are very few, and fewer still are those whose work can claim any permanent literary value.

The mass immigration of Jews to America at the end of the nineteenth century contributed to the development of a genuine American Jewish literature. Mr. Harap pays particular attention to Abraham Cahan. He calls his novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, a "social novel of permanent interest" (p. 486). Cahan is seen as a prototype of the American Jew who emerged from the melting pot of the Lower East Side of New York. In Levinsky's conflict between idealism and

financial success Mr. Harap sees Cahan's struggle between the intellectual integrity demanded by literature and the easy success of popular vulgarity in the Yiddish *Forward* which Cahan edited. In quoting Levinsky's statement: "Am I happy? . . . I am lonely" (p. 521), Mr. Harap indicates the beginnings of the moral dilemma of alienation—a major preoccupation of twentieth century American and Jewish fiction.

By tracing the change in the image of the Jew from early stereotypes to fully rounded characters Louis Harap has made a major contribution to the studies of American literature and American Jewish history. From the perspective of the literary image one can discern social values and changes. It is enlightening and sobering to realize that as a rule, only when the literary image of the Jew was drawn by Jewish authors, did it bear human features.

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*The Arab Boycott of Israel: Economic Aggression and World Reaction*, by DAN S. CHILL (Praeger: New York, 1976).

*Reviewed by* Michael W. Sigall

It is perhaps the greatest dilemma of modern social science that those topics that are the most meaningful are inherently the most difficult to research. Therefore, relevant areas of human behavior are often abandoned by scholars and are left to the emotional rhetoric of the polemicist.

Much of what has been written concerning the Arab boycott of Israel, from whatever perspective, has been shallow and politicized. In addition there is no well-reasoned and rigorous analysis of the broader societal ramifications of the boycott. It is to fill this void that Dan Chill's work is clearly addressed.

Those who advocate a so-called

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"value free" approach to behavioral research will undoubtedly be disappointed. The author's orientation is subjective in that he proposes a legal-political stance for the United States that incorporates the moral imperative. Perhaps this is just as well in that Mr. Chill's work illustrates that cultural mores are very much a part of the policy formulation process and that one need not be amoral to undertake legitimate inquiry.

The author reviews both the objectives and the procedural tactics of the Arab boycott as well as presenting an historical overview. It is disappointing, however, that he did not undertake a more probing insight into the intra-Arabic political milieu. While tangential to the structural aspects presented and the legal questions raised, such an analysis would benefit the reader who is unfamiliar with the intricacies of the Arab political culture and its multifaceted perception of the world around it. This added approach could also allow a penetrating look into the psycho-political role of an economic boycott. Thus, the chapter dealing with both the position of Israel and the reactions of the United States and the world, while highly descriptive, cannot present a behavioral analysis of the inextricably interwoven patterns of public opinion formation and political decision-making.

The legal aspect of the boycott is the most creative portion of the book. There the author applies his own expertise in sorting out the relevant legal framework from the catacombs of the American legal system. Mr. Chill carefully

outlines an implicit strategy for attacking the boycott's impact in the United States via the meticulous use of existing legal options. Moreover, he spells out for professional and lay reader alike the diverse approaches from antitrust to civil rights currently available to one who can combine calm reason with moral awareness. He, fortunately for us, resists the temptation to stop there and ploughs straight into the subjective world of, as Mr. Chill puts it, "The Law — As It Should Be."

Predicating his advice on the realization that, "the legal weapons already in existence with which to fight the Boycott are numerous," the author forces us to take cognizance of the dynamic interaction between effective political action and proper legislation.

Mr. Chill concludes that the work of the Jewish organizations in combatting the boycott has been "admirable." Yet the lack of awareness by the American public of the complex political, economic and legal implications has, in part, permitted crass interests in our political society to mislead the public into a false sense of complacency.

This work is a necessity. In brief and concise language Mr. Chill talks about the reality of the Arab boycott and never abrogates his role as advocate of a sane, plausible and humane policy. He also recognizes that this acute problem must be viewed from numerous perspectives in order to be understood. For it is obvious from this book that without a profound understanding of the workings of the boycott no solution will ever be

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forthcoming.

The Arab boycott raises questions which compel us to examine the very heart of our societal priorities, not just as Jews but as citizens and as human beings. If we are to emerge from this intact, we must begin where Mr. Chill's

work ends and examine the psychosocial and political dimensions of decision-making that together with the economic and legal analyses presented will enable us to view the totality of the problem, a prerequisite to its lasting resolution.

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